



Spring 2024

IAFF 6186.19

Instructor: Nicholas Anderson

Great Power Competition

Syllabus

Course Details

Modality: In-Person

Course Description & Goals

This MA seminar course examines the past, present, and future of how the most powerful states in the international system—the great powers—compete and cooperate in international relations. It begins by introducing different ways of defining and measuring relative power, and covers the key theoretical models of great power competition. It then examines various facets of great power competition, including its relationship to geography, technology, economics, ideology, status, nuclear weapons, and the global “periphery.” The course also examines the foreign and national security policies of individual great powers in detail, including those of the United States, the People’s Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and a number of near- or potential-great powers, such as India, Japan, and European states. The course closes by looking forward to some emerging present and future challenges in great power competition. Through this course, students will gain a thorough understanding of how the great powers protect their security and pursue their interests in international politics.

Learning Outcomes & Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the past two centuries of great power politics, as well as a firm grasp of the key theoretical models of great power competition.
- Identify the great powers and have a thorough understanding of their capabilities and their varied approaches to great power competition.
- Critically engage the richest and most rigorous academic research on great power politics.
- Critically engage the most important contemporary policy debates on great power competition.
- Write for a policy audience.

Methods of Instruction

This course uses the following methods of instruction:

- **Readings:** Readings are assigned for each class, including the first and final sessions.
- **Lectures:** While this is a discussion-based seminar course, the sessions will be interspersed with lecture material from the professor.
- **Discussion:** Student-led discussion will comprise the majority of class time each week.
- **Writing assignments:** There are three written assignments—two policy memos and a final policy paper.

Credit Hour Policy

In this 3-credit graduate course, students are expected to work for approximately 450 minutes per week. This includes about 100 minutes of lecture and discussion time in class, and about 350 minutes (nearly 6 hours) on reading, note taking, writing assignments, and review. In total, you are expected to work for at least 112.5 hours over the duration of this 15-week semester.

Prerequisites

Academic

There are no academic prerequisites for this course.

Technological

As a graduate student, it is necessary to possess baseline technology skills in order to participate fully in the course. Please consult the [GW Online website](#) for further information about recommended configurations and support. If you have questions or problems with technology for this course, please consult the Technology Help link in the left navigation menu in our course in Blackboard.

You should be able to:

- Use a personal computer and its peripherals.
- Use word processing and other productivity software.
- Access course materials on Blackboard and the [GW Library](#) website.
- Use the webcam and microphone on your device (for periodic virtual office hours).
- Seek technology help by contacting [GW Information Technology](#) (202-994-4948).

Course Materials & Requirements

There is just one required text for purchase for this course:

- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2014) (any edition is fine).

Feedback

I would appreciate your feedback throughout the semester on how the course is going. Please feel free to email me, come to my office hours, or provide anonymous feedback at the following link:

Grading & Assessment

This course uses a percent-based grading schema, as shown below.

<i>Assignment Type</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Total % of Final Grade</i>
Attendance and Participation			20%
Policy Memo #1	500 words	Session 6 (22 Feb.)	20%
Policy Memo #2	500 words	Session 10 (28 March)	20%
Policy Paper	2,000 words	2 May	40%
			<i>Total Percent: 100%</i>

The grading scale below, determines your final letter grade.

Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	Low Pass	Fail
A 94%-100%	B+ 87%-89%	B- 80%-83%	C 74%-76%	F Under 70%
A- 90%-93%	B 84%-86%	C+ 77%-79%	C- 70%-73%	

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Attendance and Participation (20%):** This is a seminar, not a lecture course. Student participation is essential. Students are expected to attend all sessions, arrive on time, have read all of the readings prior to each session, and be prepared to discuss the issues under consideration for that session. If—for any reason—active, verbal, and regular participation is a problem for you, please contact the instructor directly and we will can work out alternatives.
- **Policy Memo #1 (20%), Due Session 6 (22 Feb.) @ 7:10 PM:** Write a short, persuasive policy memo responding to, and taking a position on, a key question of policy concern regarding great power competition. Students will choose from the following questions:
 1. Is “great power competition” the right concept to capture contemporary great power politics? Why or why not?
 2. What is the best single measure of national power? Defend your choice against at least one viable alternative.
 3. What is the contemporary structure of the international system—unipolar, bipolar, multipolar, or something else? Why does this matter?
 4. What are the current hierarchy and dynamics of power in the international system? Why does this matter?

Your paper should (i) directly respond to the prompt; (ii) take a clear position on the policy question; (iii) support your position with logical argumentation and/or evidence; and (iv) discuss the policy implications of your chosen position. The best answers will do all of this while incorporating ideas from multiple sessions. Your paper should be presented in a professional manner, written in clear and concise prose, and be free of typos and other errors.

The paper should be double spaced and **no more** than 500 words in length. Use standard (12-point) font and standard (1-inch) margins. No references or citations are necessary. Please submit your paper anonymized (GWID Number only, filename: "G#####_Memo1") and in Microsoft Word format via Blackboard (under "Assignments").

- **Policy Memo #2 (20%), Due Session 10 (28 March) @ 7:10 PM:** Write a short, persuasive policy memo responding to, and taking a position on, a key question of policy concern regarding great power competition. Students will choose from the following questions:

1. Should the U.S. form a "league of democracies" for great power competition? Why or why not?
2. To what extent should the U.S./China decouple from China/the U.S. economically? Why?
3. Has the advent of nuclear weapons technology revolutionized great power politics? Why or why not?
4. What is one ally the U.S./China/Russia would be better off without, and why? What is one potential ally the U.S./China/Russia would be better off with, and why?

Your paper should (i) directly respond to the prompt; (ii) take a clear position on the policy question; (iii) support your position with logical argumentation and/or evidence; and (iv) discuss the policy implications of your chosen position. The best answers will do all of this while incorporating ideas from multiple sessions. Your paper should be presented in a professional manner, written in clear and concise prose, and be free of typos and other errors.

The paper should be double spaced and **no more** than 500 words in length. Use standard (12-point) font and standard (1-inch) margins. No references or citations are necessary. Please submit your paper anonymized (GWID Number only, filename: "G#####_Memo2") and in Microsoft Word format via Blackboard.

- **Policy Paper (40%), Due Thursday, 2 May @ 11:59:59 PM:** Write a policy paper that analyzes a key question of policy concern regarding great power competition. Students will choose from the following questions and topics:

1. Student choice: Research and write a paper on a topic of your choice related to great power competition that has clear policy relevance. It **must** be cleared in advance by the instructor.
2. How has China's economic and military rise impacted U.S.-China, U.S.-Russia, and/or Russia-China relations? Discuss the implications of your answers for great power competition.
3. How does geography influence U.S.-China, U.S.-Russia, and/or Russia-China relations? Discuss the implications of your answers for great power competition.
4. How does domestic political regime type influence U.S.-China, U.S.-Russia, and/or Russia-China relations? Discuss the implications of your answers for great power competition.
5. How will China's nuclear modernization and growing arsenal impact its relations with Russia and/or the U.S.? Discuss the implications of your answer for great power competition.
6. What grand strategy should the United States pursue in this new era of great power competition and why? Discuss the implications of your answer for great power competition.
7. What factor(s) best explain(s) China **or** Russia's shift to a more aggressive foreign policy in recent years? Support your argument with evidence, and consider other, plausible alternative arguments.
8. Assess the nature of the threats posed **by** the U.S. **to** either China or Russia. Provide policy recommendations for how to respond to these threats.

9. Which state is most likely to join the great power “club” in the next twenty years, and why? How might this influence great power competition?

Your paper should (i) directly respond to the prompt; (ii) take a clear position on the policy question; (iii) support your position with logical argumentation and evidence; (iv) discuss the policy implications of your chosen position; and, most importantly, (v) draw on a wide variety of course materials. Your paper should be presented in a professional manner, written in clear and concise prose, and be free of typos and other errors.

The paper must be double spaced and **no more than 2,000 words** in length (not including citations). Use standard (12-point) font and standard (1-inch) margins. Chicago-style footnotes for citations and references is preferred. Please do not use endnotes. No bibliography is necessary. Please reference the [Chicago Manual of Style Citation Quick Guide](#) if needed. Please submit your paper anonymized (GWID Number only, filename: “G#####_Final”) and in Microsoft Word format via Blackboard.

Course Calendar & Readings

Part I: Introduction

Session 1 (18 Jan.): Introduction: The Modern History of Great Power Competition

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: Great Power Competition.
- Are we witnessing a return of great-power competition?
- What lessons do the history of the late 19th and 20th centuries hold for contemporary great-power competition? What is different? What is similar?
- Is “great power competition” the right concept to capture today’s reality? Why or why not?

Required Readings (90 pages):

- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2014), pp. 172-209, 213-224, 225-230, 238-264.
- Michael J. Mazarr, “This is Not a Great-Power Competition: Why the Term Doesn’t Capture Today’s Reality,” *Foreign Affairs* (29 May 2019) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).

Session 2 (25 Jan.): Defining and Measuring Power: Who are the Great Powers?

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: power; power as resources; power as outcomes; great power; superpower; net power; purchasing power parity (PPP).
- Should we think of power as a resource of actors or an outcome between actors?
- What is the difference between absolute and relative power? Which should we care about?
- What is a great power? Try to define the concept in your own words.
- Who are the great powers today? What are your criteria for inclusion and exclusion?
- What are some of the ways of measuring national power? Their strengths and weaknesses?

- When comparing great powers, should GDP and military expenditure be considered at market exchange rates or based on purchasing power parity (PPP)?

Required Readings (100 pages):

- Jack Levy, *War and the Modern Great Power System: 1495-1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), pp. 8-19, **skim** 28-47 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Gregory F. Treverton and Seth G. Jones, “Measuring National Power,” *RAND Conference Proceedings* (2005), **only** pp. 1-7 ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- Michael Beckley, “The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters,” *International Security*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Fall 2018), pp. 7-44 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Michael Kofman and Richard Connolly, “Why Russian Military Expenditure is Much Higher Than Commonly Understood (As is China’s),” *War on the Rocks* (16 December 2019) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 1-9, 14-27 ([GWU library link](#)).
- **Optional/skim:** Michael J. Mazarr, “What Makes a Power Great: The Real Drivers of Rise and Fall,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 4 (July/August 2022), pp. 55-63 ([GWU library link](#)).
- **Optional/skim:** Mark Souva, “Material Military Power: A Country-Year Measure of Military Power, 1865-2019,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 60, No. 6 (November 2023), pp. 1002-1009 ([GWU library link](#)).

Part II: Models of Great Power Competition

Session 3 (1 Feb.): Polarity and the Balance of Power

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: anarchy; security-seeking; balance of power; internal balancing; external balancing; hegemon(y); multipolarity; bipolarity; unipolarity; bandwagoning.
- What are the core assumptions of balance of power theory?
- Is multipolarity or bipolarity more peaceful? Why?
- Is unipolarity peaceful? Why or why not?
- Why has there been so little balancing against the United States since 1990?
- What is the current structure of the international system—unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar? What does this imply for great power competition?

Required Readings (142 pages):

- Jack Levy, “What do Great Powers Balance Against and When?” in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michael Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 29-51 (On Blackboard).
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2014), 334-359 (Ch. 9) (On Blackboard).

- William C. Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 5-41 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Nuno P. Monteiro, “Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011/12), pp. 9-40 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Jennifer Lind and Daryl G. Press, “Reality Check: American Power in an Age of Constraints,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (March/April 2020), pp. 41-48 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, “The Myth of Multipolarity: American Power’s Staying Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (May/June 2023), pp. 76-91 ([GWU library link](#)).
 - **Optional (responses):** Joshua Shifrinson, et al., “The Long Unipolar Moment?” *Foreign Affairs* (17 October 2023) ([External link](#)).

Session 4 (8 Feb.): The Dynamics of Power: Rise and Decline

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: hegemonic war; hierarchy; hierarchy of prestige; power transition theory; stable vs. unstable system; status-quo/dominant state; revisionist/subordinate state; preventive war (vs. preemptive war); relative decline; retrenchment.
- Do power transitions make war more likely? Why or why not?
- What are the basic steps that precede the outbreak of a hegemonic war?
- Is bipolarity peaceful according to the power transition tradition? How does this compare to the balance of power tradition?
- What is the current hierarchy of power in the international system? What does this imply for great power competition?
- Will China’s rise and America’s relative decline lead to war? How likely do you think this outcome is? And why?
- Should the United States retrench its global military commitments given its relative decline?

Required Readings (132 pages):

- Robert Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 9-39 (On Blackboard).
- Jack S. Levy, “Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China,” in Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng, eds., *China’s Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 11-33 ([GWU Library link](#)).
- Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, “Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment,” *International Security* (Spring 2011), pp. 7-44 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Michael Beckley, “The Peril of Peaking Powers: Economic Slowdowns and Implications for China’s Next Decade,” *International Security*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Summer 2023), pp. 7-46 ([GWU library link](#)).

Part III: Aspects of Great Power Competition

Session 5 (15 Feb.): Geography, Technology, and Great Power Competition

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: offense-defense balance; security dilemma; Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD); AirSea Battle; amphibious invasion; naval blockade; strategic bombing campaign.
- What is the offense-defense balance and how does it relate to likelihood of war?
- What are some of the factors that influence the offense-defense balance?
- What are some key contemporary technologies of relevance for the offense-defense balance in great power competition?
- What kinds of geographies favor the offense/defense? What kinds of technologies?
- How does Asia's geography influence contemporary great power competition? What about Europe's geography?
- How likely is China to try to invade Taiwan in the coming 10 years? Beyond? And why?
- How important is Taiwan, militarily? What potential military advantages does it offer to China?

Required Readings (121 pages):

- Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufman, "What is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?" *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring 1998), only pp. 44-51, 60-68 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Keir A. Lieber, "Grasping the Technological Peace: The Offense-Defense Balance and International Security," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), pp. 71-104 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Jennifer Lind, "Geography and the Security Dilemma in Asia" in Saadia Pekkanen, John Ravenhill, and Rosemary Foot, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 719-736 (On Blackboard).
- Michael Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia: How China's Neighbors Can Check Chinese Naval Expansion," *International Security*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Fall 2017), pp. 78-90, skim 91-108, 108-119 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Brendan Rittenhouse Green and Caitlin Talmadge, "The Consequences of Conquest: Indo-Pacific Power Hinges on Taiwan," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 4 (July/August 2022), pp. 97-106 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Optional/skim: Oriana Skylar Mastro, "The Taiwan Temptation: Why Beijing Might Resort to Force," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (July/August 2021), pp. 58-67 ([GWU library link](#)).

Session 6 (22 Feb.): Ideology, Regime Type, and Great Power Competition (*Policy Memo #1 Due*)

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: ideology; regime type; democratic peace; democratic solidarity; personalist dictatorship.
- How important are the differences in domestic political regimes to contemporary great power competition? Why?
- Should the United States/China/Russia seek out allies and partners on the basis of their domestic political regime type? Why or why not?
- Is the competition between the U.S. and China likely to look like the U.S.-Soviet Cold War? Why or why not?
- What are personalist dictatorships? What are some of their foreign policy tendencies? What does this imply for contemporary great power competition?
- In what ways are the autocratic tendencies of China and Russia similar? In what ways are they different?

Required Readings (90 pages):

- Andrea Kendall-Taylor, Erica Frantz, and Joseph Wright, “The New Dictators: Why Personalism Rules,” *Foreign Affairs* (26 September 2016) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- Hal Brands and Charles Edel, “A Grand Strategy of Democratic Solidarity,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring 2021), pp. 29-47 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Thomas Pepinski and Jessica C. Weiss, “The Clash of Systems? Washington Should Avoid Ideological Competition with Beijing,” *Foreign Affairs* (11 June 2021) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- Thomas J. Christensen, “There Will Not Be a New Cold War: The Limits of U.S.-Chinese Competition,” *Foreign Affairs* (24 March 2021) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- Mark L. Haas, “The Ideology Barriers to Anti-China Coalitions,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2022), pp. 113-132 ([GWU library link](#)).

Session 7 (29 Feb.): Economics, Status-Seeking, and Great Power Competition**Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:**

- Key Concepts: economic interdependence theory; international trade; international finance; foreign debt; immigration; energy security; trade war; globalization; the “decouple debate”; chained globalization; status; social identity theory; performative war; demonstration effects.
- What does economic interdependence theory argue? How well do you think it holds up against the evidence?
- On balance, does globalization make great powers more peaceful or more vulnerable?
- What kinds of measures do great powers take to ensure their energy security? Why? Beyond oil, what other resources might prompt similar behavior today or in the future?
- What are some of the strategies great powers use to increase their status?
- How have honor concerns influenced the behavior of great powers, particularly the U.S.?
- Why did the United States invade Iraq in 2003?
- How important is status-seeking to Chinese foreign policy? To Russian foreign Policy? How about American?

Required Readings (154 pages):

- Henry Farrell and Abraham L. Newman, “Chained to Globalization: Why It’s Too Late to Decouple,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (January/February 2020), pp. 70-80 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Rosemary A. Kelanic, “The Petroleum Paradox: Oil, Coercive Vulnerability, and Great Power Behavior,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2016), pp. 181-213 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, “Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy,” *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Spring 2010), pp. 63-95 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Allan Dafoe and Devin Caughey, “Honor and War: Southern U.S. Presidents and the Effects of Concern for Reputation,” *World Politics*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (April 2016), pp. 341-381 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Ahsan I. Butt, “Why did the United States Invade Iraq in 2003?” *Security Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2019), pp. 250-285 ([GWU library link](#)).

Session 8 (7 March): Nuclear Weapons and Great Power Competition

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: Assured retaliation; no-first use; escalate-to-deescalate.
- What are the expected consequences of the theory of the nuclear revolution? How well do they line up with the evidence?
- How do nuclear weapons influence contemporary great power competition?
- What is the key driving force behind Russia's nuclear strategy?
- What is China's contemporary nuclear posture and how is it likely to change?
- How will China's growing nuclear arsenal influence great power competition?

Required Readings (146 pages):

- Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 1-8, 23-45 (On Blackboard).
- Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), pp. 10-30 (Ch. 1) (On Blackboard).
- Fiona Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, "Assuring Assured Retaliation: China's Nuclear Posture and U.S.-China Strategic Stability," *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Fall 2015), pp. 7-50 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, "Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2021), pp. 3-35 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., "The New Nuclear Age: How China's Growing Nuclear Arsenal Threatens Deterrence," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (May/June 2022), pp. 92-97 ([GWU library link](#)).
- M. Taylor Fravel, Henrik Stålhane Hiim, and Magnus Langset Trøan, "China's Misunderstood Nuclear Expansion," *Foreign Affairs* (10 November 2023) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).

Reminder (14 March) No Class (Spring Break)**Session 9 (21 March): Great Power Competition on the Periphery: Intervention, Regime Change, & Small States****Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:**

- Key Concepts: military intervention; electoral intervention; foreign-imposed regime change; subversion.
- What are some of the varied ways the great powers try to influence the policies of smaller states?
- What are some of the ways great powers intervene in foreign elections? Under what conditions are they more/less likely to be successful?
- Do you find the U.S.'s long history of intervening in foreign elections surprising? Why or why not?
- What are the different kinds of foreign-imposed regime change?
- Why does foreign-imposed regime change rarely improve relations between states?
- Should the United States continue to rely on foreign-imposed regime change as a foreign policy tool?
- The U.S. has defense commitments with 67 countries. Should it seek out more alliances? Or shed existing alliances? Why? And who should stay, who should go, and who might be added?
- Are states in East Asia balancing against a rising China? Why or why not?

Required Readings (93 pages):

- Dov H. Levin, "Partisan Electoral Interventions by the Great Powers: Introducing the PEIG Dataset," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2019), **only** pp. 88-91, 94-101 (On Blackboard).
 - Look over the list of interventions in Online Appendix B (attached).
- Alexander B. Downes and Lindsay A. O'Rourke, "You Can't Always Get What You Want: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Seldom Improves Interstate Relations," *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Fall 2016), **only** pp. 43-74, 85-89 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Jill Kastner and William C. Wohlforth, "A Measure Short of War: The Return of Great-Power Subversion," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (July/August 2021), pp. 118-131 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Patricia L. Sullivan and Michael T. Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945-2003," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46, No. 5 (2009), pp. 707-716 ([GWU library link](#)).
- David C. Kang, "Still Getting Asia Wrong: No 'Contain China' Coalition Exists," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2022), pp. 79-98 ([GWU library link](#)).
- **Optional/skim:** Vanessa Meier et al., "External Support in Armed Conflicts: Introducing the UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD), 1975-2017," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2023), pp. 545-552 ([GWU library link](#)).

Part IV: Contemporary Great Power Competition

Session 10 (28 March): American Primacy and Relative Decline (*Policy Memo #2 Due*)

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: global commons; command of the commons; contested zones; grand strategy; neoisolationism; offshore balancing; selective engagement; primacy; liberal international order; polarization.
- Is the U.S. a declining great power? Why or why not?
- What is command of the commons? Why does Posen argue it is so important to U.S. power?
- Posen's analysis is now two decades old. Does it still hold? Is the U.S. still in command of the commons?
- What are the four basic grand strategies laid out by Mearsheimer? Which do you think the U.S. adheres to currently? Which should it adhere to?
- What were the impacts of the Trump administration's tough approach taken with U.S. allies and partners?
- What changes have you seen in the Biden Administration's foreign policy as compared to the Trump Administration? What similarities?

Required Readings (92 pages):

- Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Summer 2003), pp. 5-46 ([GWU library link](#)).
- John J. Mearsheimer, "Imperial by Design," *The National Interest*, No. 111 (January/February 2011), **only** pp. 18-19 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Robert E. Kelly and Paul Poast, "The Allies Are Alright: Why America Can Get Away With Bullying Its Friends," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (March/April 2022), pp. 131-143 ([GWU library link](#)).

- G. John Ikenberry, “Why American Power Endures: The U.S.-Led Order Isn’t in Decline,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 6 (November/December 2022), pp. 56-73 ([GWU library link](#)).
- **Skim:** Joseph R. Biden, Jr., *National Security Strategy* (Washington: The White House, October 2022), **only** pp. 6-13, 23-31 ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).

Session 11 (4 April): The Rise of China

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: regional hegemon; the “Chinese Dream”/“national rejuvenation”; Belt-and-Road Initiative; debt-trap diplomacy.
- What are some basic strategies of rising great powers and is China exhibiting these behaviors?
- Should we expect China to behave differently in its regional rise from other great powers in the past, such as the U.S., Japan, and the Soviet Union? Why or why not?
- What explains the patterns of Chinese military coercion in its maritime disputes in the South China Sea?
- Is China looking to export its domestic political regime type, and “make the world safe for autocracy,” much like the U.S. aims to spread liberal democracy?
- What are the basic components of China’s grand strategy under Xi Jinping?
- Did you find anything interesting or surprising in Wang’s characterization of how China’s leaders see the U.S. and its allies?
- Should the U.S. reconsider its security commitments to Taiwan in order to improve relations with China? Why or why not?
- Will China eventually surpass the United States to become the world’s most powerful state? Why or why not? And if so, when?
- What are some areas in which U.S. China cooperation is possible, even likely? What are some areas in which competition is much more likely?
- How successful do you think China’s economic statecraft has been in recent years? Why?

Required Readings (86 pages):

- Jennifer Lind, “Life in China’s Asia: What Regional Hegemony Would Look Like,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 2 (March/April 2018), pp. 71-82 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Jessica Chen Weiss, “A World Safe for Autocracy? China’s Rise and the Future of Global Politics,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (July/August 2019), pp. 92-108 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Avery Goldstein, “China’s Grand Strategy Under Xi Jinping: Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance,” *International Security*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Summer 2020), pp. 164-201 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Charles L. Glaser, “Washington is Avoiding the Tough Questions on Taiwan and China: The Case for Reconsidering U.S. Commitments in East Asia,” *Foreign Affairs* (28 April 2021) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- Wang Jisi, “The Plot Against China? How Beijing Sees the New Washington Consensus,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (July/August 2021), pp. 48-57 ([GWU library link](#)).
- **Optional/skim:** Audrye Wong, “How Not to Win Allies and Influence Geopolitics: China’s Self-Defeating Economic Statecraft,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (May/June 2021), pp. 44-53 ([GWU library link](#)).

Session 12 (11 April): Is Russia Still Great?

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: NATO expansion.
- Why does Mearsheimer argue that the Ukraine crisis is “the West’s fault”? Do you agree?
- What does research on autocratic leadership transitions tell us about what might happen once Vladimir Putin exits Russia’s leadership?
- How important do you think Russia’s domestic political regime is to its foreign policy behavior? Would most Russian leaders behave similarly, or differently, within this system?
- How important do you think Vladimir Putin is to Russia’s foreign policy behavior? Would another Russian leader in his position behave similarly, or differently?
- Do you agree with Kofman and Kendall-Taylor that Russian decline is dangerous? Why or why not?
- What are some ways in which the War in Ukraine might end? What does each mean for contemporary great power competition?

Required Readings (86 pages):

- John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 5 (September/October 2014), pp. 77-89 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz, “After Putin: Lessons from Autocratic Leadership Transitions,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2022), pp. 79-96 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Daniel Treisman, “Putin Unbound: How Repression at Home Presaged Belligerence Abroad,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (May/June 2022), pp. 116-127 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Fiona Hill and Angela Stent, “The World Putin Wants: How Distortions About the Past Feed Delusions About the Future,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (September/October 2022), pp. 108-122 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Michael Kofman, “Russia’s Dangerous Decline: Moscow Won’t Go Down Without a Fight,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 6 (November/December 2022), pp. 22-35 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Liana Fix and Michael Kimmage, “Putin’s Last Stand: The Promise and Perils of Russian Defeat,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (January/February 2023), pp. 8-21 ([GWU library link](#)).

Session 13 (18 April): The Almost-Great: India, Japan, and Europe

Key Concepts & Discussion Questions:

- Key Concepts: India’s non-aligned tradition; Article IX of Japan’s constitution; NATO Article V; force structure; readiness; sustainability; cheap/free-riding; strategic autonomy.
- Is India a great power? Will it be a great power? Why or why not? And if so, when?
- Is Japan a great power? Will it be a great power? Why or why not? And if so, when?
- Is there any great powers in Western or Central Europe? Why or why not?
- Should we think of the EU as a great power? Why or why not? Could it become one in the future? What would it take?
- Could Europe defend itself if the NATO were disbanded and the U.S. withdrew its forces from the region?

- Should the U.S. maintain its commitment to European defense and remain forward-deployed in the region? Why or why not?

Required Readings (81 pages):

- Alyssa Ayres, "Will India Start Acting Like a Global Power?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 6 (November/December 2017), pp. 83-92 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Jennifer Lind, "Japan Steps Up: How Asia's Rising Threats Convinced Tokyo to Abandon its Defense Taboos," *Foreign Affairs* (23 December 2022) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- "Executive Summary," in Douglas Barrie, Ben Barry, Lucie Beraud-Sudreau, Henry Boyd, Nick Childs, and Bastian Giegerich, *Defending Europe: Scenario-Based Capability Requirements for NATO's European Members* (London: The International Institute, April 2019), only p. 3 ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).
- Barry R. Posen, "Europe Can Defend Itself," *Survival*, Vol. 62, No. 6 (December 2020-January 2021), pp. 7-34 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Hugo Meijer and Stephen G. Brooks, "Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for its Security if the United States Pulls Back," *International Security*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Spring 2021), pp. 7-43 ([GWU library link](#)).

Part V: The Future of Great Power Competition

Session 14 (25 April): The Future of Great Power Competition: Challenges to Come

Discussion Questions:

- In what ways are demographics important to great power competition? How are they expected to play a role in the years ahead?
- How has COVID-19 impacted great power competition? Do you think the next global pandemic will play out similarly, or differently, as it relates to power politics?
- How could U.S.-China competition be good for the global environment? How could it be bad?
- To what extent does the U.S.-China rivalry contribute to anti-Asian racism in the U.S.? What might help mitigate this problem?

Required Readings (47 pages):

- Nicholas Eberstadt, "With Great Demographics Comes Great Power: Why Population Will Drive Geopolitics," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (July/August 2019), pp. 146-157 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Skim: Thomas Wright, "Ch. 17: COVID-19's Impact on Great-Power Competition," in Hal Brands and Francis J. Gavin, eds., *COVID-19 and World Order: The Future of Conflict, Competition, and Cooperation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), pp. 316-330 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Jeff D. Colgan and Nicholas L. Miller, "The Rewards of Rivalry: U.S.-Chinese Competition Can Spur Climate Progress," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 101, No. 6 (November/December 2022), pp. 108-119 ([GWU library link](#)).
- Russel Jeung and Jessica J. Lee, "Rivalry Without Racism: Can American Compete with China and Avoid Fueling Anti-Asian Hate?" *Foreign Affairs* (28 July 2021) ([External link](#) or on Blackboard).

2 May, 11:59:59 PM: Policy Paper Due

Policies

Incomplete Grades

At the option of the instructor, an Incomplete may be given for a course if a student, for reasons beyond the student's control, is unable to complete the work of the course, and if the instructor is informed of, and approves, such reasons before the date when grades must be reported. An Incomplete can only be granted if the student's prior performance and class attendance in the course have been satisfactory. Any failure to complete the work of a course that is not satisfactorily explained to the instructor before the date when grades must be turned in will be graded F, Failure.

If acceptable reasons are later presented to the instructor, the instructor may initiate a grade change to the symbol I, Incomplete. The work must be completed within the designated time period agreed upon by the instructor, student, and school, but no more than one calendar year from the end of the semester in which the course was taken. To record the exact expectations, conditions, and deadlines of the Incomplete please use the Elliott School's Incomplete Grade Contract:

[Incomplete Grade Contract for Graduate Courses](#)

The completed and signed contract is to be submitted to the Academic Affairs and Student Services Office. All students who receive an Incomplete must maintain active student status during the subsequent semester(s) in which the work of the course is being completed. If not registered in other classes during this period, the student must register for continuous enrollment status. For more information regarding Incompletes please review the relevant sections in the University Bulletin:

<http://bulletin.gwu.edu/university-regulations/#graduatetext>

Instructor Response Time

I will usually respond to emails within 24 hours, often considerably faster. On weekends, I may be somewhat slower. If you haven't heard back from me via email within 24 hours, please feel free to follow up.

I will return graded assignments within one week.

Statement on Inclusive Teaching

In support of inclusive excellence, the Elliott School is committed to supporting our faculty and students in exercising inclusive teaching throughout our curriculum. All faculty members are expected to practice inclusive teaching as outlined in ESIA inclusive teaching statement (<https://elliott.gwu.edu/statement-inclusive-teaching>) and to include a stated commitment in the syllabus. Resources for inclusive teaching can be found here: <https://elliott.gwu.edu/inclusive-teaching-resources>.

Differences in time Zone

All the times in this course correspond to the U.S. Eastern Time zone (e.g., Washington, DC). It is your responsibility to convert these times to the time zone of your location so that you can meet this course's deadlines.

Inclement Weather

In-person classes may be held online in case of inclement weather. Faculty will inform students of relevant instructional continuity plans.

Late Work

Late submissions of assignments will be deducted one letter gradient (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for each day they are late. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis for illnesses, family emergencies, religious observances, and the like. If you are seeking an extension for one of these reasons, please give me as much advance notice as is possible. Extensions will rarely be granted on or in the day or two leading up to a due date, except under extraordinary circumstances.

GW Acceptable Use for Computing Systems and Services

All members of the George Washington University must read and comply with the Acceptable Use Policy when accessing and using computing systems and services, including email and Blackboard. Please read [the Acceptable Use Policy](#) to familiarize yourself with how GW information systems are to be used ethically.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. Note that, in accordance with [university guidelines](#), using generative artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT to write any part of any assignment is a violation of academic integrity.

Please review GW's policy on academic integrity, located at: <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>. All graded work must be completed in accordance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. For more information, see [Promoting Academic Integrity](#).

Sharing of Course Content

Unauthorized downloading, distributing, or sharing of any part of a recorded lecture or course materials, as well as using provided information for purposes other than the student's own learning may be deemed a violation of GW's Student Conduct Code.

Use of Student Work (FERPA)

The professor will use academic work that you complete during this semester for educational purposes in this course during this semester. Your registration and continued enrollment constitute your consent.

Copyright Policy Statement

Materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection under Title 17 of the United States Code. Under certain Fair Use circumstances specified by law, copies may be made for private study, scholarship, or research. Electronic copies should not be shared with unauthorized users. If a user fails to comply

with Fair Use restrictions, he/she may be liable for copyright infringement. For more information, including Fair Use guidelines, see [Libraries and Academic Innovations Copyright page](#).

Bias-Related Reporting

At the George Washington University, we believe that diversity and inclusion are crucial to an educational institution's pursuit of excellence in learning, research, and service. Acts of bias, hate, or discrimination are anathema to the university's commitment to educating citizen leaders equipped to thrive and to serve in our increasingly diverse and global society. We strongly encourage students to [report possible bias incidents](#). For additional information, follow this link: <https://diversity.gwu.edu/bias-incident-response>.

Disability Support Services & Accessibility

If you may need disability accommodations based on the potential impact of a disability, please register with Disability Support Services (DSS) at: <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>. If you have questions about disability accommodations, contact DSS at 202-994-8250 or dss@gwu.edu or visit them in person in Rome Hall, Suite 102.

For information about how the course technology is accessible to all learners, see the following resources:

[Blackboard accessibility](#)

[Kaltura \(video platform\) accessibility](#)

[Voicethread accessibility](#)

[Microsoft Office accessibility](#)

[Adobe accessibility](#)

Religious Observances

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: <https://registrar.gwu.edu/university-policies#holidays>.

Mental Health Services

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information call 202-994-5300 or see: <https://healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services>.

Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures

The University has asked all faculty to inform students of these procedures, prepared by the GW Office of Public Safety and Emergency Management in collaboration with the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

To Report an Emergency or Suspicious Activity

Call the University Police Department at 202-994-6111 (Foggy Bottom) or 202-242-6111 (Mount Vernon).

Shelter in Place – General Guidance

Although it is unlikely that we will ever need to shelter in place, it is helpful to know what to do just in case. No matter where you are, the basic steps of shelter in place will generally remain the same.

- If you are inside, stay where you are unless the building you are in is affected. If it is affected, you should evacuate. If you are outdoors, proceed into the closest building or follow instructions from emergency personnel on the scene.
- Locate an interior room to shelter inside. If possible, it should be above ground level and have the fewest number of windows. If sheltering in a room with windows, move away from the windows. If there is a large group of people inside a particular building, several rooms may be necessary.
- Shut and lock all windows (for a tighter seal) and close exterior doors.
- Turn off air conditioners, heaters, and fans. Close vents to ventilation systems as you are able. (University staff will turn off ventilation systems as quickly as possible).
- Make a list of the people with you and ask someone to call the list in to UPD so they know where you are sheltering and who is with you. If only students are present, one of the students should call in the list.
- Await further instructions. If possible, visit [GW Campus Advisories](#) for incident updates or call the GW Information Line 202-994-5050.
- Make yourself comfortable and look after one other. You will get word as soon as it is safe to come out.

Evacuation

An evacuation will be considered if the building we are in is affected or we must move to a location of greater safety. We will always evacuate if the fire alarm sounds. In the event of an evacuation, please gather your personal belongings quickly (purse, keys, GWorld card, etc.) and proceed to the nearest exit. Every classroom has a map at the door designating both the shortest egress and an alternate egress. Anyone who is physically unable to walk down the stairs should wait in the stairwell, behind the closed doors. Firemen will check the stairwells upon entering the building.

Once you have evacuated the building, proceed to our primary rendezvous location: the court yard area between the GW Hospital and Ross Hall. In the event that this location is unavailable, we will meet on the ground level of the Visitors Parking Garage (I Street entrance, at 22nd Street). From our rendezvous location, we will await instructions to re-enter the School.

Alert DC

Alert DC provides free notification by e-mail or text message during an emergency. Visit GW Campus Advisories for a link and instructions on how to sign up for alerts pertaining to GW. If you receive an Alert DC notification during class, you are encouraged to share the information immediately.

GW Alert

GW Alert provides popup notification to desktop and laptop computers during an emergency. In the event that we receive an alert to the computer in our classroom, we will follow the instructions given. You are also encouraged to download this application to your personal computer. Visit [GW Campus Advisories](#) to learn how.

Additional Information

Additional information about emergency preparedness and response at GW or the University's operating status can be found on [GW Campus Advisories](#) or by calling the GW Information Line at 202-994-5050.