Nuclear Weapons and International Politics

Fall 2014
Nicholas L. Miller
Department of Political Science
Brown University

Email: nicholas_miller@brown.edu
Office: Watson Institute 303
Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 PM, or by appointment

Thursday, 4:00-6:20 PM
Location: J. Walter Wilson 403

Course Description

This seminar explores the causes and consequences of nuclear weapons proliferation in international politics. Each week we will explore a different dimension of nuclear proliferation, drawing on academic theory and historical evidence.

Specific topics examined include the causes of nuclear proliferation, nonproliferation and counterproliferation policies, nuclear strategy, the effect of nuclear weapons on international conflict, and nuclear terrorism. The primary goal of the course is to provide students with a theoretical and historical understanding of core issues related to nuclear weapons, which in turn will allow for a more informed evaluation of contemporary policy debates.

Before taking this course, it is recommend that students have previously completed Introduction to International Relations (POLS 0400). Enrollment priority will be given to students concentrating in political science, international relations, and upperclassmen.

Assignments and Grading

Participation: 30%
As a discussion-based course, active participation is a crucial component of the grade. This includes both regular attendance in class and contribution to class discussion. Students should therefore complete all readings before attending class. Halfway through the semester, I will provide students with a provisional participation grade.

Response Papers: 20%
Over the course of the semester, students will write two brief response papers (maximum 1000 words) based on the week’s assigned readings. These papers will be due via email by 9 A.M. on the day of class and should critically examine at least one of the week’s readings, either in terms of the logic of the argument, the evidence advanced to support the argument, or both. Solely summarizing the reading’s argument is insufficient and will result in a poor grade. Students will sign up for particular weeks at the course’s second meeting and likely will be called upon in class discussion to briefly present on their response paper as a springboard for discussion.
Research Paper: 50%
The research paper is the most important component of the final grade, so students should begin work on this as early as possible. Papers should be between 20 and 30 double-spaced pages and can be on any topic related to nuclear weapons. The papers must include (1) a brief literature review, (2) a clearly stated argument or hypothesis (either from the readings or elsewhere), (3) a description of how the argument/hypothesis will be evaluated empirically, and (4) an evaluation of the argument using evidence from at least one historical case. While students are encouraged to evaluate an argument advanced in the course readings, they cannot use the same case(s) to evaluate the argument as are used in the readings.

On 10/9, students are required to submit a one-page proposal that identifies the argument/hypothesis to be tested in the research paper and the case(s) that will be examined. Students are strongly encouraged to submit and receive feedback on one rough draft, but this must be submitted electronically no later than 12/4 (the final class period). I will provide comments within 72 hours of receiving the draft. Final papers are due by 5 PM on 12/15.

Required Books

The following books are required for the course. They are available for purchase at the bookstore or can be bought online. Copies of Bomb Scare, Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era, and Arms and Influence are on reserve at the Rockefeller Library.


Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (9/4): Introduction

Week 2 (9/11): Technical and Historical Background


Week 3 (9/18): The Effects of Nuclear Weapons, An Overview


Week 4 (9/25): Causes of Proliferation, Demand-Side


Week 5 (10/2): Causes of Proliferation, Supply-Side


**Week 6 (10/9): Nonproliferation (RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE)**


**Week 7 (10/16): Counterproliferation**


**Week 8 (10/23): Cold War Nuclear Strategy, Part I**


**Week 9 (10/30): Cold War Nuclear Strategy, Part II**


**Week 10 (11/6): Nuclear Strategy Beyond the Superpowers**


Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, chapters TBD.

**Week 11 (11/13): Nuclear Weapons, Conventional Conflict, and Crises**


**Week 12 (11/20): Norms and Nuclear Weapons Use**


**Week 13 (11/27): NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 14 (12/4): Command and Control, Accidents, and Nuclear Terrorism (LAST DAY THAT DRAFT CAN BE SUBMITTED)**


**Week 15 (12/11): Global Zero and Contemporary U.S. Nuclear Policy**


**12/15: RESEARCH PAPER DUE**
Resources on Nuclear Proliferation

Best Histories of (Successful) Nuclear Weapons Programs

United States: Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*

Soviet Union: David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*

Britain: Margaret Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*

France: Lawrence Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France under the Fourth Republic*

China: John Lewis and Litai Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*

Israel: Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*

India: George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*

South Africa: Helen Purkett and Stephen Burgess, *South Africa's Weapons of Mass Destruction*

Pakistan: Feroz Khan, *Eating Grass*

North Korea: Jonathan Pollack, *No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons, and International Security*

Online Sources


Archival Documents Online


National Security Archive, http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/


Cold War International History Project, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/program/cold-war-international-history-project