

POLS 387: International Security

Dr. Ches Thurber

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Office Hours: Tue 2:00-3:30 | Wed 9:30-11:00

Class Hours: T/Th 12:30 - 1:45

Office: 414 Zulauf Hall

Class Room: 204 DuSable Hall

Course Description

This course offers a broad overview of security challenges facing policymakers and citizens in the 21st century. We will begin with a “traditional” approach to security studies, examining questions surrounding the causes of war, the art of strategy, and the logic of deterrence. We will then move on to address the complex threats posed to security in the 21st century: from nuclear proliferation to environmental conflict, from terrorism to pandemics, and from cyberwarfare to peacekeeping missions. By the end of the course, students are expected to demonstrate not only a deep understanding of each of these concepts, but also an ability to place contemporary challenges in their broader historical contexts and to evaluate the costs and benefits of potential policy responses.

Course Format

We will be meeting twice a week for 75 minute sessions. While some material will be presented in lecture, we will spend much of our time openly discussing the readings and topics assigned for each day. As such, it is essential that students come to class having completed the readings and participate in discussion every class period. Throughout the semester there will also be in-class exercises and role-plays. Audio-visual materials may also be used as appropriate.

A Note on Learning Amidst Pandemic

I was hoping to be able to delete this section this semester. But the Omicron had other ideas. These are still crazy times. We will be proceeding with this class the best we can and to some degree I hope the process of reading, writing, and talking about topics we are all passionate about helps provide you with some sense of normalcy. But sometimes that can feel like absurdity. Please know that you are not alone in feeling it and that we are all in this together. I will be as accommodating as I can this semester in light of these circumstances and I hope that we can all agree to engage each other in a spirit of mutual patience, empathy, and understanding. If you or somebody you know is struggling with anxiety or other issues, do not hesitate to reach out. Resources available include the DRC, Student Counseling Services or call 815-306-2777.

As per the university’s recent decision, we will not hold in-person class the first week. Instead I will be assigning you work to do at your own pace. My hope is to begin in-person learning as

soon as it is possible to do so. If health concerns or issues prevent you from being able to come to class, I will work hard to accommodate your situation and make class materials available to you. I will not, however, be able to simulcast class sessions online.

Office Hours

I will be holding office hours on Tuesdays from 2-3:30 p.m. and Wednesdays from 9:30-11 a.m. Office hours appointments are available either in-person in my office or online. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this. Sign up for an appointment at [this link](#). The system will send you a Zoom link that we can use for our meeting. Or you can just show up at my office at that time.

Course Materials

There are no textbooks for this course!!! :) All readings will be made available on Blackboard. Students will be asked to sign up for the online discussion board service Packback (\$35) as well as find a way to watch the animated Disney movie *Raya and the Last Dragon* (\$4 or free for Disney+ subscribers).

Packback

We will be supplementing our in-class discussions with an online discussion board service called "Packback." Packback is similar to discussion boards offered on Blackboard. The advantage of Packback is that it is much more engaging, allowing for a lot more back and forth discussion and feedback. The disadvantage of Packback is that it will cost you money. I take this drawback seriously and am assigning Packback this year only after getting very positive reviews from students who used it with me in the International Law course last semester.

Before the start of each TUESDAY CLASS, you will be required to post *THREE* times on the Packback discussion board. In one post you will pose a question for your classmates. In the other two you will respond to questions your classmates or I have posed.

You will sign up for Packback by clicking on the assignment link in Blackboard and following the instructions.

You can find more info about Packback at help.packback.co. I am of course available to answer questions, and you are also welcome to get your money's worth by contacting Packback's customer support team directly at help@packback.co. (Seriously, they encourage you to do this and they are very responsive!)

If the cost of Packback (\$35) creates hardship for you or your family, you may also contact them to request a fee waiver. They have promised to honor such requests. You may choose to include me in your communication with Packback about this or not, depending on what you are comfortable with (i.e. I will go to bat for you to get you a waiver, but you are also welcome to keep this private.)

You can find a brief propaganda video on Packback [here](#).

Model UN Option

Students in the class are encouraged to consider participating in NIU's Model UN club, for which I am the advisor. We meet one day a week during the semester, and then travel to Chicago on

Easter weekend to participate in historical crisis simulations. Students who choose to participate in Model UN may choose to count the Model UN experience in lieu of the class National Security Council simulation.

Evaluation

Class attendance, preparation and participation (15%): The time we spend in class is for me the most important of this course. As such, punctual attendance is mandatory. But more important than just being present at a desk is that you are actively engaged. I expect that you have done the readings and that you try to participate in discussion each and every class section. You may miss up to 2 classes during the course of the semester without penalty. Beyond that, I ask that you write a brief 1-page summary of the readings assigned for the missed day as make-up work to receive attendance credit. Generally, make-up reading summaries are due by the beginning of the next class, but I will be more flexible on this in pandemic times.

Packback Discussion Board Posts (15%): Each week, by the start of TUESDAY'S CLASS, students are expected to contribute three posts to Packback: one question and two responses. The posts must meet minimum criteria (60 points) for length and depth of engagement. Doing so will result in full credit (100%) for that week.

Reading Quizzes (10%): Each week, by the start of THURSDAY'S CLASS, you will have an online reading quiz to complete. It will be a 5-question multiple-choice quiz. You may attempt the quiz twice.

Examinations: (40%) There will be two exams. Each will count for 15% of your final grade. I will provide a list of possible exam questions one week before the exam. I encourage you to work with others to plan your answers in advance, but your work on exam day must be your own, produced without the assistance of books or notes.

Final Simulation (20%)

We will hold a final simulation activity, involving a meeting of the US national security council in which each student will play the role of a national security principal on one of two contemporary topics. You are expected to write a policy memo in preparation for the simulation (15% of your final grade) and your participation will be graded as well (5%).

Course Policies

- Successful completion of this course consistent, punctual attendance, completing the readings prior to the start of class, and active participation. If you must miss class due to a conflicting responsibility or an emergency, it is your responsibility to contact me to discuss the situation. I will generally require a short written assignment to be submitted in lieu of class attendance. Any more than 2 absences without prior notification and make-up work will affect your final grade.
- If you think you need to delay taking an exam or submitting a written assignment, you should talk to me, generally at least two weeks before the exam/due date. Such extensions are never guaranteed, but will be based on university policy, exigency of the circumstances, and timeliness of the request (the earlier the better). Any missed exam or written assignment submitted after the deadline without prior authorization will incur a penalty.

- All students are expected to adhere to the highest levels of academic integrity. Violations of university, departmental, and disciplinary standards will not be tolerated and will lead to an F for the course. Information on University-wide definitions and policies regarding academic integrity can be found [here](#).
- Consistent with university policy, all written work must be original to this course. The re-use of papers previously submitted for a prior or concurrent class is not permitted unless discussed in advance with me.
- If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu. Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations. The sooner you let me know your needs, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.
- I ask that my undergraduate students refer to me as either Dr. or Professor Thurber. I'm just old-school that way. I use the pronoun "he" and its variants, but am equally comfortable with the singular "they." Please let me know how you prefer to be addressed, both in name and pronoun, especially if it differs from what is in the college directory. I will make every effort to address you in the way you wish to be addressed. Please try and do the same for your fellow classmates, as well as for other faculty in the department.
- I am committed to your success in this class – if you feel that you are not performing to your expectations, please come and see me. I am available to answer any questions you may have about course assignments, requirements or content. I generally answer e-mails within 24 hrs on weekdays, and would be happy to schedule an appointment to meet with you if you are unavailable during my posted office hours.

Letter Grade Distribution

You will receive a percentage score for each assignment above that can be translated into a letter grade according to the scale below:

Percentage	Letter Grade
> 93.00	A
90.00 - 92.99	A-
87.00-89.99	B+
83.00 - 86.99	B
80.00 - 82.99	B-
77.00-79.99	C+
70.00 - 76.99	C
60.00 - 69.99	D
< 60.00	F

Class Schedule

Readings are listed for the week. Students should plan to read some readings before Tuesday to be able to participate in Packback discussion boards. All readings should be completed before attempting the online reading quiz which is due each week on Thursday.

Week 1: Introduction – Virtual Week

Tuesday 01/18 and Thursday 01/20: No In-Person Class

- Read Syllabus and watch Syllabus Video
- Take Syllabus Quiz (Due Thursday at 12:30pm)
- Watch Packback Video
- Get Started on Packback (not due until next Tuesday)
- Watch *Raya and the Last Dragon*

Week 2: Conceptualizing Security

Tuesday 01/25: Simulation Activity

Thursday 01/27: Defining “Security”

- Reveron and Mahoney-Norris, *Human Security in a Borderless World*, Ch. 1
- Cohn, “Gender and National Security”
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 3: Approaches to the Study of Security

Tuesday 02/01: Science, Policy, and Purpose

Thursday 02/03: Analytic Frameworks

- Mingst and McKibben, *Essentials of International Relations*, Chs. 1 and 3
- James Mattis on Reading
- Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories”
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 4: The International System

Tuesday 02/08: Anarchy and the Security Dilemma

Thursday 02/10: Bargaining and War

- Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Ch. 1
- Frieden et al, “Why are there wars?”
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 5: Foreign Policy and Statecraft

Tuesday 02/15: Domestic Politics and Leadership

Thursday 02/17: Deterrence and Coercion

- Frieden et al, “Domestic Politics and War”
- Saunders, “What a President Trump Means for Foreign Policy”
- Santiago, “There Still Aren’t Enough Women Working in National Security”
- Jervis, “Spiral and Deterrence Models”
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 6: Nuclear Weapons

Tuesday 02/22: From Mutually Assured Destruction to Nonproliferation

Thursday 02/24: Contemporary Nuclear Debates

- CFR, World 101, “Nuclear Proliferation”
- Nichols, “No Other Choice: Why the US Dropped the Atomic Bomb on Japan”
- NPR, “Hiroshima Survivor Remembers” (DC)
- Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities”
- Broad and Pecanha, “The Iran Nuclear Deal: A Simple Guide”
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 7: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Tuesday 03/01: Civil Wars

Thursday 03/03: Counterinsurgency

- HSR, “Why the Dramatic Decline in Armed Conflict?”
- Nagdy and Roser, “Civil Wars”
- Laub, “Syria’s Civil War”
- Walter, “Four Things We Know About How Civil Wars End”
- Staniland, “Counterinsurgency is a Bloody Costly Business”
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 8: MIDTERM WEEK

- No Packback or Reading Quiz

Tuesday 03/08: Review Day

- Midterm exam available online at 2PM

Thursday 03/10: MIDTERM EXAM (in class or at home)

- Midterm exam due Thursday at midnight

SPRING BREAK

Week 9: Intervention and Peacekeeping

Tuesday 03/22: External Intervention in Civil Conflicts

Thursday 03/24: Peacekeeping

- Luttwak, "Give War a Chance"
- UNSC, "UN Peacekeeping: An Introduction"
- Walter, Howard, and Fortna, "The Extraordinary Relationship Between Peacekeeping and Peace"
- Rohde, "The UN Still Can't Stop Civilian Slaughter"
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 10: Terrorism

Tuesday 03/29: Concepts, Causes, and History

Thursday 03/31: Case Studies: ISIS and White Nationalism

- CFR, World 101, "Terrorism"
- Chenoweth and Moore, *The Politics of Terror*, Ch. 1
- Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants"
- Peterson, Rankine, and Walsh, "Inside the White Nationalist Terrorist Movement in America"
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 11: Technology

Tuesday 04/05: Cyber Conflict

Thursday 04/07: Autonomous Weapons

- Greenberg, "The Untold Story of NotPetya, the Most Devastating Cyberattack in History"
- Zetter, "An Unprecedented Look at Stuxnet, the World's First Digital Weapon"
- Fryer-Biggs, "Coming Soon to a Battlefield: Robots that Can Kill"
- Scharre and Horowitz, "An Introduction to Autonomy in Weapons Systems"
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 12: Ecosystems

Thursday 04/14: Pandemics and Global Health

Tuesday 04/12: Environmental Change

- Busby, "Warming World"
- Hendrix and O'Laughlin, "Searching for Consensus on Conflict-Climate Connections"
- Christy, "How Killing Elephants Finances Terror in Africa"
- CFR, World 101, "Global Health"
- Brundtland, "Global Health and International Security"
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 13: Consequences of Conflict

Tuesday 04/19: Displacement and Refugees

Thursday 04/21: Sexual Violence in War

- CFR, “No Refuge”
- Boehler and Pecanha, “The Global Refugee Crisis: Region by Region”
- New York Times, “How the Rohingya Escaped” (DC)
- IIS, “Conflict-Related Sexual Violence” (DC)
- Normal Packback and Reading Quiz Deadlines

Week 14: Simulation Week 1

Tuesday 04/26: Simulation 1

Thursday 04/28: Simulation 2

- No Packback or Reading Quiz

Week 15: Simulation Week 2

Tuesday 05/03: Simulation 3

Thursday 05/05: Exam Review

- No Packback or Reading Quiz

Final Exam : *Thursday 05/12: 12:00pm-1:50pm*