Colloquium on Problems in International Politics:
International Security
POLS BC3118y

Spring 2016
Tues., 2:10-4:00 pm

Prof. Kimberly Marten
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Office hours: Mon. 1:30-2:30pm, Tues. 1-2pm

Course Description
With the perceived decline of US hegemony, the spread of violent non-state actors, the resurgence of the Russian military, and the emergence of cyber attacks, many new issues have arisen in the field of international security studies in recent years. In this course we will begin to explore the debates that have arisen over the causes and consequences of these phenomena. Which problems are the most important, and thus the most deserving of attention in a time when budgets are constrained? Do solutions exist? Or is international conflict inevitable?

Student Learning Outcomes
Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of social science and policy debates about a variety of key issues in international security.
- Demonstrate factual knowledge of selected historical and current cases where these debates are reflected in real-world events.
- Read critically to assess the explanatory value of competing perspectives and theories.
- Apply contending theories to analyze, compare, and evaluate selected historical and current events, in class discussions and written assignments.
- Synthesize facts and arguments across cases in order to reason critically and argue creatively in class discussions and written assignments.
- Find high-quality source material online and in the library, and recognize the hallmarks of expert, objective, vetted analysis.
- Independently design, research, and write a substantial paper of 25-30 pages that explores and takes a stance on a significant debate about an international security issue of the student’s choosing.

Course Requirements
Students are required to attend all course meetings, to participate regularly in class discussions, and to demonstrate through this participation that they have completed the assigned readings before class is held. If a student is not able to attend a particular course meeting, Prof. Marten must be notified in advance if at all possible, and an alternate assignment (for example, a one-page written summary and discussion of assigned course readings) must be completed in lieu of discussion participation for that day.

All written assignments will be submitted on the “assignments” page on Courseworks, which notes time and date of submission. All uploaded files must be in either Word or PDF format. Late assignments will not be accepted, except in the case of a documented family or health emergency (usually requiring a supportive email from the student’s dean).

Twice during the semester, each student will write a short (3- to 5-page) argumentative essay on some aspect of the assigned weekly readings, due before the start of class that week so that the paper is not influenced by our course
discussion. A schedule will be circulated after our first class meeting, so that students may choose the subjects and
dates of their critique papers.

Each student must also choose one day to lead or co-lead the opening 15 minutes of our class discussion, after Prof.
Marten’s introductory remarks. This discussion leadership role will be factored into the course participation grade.

Students will also write a longer research paper of at least 25 double-spaced pages on a topic chosen in consultation
with Prof. Marten, due by noon on Tues. April 26. The process of writing this research paper—not merely the final
result—is the heart of the course, and students should plan to spend significant time throughout the semester
conceptualizing and rethinking the topic and research strategy as the semester progresses. The frustrations of
rigorous research are part of the learning experience of the course. Students will turn in a carefully written and
preliminarily research topic statement (2-3 paragraphs) for this longer paper by midnight on Monday, Feb. 8 (we
will discuss them in class on Feb. 9) and a research proposal (of at least 3 pages, including a revised topic
statement if necessary) with an annotated draft bibliography of at least 15 high-quality sources by 5pm on
Friday, March 11, before the official start of spring break. (Early submissions are most welcome.) Separate
handouts will describe the expectations of each of these assignments.

Senior Capstone Requirement
In addition to the above requirements, all seniors who have designated this colloquium to
fulfill their Senior Capstone requirement will be assigned peer partners, with whom they are expected to consult
throughout the semester about their major paper assignment. Capstone seniors will hold additional meetings in the
instructor’s office (mutually convenient times TBA) where peer partners will discuss and provide constructive
mentoring and feedback on the topic statement and research proposal and methods. A portion of seniors’ class
participation grade will reflect the quality of their work as peer partners.

Capstone seniors will present their final research papers in class on the last day of class, along with a poster
summarizing their research questions, arguments, and findings. A portion of seniors' final research paper grade will
reflect the quality of their presentations. The poster will also be displayed at the Barnard major’s senior end-of-year
party (date TBA). The poster itself will not be graded, but the completion of a poster is required to receive a "Pass" for
the senior requirement, and will factor into Departmental considerations for Senior Project Distinction.

Evaluation
Participation: 20%
Two short papers: 10% each (20% total)
Initial topic statement for longer paper: 5%
Research proposal (and revised topic statement, if necessary): 10%
Annotated bibliography: 5%
Finished 25- to 30-page paper: 40%

Barnard Honor Code
All assignments in this class are to be completed in accordance with the Barnard Honor Code, with expectations
outlined in the following paragraph. Any student who violates the Honor Code will face dean’s discipline at her or
his home college, and will earn a failing grade in the course.

Students affirm that all work turned in is their own, and that they have fully and accurately cited every written
source, including web-based sources and unpublished sources (such as prior student papers), used in their writing.
Students are encouraged to consult with each other to get feedback as they are writing their major research papers
and the intermediary assignments associated with the research papers, but no collaboration is allowed when writing
the short papers on the assigned readings. All students receive in-depth briefings on plagiarism and proper citation
techniques as part of their introductory days at Barnard and Columbia; any student who has any remaining questions
about proper citation technique or about how to avoid plagiarism should discuss these questions and concerns with
Prof. Marten before turning in the assignment in question.
**Required Readings**

All required books have been put on reserve at the Barnard library, and are available for purchase at Bookculture, 536 W. 112th Street.


All remaining book chapters will be placed on our Courseworks website under “Files and Resources.” All journal articles are accessible for free by signing in to the Columbia Library Web.

**Class Schedule**


**Jan. 26.**  How do political scientists study war and violence?


**Feb. 2.**  The U.S. role in the world: unipolar dominance or hegemonic decline, and why it matters


**Feb. 9.**  Research methods session.  ATTENDANCE AT THIS CLASS IS ABSOLUTELY REQUIRED.

[Please note: topic statements are due at midnight on Monday Feb. 8, so that we can discuss them in today’s class.]

**Please do the reading before writing up your topic statement**, so that your work benefits from the advice in the reading. Some students have found this reading’s suggestion to focus on “what” questions confusing. Please instead focus your research statement on a “why” or “what effect” question—on independent and dependent variables, operationalization, case selection, and situating your own research question within a broader scholarly debate about cause and effect.


**Feb. 16.**  The rise of China: what does it mean, is there a threat, and if so, who threatens whom?


Feb. 23. Nuclear proliferation: does it matter?

Mar. 1. The case of North Korea.

Mar. 8. Russia and Ukraine.

***Please note: research proposal and annotated bibliography are due by 5pm on Friday, March 11. Early submissions are most welcome!***

Mar. 15. Spring break. No class meeting.

Mar. 22. Warlords: challenge to state sovereignty?

Mar. 29. Why do individuals choose to commit acts of political violence?

Apr. 5. International terrorism: the Islamic State.

Apr. 12. Cyber war: similar or different from conventional war and nukes?

Apr. 19. No class meeting: informal meetings with Prof. Marten in her office.
Students should be focusing on their final papers, so no additional reading is required this week. Instead, Prof. Marten will be available in her office during class hours.
Apr. 26. Senior Capstone research presentations.
***Please note: final papers due today before the start of class.***