RPOS 479Z: Weapons of Mass Destruction and International Security

Instructor: Bryan R. Early, Associate Professor of Political Science
Course #: 10454 (Fall 2017)
Class Times: MWF 10:25-11:20AM
Room: BB356
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Office Hours: Uptown, Humanities Building B16 – Monday, 11:20 AM -12:20PM

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the threats posed to national and international security by chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. Students will learn why these weapons should not all be considered “weapons of mass destruction” through exploring the risks and consequences of their use by state and non-state actors. The course will do this by delving into the technical and policy challenges related to these weapons’ construction. It will further address how CBRN weapons shape countries’ national security strategies and regional security dynamics. Efforts at the international level to restrict the use and proliferation of these weapons will also be explored. Students will be given three writing assignments throughout the semester, including a major research paper on a related topic of their choice.

Expectations

Adopt the mentality that this course is a job and I have professional-level expectations of your performance. This is a reading intensive course that will make significant demands of your time. Students are expected to attend every class having done the assigned reading and prepared to discuss the assigned texts. Class discussions will be conducted in a collegial manner. Attendance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for success. It will be incorporated into students’ participation grades. Students will be expected to turn in assigned work on time. Late work will face significant deductions and can result in 0s.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:
- Describe the major technical challenges involved in the construction of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons
- Identify what makes certain types of CBRN weapons more effective for state actors and what makes certain types more effective for non-state actors
- Explain the major issues surrounding the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the role they play in international security
- Explain the nature of the threat posed by CBRN terrorism
- Discuss the regional security issues posed by nuclear weapons and the international efforts to prevent proliferation
- Apply their knowledge of CBRN issues to understanding contemporary events
- Have the foundational knowledge and skills to pursue a career in the WMD security field
Grading

A points-based grading scheme is employed that is translated into A-E grades with pluses and minuses. Minuses and pluses are awarded at the 2.5% boundaries of the grade thresholds. For example, a 91% is considered an “A-” and an 89% is considered a “B+.”

Participation – 10%

Participation will be evaluated based upon the quality and regularity of students’ contributions to course discussions and the class debates. The instructor reserves the right to give pop quizzes that will factor into the participation grade if deemed necessary. Attendance will be factored into this grade.

Getting the Bomb Paper – 15%

Students will write a 4-6 page (double-spaced) paper on the major obstacles that states must overcome to acquire a military nuclear program capable of producing atomic bombs. Students should write this paper from a contemporary perspective. The paper should address the technical challenges, domestic political issues, and international political issues that may serve as obstacles for states’ efforts to acquire atomic bombs. The use of real-world examples is encouraged. Due: 10/11.

Pick Your Poison Brief – 15%

Students will write a 3-4 page (double-spaced) brief paper on a chemical or biological weapons agent. This brief should be considered a primer for high-level policymakers on the particular agent, providing them with a summary description of the agent, the military and terrorism threat it poses, and the preparations the government should undertake to redress that threat. Due: 11/1.

Research Paper – 30%

Students will write a 15-20 page (double-spaced) research paper on a topic related to CBRN weapons, CBRN terrorism, international arms control or nonproliferation efforts, or regional security involving CBRN weapons. Students will submit their topics to the instructor for initial feedback and a rough draft of their papers to receive comments from a peer in class. Students will be expected to incorporate this feedback within their projects. The final draft will be evaluated by the instructor on its quality and the depth of the improvement made by the student from his or her initial draft.

*Topic Selected: Due 9/25*
*Rough Draft (5%): Due 11/17*
*Peer Review (5%): Due 11/27*
*Final Draft (20%): Due 12/11*
**Final Exam – 30%**

This will be a cumulative exam that will cover the entire semester’s course material. It will be very difficult to pass for students that do not keep up with the readings and attend lectures. Students should take detailed notes throughout the semester on their readings and during their lectures. Building a running study guide throughout the semester is also suggested.

*Exam Period: 12/14 (Thursday) from 3:30-5:30PM.*

**Grading Policy**

Tests and papers will be graded blind by the instructor and/or teaching assistant. If a student wishes to challenge how his or her exam or paper was graded, the student must submit a written statement describing what part of their assignment was improperly evaluated and why they think that was the case. This must be done within five days of having the assignment returned. Both the instructor and his graduate assistant will re-grade the entire project, compare their assessments, and mutually decide on a final grade. This grade may be higher or lower than the original grade given and will be final. Any clear mistakes or errors made by the instructor will be promptly corrected.

**Policy on Academic Honesty**

Please familiarize yourself with the undergraduate bulletin’s descriptions of cheating and plagiarism. If you are involved in plagiarism or cheating, the penalty will be failure in the course and you will be reported to judicial affairs. If you are not sure if something violates standards – feel free to ask ahead of time. In general, it’s always better to err on the side of citing too much than too little in your research papers. Information on the university’s policies can be found at: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html).

**Accommodations**

“Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). The office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.” For the University’s policy, see: [http://www.albany.edu/disability/resource.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/disability/resource.shtml). If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class please inform the instructor as soon as possible. This is a link for the university’s policies on medically-excused absences: [http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml).

**Resources**

This course will be very reading intensive. The readings come from a mixture of required texts, readings posted on Blackboard, and articles that students will be required to look up themselves using the university’s electronic library resources.
Required Texts


Course Schedule

*Introduction*

Day 1 - 8/28: Introduction
- Discuss Syllabus, Course Organization, Grading, and Class Policies

Day 2 - 8/30: Critiquing the WMD Concept

Day 3 – 9/1: A Global Overview of Proliferation

9/4 – Labor Day

*Nuclear Weapons*

Day 4 - 9/6: History of Nuclear Weapons Development

Day 5 - 9/8: How Nuclear Weapons Work and the Consequences of Their Use

Day 6 - 9/11: Why States Acquire Nuclear Weapons

Day 7 - 9/13: Explaining Nuclear Restraint

Day 8 - 9/15: Nuclear Opacity and Hedging / Case Studies: Israel and South Africa

Day 9 - 9/18: How to Make Nuclear Weapons

Day 10 - 9/20: Sensitive Foreign Nuclear Assistance

9/22 – Rosh Hashanah

Day 11 - 9/25: Peaceful Nuclear Assistance

Day 12 - 9/27: Illicit Nuclear Black Markets

Nuclear Nonproliferation Efforts

Day 13 - 9/29: The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and IAEA
- The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Full Text Available at: http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml

Day 14 - 10/2: Other Nuclear Arms Control Treaties


Day 15 - 10/4: National Export Controls and Multilateral Export Control (10/12)

Day 16: UNSCR 1540 and the Multilateral Export Control Regimes


Day 17 - 10/9 - Counter-Proliferation Efforts

**Nuclear Deterrence, Coercion, and Effects on International Conflict**

Day 18 - 10/11: Nuclear Deterrence

Day 19 - 10/13: Nuclear Weapons and Coercion
Day 20 - 10/16: Nuclear Weapons and Coercion

Day 21: 10/18: Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict, Pt. I

Day 22 - 10/20 - Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict, Pt. II


Biological and Chemical Weapons

Day 24 – 10/25: Biological Weapons

Day 25 - 10/27: Chemical Weapons

Day 26 - 10/30: Chemical and Biological Weapons and the Dual-Use Dilemma

Day 27 - 11/1: Why States Want Chemical and Biological Weapons

Day 28 - 11/3: International Arms Control Efforts

**Ballistic Missiles**

Day 29 - 11/6: Ballistic Missiles: Strategic Significance and Proliferation Issues

Day 30 - 11/8: Ballistic Missile Proliferation

**CBRN Terrorism**

Day 31 - 11/10: Nuclear and Radiological Terrorism: Part I
Day 32 - 11/13: Nuclear and Radiological Terrorism: Part II

Day 33 - 11/15: Chemical Terrorism

Day 34 - 11/17: Bioterrorism

11/20-11/24 – Thanksgiving Break (Draft Peer Review)

Day 35 - 11/27: Preventing and Recovering from of CBRN Terrorism

**Cases Analyses of WMD Security and Proliferation Issues**
(Readings in this Section Subject to Change to Account for Current Events)

Day 36 - 11/29: The United States

Day 37 - 12/1: Russia

Day 38 - 12/4: North Korea
Day 39 - 12/6: Iran

Day 40 - 12/8: China

Day 41 - 12/11: Conclusion