

**PS 491: Capstone Seminar in Political Science, Strategy, and National Security**

United States Air Force Academy

Department of Political Science

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*Ratio Libertatis Custos* (Reason is the guardian of freedom)

“The nation that will insist upon drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking by cowards.” -- Sir William Francis Butler, British officer, 19<sup>th</sup> century

## I. Introduction

This is the capstone course for the Political Science major. You will synthesize what you have already learned in our discipline’s subfields in relation to new ideas, and think critically about major current issues. This version of 491 focuses on political science and strategic thinking or grand strategy, looking at both classic works and current debates about American foreign and security policy. If strategy is the effort to define ends and find the appropriate means to achieve them, grand strategy is the search by states and leaders for international order, its ends, ways, and means. What kinds of thinking or abilities will officers need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to contribute to debates about American grand strategy? What should the ends and means of American national security policy and foreign policy be? What particular resources does political science – capaciously defined – bring to these questions? Put another way, how can political science help you to continue your development as a national security leader?

Our fundamental goal as a department and a discipline is to prepare officers and citizens who can exercise political judgment in a way that combines wisdom, values, critical thinking and sound principles. Political judgment derives from the capacity to think about politics in the same terms that political actors and statesmen do, but hopefully in a deeper and more far-sighted manner. Thus, this course uses both classic and modern works to illuminate the basic questions of political science—who governs, how, and to what ends?

As political science majors, you inherit the responsibility that at the highest level, military and national security decisions are rooted in politics more than any other academic field, especially if political science is broadly defined and draws from such sister disciplines as history and economics. Clausewitz’s maxim that war is simply the continuation of politics by other means is continually reaffirmed – once again, influencing who governs, how, and to what ends.

In what way does this summarize your studies in political science, as a capstone course should do? Political Science teaches you how to think about politics, and provides tools for rigorous analysis. It challenges the prejudices you may have brought to your studies, makes you familiar with the great minds who have considered politics, and gives you a new way to look at issues and relationships. Now, at the conclusion of your studies, this class is meant to give you insight into some of the central debates of our times about foreign and security policy.

## **II. Course Objectives**

Based on the principles above, our course objectives are:

1. Build upon basic knowledge gained in previous political science courses, and work toward synthesizing ideas from the sub-fields of our discipline.
2. Apply our knowledge and reasoning to better understand important theories and topics in political science, particularly enduring and current debates about American foreign and national security policy.
3. Delve into some of the seminal works in classical and modern political science, as part of an introduction to strategic thinking or grand strategy.
4. Discover and/or review some of the predominant issues in political science—some so-called “big questions” in the discipline, particularly the character of democracy in relation to foreign and security policy, its virtues and its vices.
5. Think critically about these “big questions” and communicate these thoughts and ideas in a logical fashion in both our writing and our discussions, as a further way to develop foundations for strategic thinking and leadership.
6. Gain a better understanding of political science as a discipline—its nature, approaches, and the discipline’s predominant issues – including the importance of moving beyond our specific area of interest to incorporate the insights of all of the sub-disciplines in political science.

## **III. Course Overview**

A. Schedule: This course is offered on an alternating-lesson basis as a double-period class – 106 minutes. In general, seminars will take place every other lesson, as listed in the syllabus. Some alterations may occur, and if so, will be announced in class and/or via email.

B. Seminar Method: This is a senior seminar with students leading almost all of the discussions in class. Both individual and group success demands a high level of student preparation and participation. You must come to class prepared to address the day’s readings, issues, and the viewpoint of your peers. This also means that you must read the material and reflect on what you have read in order to develop thoughtful questions and perspectives about the topic. For your planning purposes, this should represent at least four hours of outside preparation time for each class meeting.

C. Organization of themes: The course consists of five major blocks. The first section introduces us to strategic thinking and the important contribution political science makes to this essential component of national security and foreign policy; this will include our close study and discussion of the first major work of strategic thinking or assessment of grand strategy in the Western tradition, Thucydides’ account of the war between the Athenian and Spartan alliances. The second block focuses on comparative grand strategy in the European tradition. Block III examines the nature of power in the international system and the question of American decline. Block IV features two contrasting, book-length treatments of America’s options for grand strategy after Iraq. The final block will include debates on current foreign policy and research

presentations by the cadets with time for class discussion and critiques. We expect a few guest speakers will be mixed into early blocks as well.

#### IV. Course Administration

A. Course Director: Dr. Damon Coletta (contact information above)

B. Course Materials: four books required for purchase, and other distributed readings:

*The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War.* Edited by Robert B. Strassler. Simon & Schuster Publishing, 1998. ISBN 0-684-82790-5.

*The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War.* Edited by Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein. Cambridge University Press, 1994. ISBN 978-0-521-56627-8.

*The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present.* Christopher Layne. Cornell University Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8014-7411-8.

*Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order.* G. John Ikenberry. Princeton University Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-691-12558-9.

E-texts can be used, but our experience is that most e-readers place you at a disadvantage in terms of annotating texts and moving around quickly in a text to respond to class discussion.

Other readings will be distributed by the professors, usually via email. You are responsible for reading those messages and preparing those materials, as well as for bringing your copy to class for discussion (print or e-text – but note above concerns about e-texts).

C. Extra Instruction: EI is always available and encouraged. It is wise to contact your professor in advance in order to ensure availability.

D. Academic Integrity: As in all areas of your academic endeavors, all students are required to document properly all sources used in academic papers. If you are uncertain about what plagiarism is, please see the MLA Handbook, talk to your professor, and review the Dean's policy on academic integrity. You cannot go wrong if you document when in doubt. Plagiarism is a serious offense. A paper plagiarized will result in a failing grade in the course.

E. Late Penalties: Papers must be turned in at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. The penalty is 10% for every 24-hour period late, to include weekends. Late penalties are assessed based on when the assignment is actually turned in. If late work is completed on a weekend, document the time of completion, attach a copy to an e-mail sent to your professor, and turn it in as soon as possible, but no later than 0800 of the next duty day.

**Reading Responses (see below) are due at the beginning of each class meeting.** No late submissions will be accepted on Reading Responses, barring extraordinary circumstances and the approval of your professor. The principle is to ensure that you have prepared the assigned readings prior to class and will be a contributing citizen in the seminar, not a free-rider.

F. You must complete all graded assignments to pass this course. If you are unable to complete any requirement at the scheduled time, it is your responsibility to notify your professor well before the scheduled date to make other arrangements. It is also your responsibility to keep track of the assignments and whether or not you have completed any and all course requirements.

G. Evaluation: Grades will be based on the following:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
1. Discussion/Participation (quarterly during course)	200
2. Reading Responses (4 x 25 points)	100
3. Discussion Leader (once during course)	100
4. Research Proposal (due M9, T9, M10)	100
4. GR 1 (M17, T17, M18)	100
5. Paper 1 (M21, T21, M22)	100
6. Research Presentation (due M33-M38)	100
7. Final Research Paper (due M19, T19, M20)	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>

1. You are responsible for participating in the classroom discussion based on the lesson's reading assignment. Discussion will bring out the primary points of the reading, debate controversial or complex arguments, apply the argument to current issues, and generally identify other questions useful in critiquing the reading assignment. Participation in discussion will be tracked on a daily basis, assessed every ten lessons (quarterly during the course). As a goal, you should find that you have something useful to say at least every 20 minutes. Discussion guidelines will be distributed.

2. Each student is required to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of current political events, especially news and debates about American foreign and security policy. One excellent source is a subscription to the *Economist* (also available in the library). Other fine on-line sources include:

- *The New York Times* at <http://www.nytimes.com/>.
- two websites that are clearinghouses for news and opinion are *The Early Bird* – a DOD daily summary of news on military and security policy, at <http://ebird.afis.mil/> - - and *RealClearPolitics*, a daily digest of political news and opinion essays covering a range of political views and topics, at <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/> (there also is a *RealClearWorld* section of *RCP*.) These sites will point you to credible and important news sources or journals.
- *The Financial Times* (London), <http://news.ft.com/home/us> -- a good international perspective on world affairs and American policies.

- Another international source with much free content is *The International Herald Tribune* (a New York Times publication), at <http://www.iht.com/>.

3. To help prepare your thoughts for class, you will submit a Reading Response for four of the lessons during which we have assigned reading. As noted above, these are due at the beginning of the class. These are one-page, single-spaced summaries of the main points or most important issues for ALL the parts of that lesson's assigned readings; at the end include a brief discussion of a recent news article or opinion essay from a serious news source (internet or print) that suggests the continuing relevance of the issues raised by the reading. A copy of the news article or op-ed should be stapled to the reading response; use major national or international news sources (no TV, and no blogs). You must complete at least TWO Responses before prog (M17/T17/M18) and all four Responses by our Lesson 17 (M33/T33/M34).

4. As discussion leader, you and a partner will be responsible for leading the class for a lesson. You will be graded on coverage of all the assigned readings, your ability to identify overarching themes as well as pull out specific details for discussion, the quality of both your leadership and the ensuing discussion, and your ability to handle questions your professor and fellow students ask you during the class or at the end. Sign-ups for particular dates will occur by the close of lesson 2 (Dr. Coletta) or lesson 3 (Dr. Carrese).

5. Assignments and further guidance will be distributed regarding the research proposal, the first paper, the research presentation, and the final research paper. Guidelines on writing also will be distributed.

6. Final research paper options: All projects will be individual unless a compelling case is made to your professor regarding the necessity or benefits of a group project, and means are demonstrated regarding how to assess individual contributions as well as the final project. Projects within all the subfields of political science are acceptable, but your professor will make a final judgment about the topic suggested.

Option 1: Complete your Political Science 300 research proposal. The easiest option would be to execute the research that you are already intimately involved with.

Option 2: Write an essay that complements and extends one of your Political Science 301 essays or addresses an element of political philosophy in relation to strategic thinking or grand strategy.

Option 3: Conduct a research project under the guidance of a faculty mentor. This runs the gamut from conducting an analysis of Air Force environmental policy or the purpose and use of small nukes, or assessing the descriptive representation of the Colorado legislature.

## V. Syllabus of Readings and Schedule of Course Meetings

### **Block I: Foundations of Strategic Thinking and Grand Strategy**

Lesson 1 (M1, T1, M2) – introduction to course (and selection of discussion leaders); relevance of strategic thinking or grand strategy, and introduction to Thucydides

Jan 4/5/6 Readings: Scott Bethel, Aaron Prupas, Tomislav Ruby, and Michael Smith, “Developing Air Force Strategists: Change Culture, Reverse Careerism,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* Vol. 58, No. 3 (2010): 82-88, at <K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491> under “Bethel”; Gideon Rachman, “Think Again: American Decline,” *Foreign Policy*, Jan/Feb 2011, at [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/01/02/think\\_again\\_american\\_decline?page=full](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/01/02/think_again_american_decline?page=full); Robert D. Kaplan, “A Historian For Our Time,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Jan/Feb 2007 (on Herodotus and Thucydides), at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/01/a-historian-for-our-time/5562/3/>; and, *The Landmark Thucydides*, Introduction by Hanson, ix-xxiii (see also the Editor’s Note by Strassler and p. xxxii on key to map symbols; and the appendices -- particularly A, C, F, and G – if interested)

Lesson 2 (M3, T3, M4) – Thucydides

Jan 9/10/11 Book 1: I.1-2 (pp.3-4); I.7-9 (7-8); I.13-23 (11-16); I.31-37 (21-25); I.43-44 (27-28); I.66-71 (37-41); I.75-78 (43-45); I.88 (49); I.97 (53); I.118 (65) I.120-127 (66-70); I.139-I.146 (79-85); see also I.115 (63)

Lesson 3 (M5, T5, M6) - Thucydides

Jan 13/17/18 Book 2: II.1 (89); II.11 (96-97); II.21-22 (103-4); II.34-66 (110-28)  
Book 3: III.36-50 (175-84); III.81-84 (198-201)  
Book 4: IV.17-22 (232-34); IV.70-74 (261-63); IV.78-88 (266-72); IV.102-117 (279-86)  
Book 5: V.6-11 (304-309; see also map 5.3 on 302); V.14 (309); V.25-6 (316-17); V.84-116 (pp. 350-57); paired with Melian Dialogue, Chios at VIII.24 (494-95)

Lesson 4 (M7, T7, M8) - Thucydides

Jan 20/23/24 Book 6: VI.1 (361); VI.6-20 (365-73); VI. 24-31 (375-78); VI.38-41 (383-85); VI.60-61 (394-95); VI.76-90 (403-13); VI.93 (416)  
Book 7: VII.47-50 (455-58); VII.55 (459); VII.75-77 (471-73); VII.82-87 (476-8)  
Book 8: 8.1 (481); 8.5-6 (484-85); review VIII. 24 (494-95); VIII. 46 (508); VIII.53-54 (511-12); VIII.63-76 (517- 25); VIII.86-90 (529-33); VIII.96-97 (538-40)  
Epilogue: sections 1-3 (549-50); sec. 5 (551-52); sec. 10 (553)

Lesson 5 (M9, T9, M10) – Modern Interpretation of Thucydides  
Jan 26/27/30 “Book 6” and “Book 7” in W. Robert Connor, *Thucydides*, Princeton University Press, 1984, at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491, under Connor; Monoson and Loriaux, “The Illusion of Power and the Disruption of Moral Norms: Thucydides’ Critique of Periclean Policy,” *American Political Science Review* (June 1998), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491, under Monoson; and, **Research Proposal Due.**

### ***Block II: Grand Strategy in the European Tradition***

Lesson 6 (M11, T11, M12) – *Making of Strategy*  
Feb 1/2/3 Ch. 1: Intro; Ch. 5: Hapsburg Spain; Ch 6: England.

Lesson 7 (M13, T13, M14) – *Making of Strategy*  
Feb 7/8/9 Ch. 10: England II; Ch. 12: Germany; Ch. 13: England III.

### ***Block III: Power and the Question of American Decline***

Lesson 8 (M15, T15, M16) – Grand Strategy from the Classics to America  
Feb 13/14/15 **GR Due at Beginning of Class**  
Charles Hill on strategic thinking and world order; selections from Hill, *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* (2010); “Prologue” and ch. 6, “America: A New Idea,” all at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491 .

Lesson 9 (M17, T17, M18) – Foundations: America’s Strategic Thinking and Grand Strategy  
Feb 17/20/21 Primary Sources: *The Federalist*, Hamilton, no. 11; Washington’s Farewell Address, selections; Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, selections, all at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491 .

Lesson 10 (M19, T19, M20) – American Power and American Values  
Feb 27/28/29 *Making of Strategy*, Ch. 14; Huntington, “American Ideals versus American Institutions,” *Political Science Quarterly* (Spring 1982), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Kennan, “Morality and Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1985/86), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491.

Lesson 11 (M21, T21, M22) – Soft Power  
Mar 2/5/6 **Paper 1 Due at Beginning of Class**  
Kagan, “Power and Weakness,” *Policy Review* (June/July 2002), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Nye, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 2004), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Gelb, “Necessity, Choice, and Common Sense,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2009), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Kagan, “The Price of Power,” *Weekly Standard* (Jan 24, 2011), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491.

Lesson 12 (M23, T23, M24) – After Iraq

Mar 8/9/12

Zakaria, “The Future of American Power,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2008), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Bacevich, *Limits of Power* Book Interview, at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Khanna, “Waving Goodbye to Hegemony,” *NYT* (January 27, 2008), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Layne, “the Waning of U.S. Hegemony—Myth or Reality?” *International Security* (Summer 2009), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Nye, “American and Chinese Power after the Financial Crisis,” *Washington Quarterly* (2010), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491.

Lesson 13 (M25, T25, M26) – Empire or Civilization

Mar 14/15/19

Bacevich, *American Empire*, Ch. 7, at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Nexon and Wright, “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate,” *American Political Science Review* (May 2007), at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491; Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization* (U Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 161-214, at K:\DF\DFPS\Courses\PS 491.

#### ***Block IV: Two Approaches to the American Predicament***

Lesson 14 (M27, T27, M28) – *Peace of Illusions*

Mar 21/21/23

Intro. – Ch. 3 (pp. 1-70) and extended Ch. 5 (pp. 88-117).

Lesson 15 (M29, T29, M30) – *Peace of Illusions*

Apr 3/4/5

Ch. 6 – Conclusion (pp. 118-205).

Lesson 16 (M31, T31, M32) – *Liberal Leviathan*

Apr 9/10/11

Preface + Ch. 3-4 (pp. xi-xvi, 79-156).

Lesson 17 (M33, T33, M34) – *Liberal Leviathan*

Apr 13/16/17

Ch. 6 -7 + Conclusion excerpt (pp. 221-332, 353-60).

#### ***Block V: Cadet Papers and Presentations***

Lesson 18 (M35, T35, M36) – paper presentations

Apr 19/20/23

**ALL DRAFT PROJECTS DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**

Lesson 19 (M37, T37, M38) - paper presentations

April 25/26/27

Lesson 20 (M39, T39, M40) – paper presentations

May 1/2/3

**ALL FINAL RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE ! With one exception, cadets presenting on Lesson 20 will have a few extra days to incorporate feedback: See your professor.**