1 Course Description

“Decision Making in Nuclear Crises” draws on insights from political science, international history and public policy as well as related fields in the behavioral sciences insofar as they bear on judgment and decision-making. The course will be structured around different sets of decisions that political leaders face, such as the decision about whether to pursue nuclear weapons, how to make judgments about intelligence on the weapons programs of other countries, how and when to limit armaments, behavior during nuclear crises and whether and how to address proliferation. It will culminate in a multi-day simulation of a nuclear crisis.

Learning Outcomes: This is a three credit course. This course is a traditional course according to the Carnegie definition (i.e. at least 1 hour of classroom instruction and 2 hours of out-of-class student work each week). Students who closely and carefully engage course readings, attend and participate in class discussion, and complete course assignments will be able to:

- Explain arguments for and against the utility of nuclear weapons and their proliferation
- Examine and assess the strengths/weaknesses of theories of nuclear weapons and political decision-making
- Apply course concepts to contemporary debates about nuclear weapons and foreign policy
- Plan, conduct research for and write a term paper
- Dissent respectfully

2 Policies

- I expect you to complete the readings assigned for each week prior to our class meeting, to take notes on your readings and to actively participate in our seminar discussion. Active participation requires you bring the relevant readings to class each day (which may mean printing them beforehand) and that you respectfully engage with both the course content and your peers’ contributions.
I agree entirely with the University’s institutional statement on inclusion and diversity, and value the contributions of each person and respect the ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich our intellectual community [https://diversity.wisc.edu](https://diversity.wisc.edu).

You will need to complete your assignments on time, as I will accept no late work without an approved accommodation prior to the due date.

Accommodations will be made for those students who have documented proof of an emergency or those students who have documented evidence of learning disabilities. I am firmly committed to ensuring equal learning access for all and therefore encourage individuals with disabilities to participate in the McBurney Center’s available programs and activities. If you need an accommodation, you must contact the center at (608) 263-2741 or email them at [mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu](mailto:mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu) to obtain documentation for your specific needs. You must do so by the end of Week 2 and you must contact me in advance to make appropriate arrangements for papers, etc.

NO LAPTOPS IN CLASS. There is an overwhelming amount of research showing that students take better notes when they do it by hand, and learn more overall when they don’t have their computers open. If you have a medical or other legitimate need for a laptop, please let me know.

If you have any questions about anything related to the course, email me and I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

→ One exception: I will not respond to emails sent the night before an assignment is due or before a midterm or final exam.

Finally, I strictly adhere to the UW Academic Misconduct Process and will report all incidents of academic misconduct the Dean of Students Office, as it is a prerequisite for maintaining academic integrity in our course.

### 3 Assignments & Grading

- **20% – Attendance/Participation**
  
  → I expect you to attend all of the sessions of the course and contribute to discussion.

- **10% – Simulation (will discuss in detail in class)**

- **40% – Recurring Assignments**
  
  - 10% – Discussion questions

    You will submit a discussion question prior to each class (with a few exceptions) via Canvas. Questions can be focused on one particular reading or making connections across readings and are due no later than 5:00pm *the day before class* (so, on Mondays and Wednesdays). I will not evaluate the content of these questions, but they should either be a clarification question or a substantive question on the assigned readings that you think would be useful to discuss in class. The discussion leader will also use these questions as they prepare comments for our seminar.
⇒ Due day before each class by 5:00pm.

- 15% – Guiding class discussion (7.5% each × 2)
  → You will lead the discussion (along with a classmate) two times. This involves doing all the readings carefully, preparing questions and topics and getting our discussion going in class. It will also require coordinating with the other student(s) signed up for that week to think about how you’d like to focus class discussion.
  → Please email me your outline for class discussion the night before class. Sign up [here](#).

- 15% – Response paper (7.5% each × 2)
  → Every time you lead class discussion, you will also write a short response paper (due any time before class starts that day). Response papers are to address the day’s reading; you can compare and contrast readings, pick one and analyze it in detail, examine either the arguments (theory) or evidence, or the fit between them. There are lots of options. Response papers should never just summarize the readings. They should not exceed 500 words (or the equivalent of three pages double-spaced).

- 30% – Final research paper (10-15 pages)
  Topic: TBD (you will have several options)
  We will discuss this assignment in detail in class, but the basics are as follows:
  (i) Sign up for at least one appointment at office hours to discuss your paper (but feel free to sign up for more!). It is highly recommended that you bring an outline of your paper idea to the appointment.
  (ii) Turn in a 1 page overview that I will provide feedback on.
  (iii) Write the actual paper!
  ⇒ 1 page overview due **Tuesday, October 30th**
  ⇒ Paper due **Thursday, December 13th**

4 Required Readings

Journal articles and edited book chapters - Available through the [UW Library website](#).
Another, easier way access them is to use [scholar.google.com](#). The first time you use it, click on “Settings,” then “Library Links” and choose UW-Madison. Every time you look up an article title after that, it will provide you a direct link to download that article. Anything not accessible through these sources will have a link next to it on the syllabus to enable you to download a scanned copy (email me if there are problems!).

5 Overview of Schedule
Week 1: Intro
Week 2: Why Do States Pursue Nuclear Weapons?
Week 3: The Use of the Bomb in WWII
Week 4: U.S. Nuclear Strategy in the 1950s
Week 5: Nuclear Deterrence
Week 6: Is More Better?
Week 7: Nuclear Crises
Week 8: Proliferation
Week 9: Nuclear Latency/Norms & Ethics
Week 10: Nuclear Terrorism
Week 11: Global Zero/Current U.S. Strategy
Week 12: Simulation
Week 13: Simulation
Week 14: Guest Lectures
Schedule

1. Why Study Nuclear Weapons?
   [Thursday, September 6th]

   Optional Readings:

2. Why do states pursue nuclear weapons? I
   [Tuesday, September 11th]

   Optional Readings:
3. Why do states pursue nuclear weapons? II (Status and Identity)  
[Thursday, September 13th]


Optional Readings:


4. The Use of the Bomb in WWII: stress, overconfidence, etc.  
[Tuesday, September 18th]


5. The Use of the Bomb in WWII  
[Thursday, September 20th]


Optional Readings:

6. What was U.S. Nuclear Strategy in the 1950s?

[Tuesday, September 25th]


Optional Readings:


7. NO CLASS MEETING (Watch Dr. Strangelove)

[Thursday, September 27th]

- Eric Schlosser, “Almost Everything in Dr. Strangelove was True,” New Yorker, January 17, 2014.

8. The Psychology of deterrence

[Tuesday, October 2nd]


9. Do Nukes Deter?  
[Thursday, October 4th]


Optional Readings:


[Tuesday, October 9th]


11. Is More Better? II: Do nukes help states “get their way in international politics?  
[Thursday, October 11th]


*Optional Readings:*


12. What (if anything) is different about nuclear crises? I (crisis decisionmaking, fear)  
[Tuesday, October 16th]


13. What (if anything) is different about nuclear crises? II  
[Thursday, October 18th]


14. Approaches to Non-Proliferation I: Arms Control Agreements

[Tuesday, October 23rd]


Optional Readings:


15. Approaches to Non-Proliferation II: “Alternative” Approaches

[Thursday, October 25th]


Optional Readings:

- Fuhrmann, M. and Kreps, S. E. Targeting nuclear programs in war and peace
- Collection of articles. Name: “The Iran Debate: To Strike or Not to Strike” In the Journal Foreign Affairs January 2012.
16. Nuclear Latency

[Tuesday, October 30th]


⇒ RESEARCH PAPER: 1 page overview due

17. Norms and ethics

[Thursday, November 1st]


Optional Readings:

18. Nuclear Terrorism  
[Tuesday, November 6th]


Optional Readings:


19. NO CLASS MEETING  
Thursday, November 8th

20. Is “Global Zero” possible or desirable?  
[Tuesday, November 13th]


Optional Readings:

- Remarks by President Barack Obama in Prague, April 5, 2009
21. What is current U.S. Strategy?  
[Thursday, November 15th]


22. NO CLASS MEETING (Thanksgiving week)  
[Tuesday, November 20th]

23. SIMULATION  
[Tuesday, November 27th]

24. SIMULATION  
[Thursday, November 29th]

25. SIMULATION  
[Tuesday, December 4th]

26. GUEST LECTURE: Andrew Coe (Vanderbilt University)  
[Thursday, December 6th]

27. GUEST LECTURE: Jane Vaynman (Temple University)  
[Tuesday, December 11th]

⇒ Thursday, December 13th: RESEARCH PAPER DUE