CHALLENGES AND INSTITUTIONS IN GLOBAL SECURITY

COURSE SYLLABUS
2024-2025

"Cluster A"
Prof. Fulton Armstrong

DESCRIPTION

The lectures, readings, discussions, and exercises in this course prepare students to understand, support, and ultimately participate in foreign policy policymaking in a wide range of governmental and non-governmental contexts. The eight sessions of "Cluster A" – entitled "Supporting Policy Through Actionable Analysis" – focuses on enabling decisionmakers and institutions to respond effectively to foreign policy challenges and opportunities. This cluster zeroes in on the inputs and dynamics of decisionmaking in a variety of contexts, from the press and intelligence, through analytical processes, to the development and recommendation of options. It also emphasizes sharpening the skills needed to effectively communicate foreign policy analysis and recommendations in written and oral products, which students practice through a project they undertake on an issue that interests them. Cluster B includes three sessions entitled "Global Security Context from a European Perspective," taught by Professor Ana Hernández.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course enables students to:

- Achieve a deep understanding of the needs of decisionmakers, particularly in the foreign policy universe, and to craft strategies to give them the information, analysis, and recommendations they need to pursue the interests of the organization, community, or nation.

- Identify why policies succeed and fail, troubleshooting where defects in information, analysis, or deliberative processes cause policy breakdowns and exploring ways of avoiding or reducing them in the future.

- Implement a time-tested model for producing actionable intelligence – analysis that enables decisionmakers to take action with better odds of strategic success. In particular, appreciate the importance of identifying drivers and their trends; defining scenarios and their probabilities; articulating the implications of different evolving situations – all to maximize positive outcomes.

- Manage personal and institutional biases, political pressures, information gaps, and other human factors that can derail the development of sound policies that serve local, corporate, or national interests.

- Understand how to develop effective policy options based on clear analysis of short-, medium-, and long-term factors, while conceding that policymakers also often have to appear responsive immediately – and understand how to balance such competing requirements.

- Communicate analysis and recommendations in written and oral briefs better, increasing their impact and utility to decisionmakers. Adapting to changing circumstances in how the analytical and policy product can be delivered for positive effect.

COURSE SCHEDULE
"Cluster A"

SESSION 1: Understanding the Policymaker's Universe (11 Dec)

You examine the strategic and day-to-day challenges facing decisionmakers at all stages and levels of the policymaking process. Who are they? What do they need? How do their needs differ from their desires? How do we and they bridge those two conflicting realities? What's on policymakers' plates today, and what does the world look like to them? And what does the world look like to us?

Preparation:
1. Read: *A Guide to Producing Actionable Intelligence.* Introduction, BLUF, What do Decisionmakers Need (pp i-19).
2. Read: *Revista Hipótesis.* The Analyst's Exciting Challenges. Commentary by Fulton Armstrong. 2014.
3. Begin to think what topic you want to treat over the course of our eight sessions together, walking it through each stage of analysis, policy option development, and recommendation. Choose a topic that you already know a lot about so you don't have to do too much new research.

SESSION 2: The Inputs at a Policymaker's Disposal (12 Dec)

You look at the range of sources of information, analysis, values, pressures, and guidances that influence policymakers – and sort out the impact of each. What is the role of clandestine intelligence versus open-source? How do we and policymakers assess the accuracy of each? How can we model the flow of information influencing public debate and private deliberations? Which "wins" the battle of influence, and why? What are the causes of "intelligence failures"?

Preparation:
1. Read: *Excerpts from Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, by Richards Heuer, Jr. – paying particular attention to the dynamic between information, where it fits in mental models, and how the author recommends we navigate our own mental shortcomings.

2. ASSIGNMENT: Write down the sources of information upon which you rely to understand your world, especially the topic you've chosen to develop over the course of these eight sessions.

3. Think about how you and colleagues evaluate information and avoid the pitfalls of fake news, algorithm-driven search tools, biases programed into AI, and other threats to clear and free thought.

SESSION 3: The Role of Analysis – and How to Make it Actionable (13 Dec)

You begin a deep dive into a realistic way of improving the inputs into policymaking and, therefore, into policy itself. What is "actionable" analysis, and what makes it different? What are "drivers"? How do they make actionable analysis different from academic analysis? What are the drivers of world and national affairs in today's headlines? How are those drivers evolving?

Preparation:
1. Read: *A Guide to Producing Actionable Intelligence.* Doing the Analysis (pp 20-33).
2. Think about the drivers in your personal life, in the organizations you're part of, and in national and international affairs.

SESSION 4: "Drivers" as the Heartbeat of Analysis and Policy (8 Jan)

When we reconvene for this in-person session, you plumb deeper into the essential nature of drivers in good analysis and identify them in projects of the class's choosing. How are they evolving –"stronger or weaker" or "better or worse"? How do you track them, and what indicators do you consider reliable? What drivers influence your life? How do drivers translate into policy options?

Preparation:
1. Read: *A Guide to Producing Actionable Intelligence.* The Double Importance of Drivers and Trends (pp 33-46).
2. Think about the difference between "linear" and "spiral" thinking – and how the two styles produce different results at every stage of your work.
3. ASSIGNMENT: Write and e-mail to the professor a) a list of the principal (five or so) drivers of the issue you're covering as your semester project; a brief definition of each driver; and a description of how each is evolving (as defined in the reading); and b) a list of policies that you think, at this early stage of your work, could conceivably *change* the impact of those drivers on your issue.
   Deadline: 9pm on Friday, 3 January
   Format: Word document
4. ASSIGNMENT: Begin filling in the "analytical worksheet" on your semester project, preferably using the Word "form" version. For Session 4, fill in a draft of your Thesis; the basic facts you want to include in Framing; and the four top drivers and their "trends" that you have identified in your e-mail to the professor.

SESSION 5: Crafting "Scenarios" with Meaningful Probabilities and Messages (9 Jan)

You game out the most likely scenario or two that your issue will follow. What are the distinguishing characteristics of your principal scenario? How will your policymaker know it's coming? What probability do you give it? What driver will evolve in a way that a different scenario will occur? How will you know? What does each scenario mean for your policymaker, organization, or country?

Preparation:
1. Read: *A Guide to Producing Actionable Intelligence.* Scenarios. "Red Cell" and Competitive Analysis. Inductive, Deductive, and Abductive Thinking. Wild Cards. Implications (pp 47-66).
2. ASSIGNMENT: Outline (in writing) the principal and alternative scenarios – with probabilities – that you see ahead for your semester project topic. Give the scenarios titles, probabilities, brief descriptions, and implications. Bring the written paper to Session 5.

SESSION 6: Sharpening Our Analysis and Honing Our Tradecraft (10 Jan)

You undertake a full-fledged analysis of a topic of your choosing, in coordination with a classmate, for a predetermined policymaker. What sort of options do you foresee the policymaker as having, and what do you expect them to do? What "symptoms" of a problem are they going to have to deal with – to satisfy short-term demands – and what drivers will they have time to address with smarter policies? What drivers, trends, scenarios, and implications do they need to know to make a good decision?

Preparation:
1. Read: *A Guide to Producing Actionable Intelligence.* Are You Confident? Mind-Mapping. Other Analytical Models. Tradecraft. (pp 66-76).
2. ASSIGNMENT: Add the scenarios, wild cards (if any), and implications to your Analytic Worksheet. Add "Other Points," as defined in the readings and class, if you have any. Bring a printed copy for each classmate and the professor.
3. Think again of what policy options you would identify for your policymaker based on the drivers and trends in your analysis.

SESSION 7: Communicating Analysis for Impact (13 Jan)

You practice the technique of communicating analysis to busy policymakers – concisely, accurately, unambiguously, and efficiently. What does your decisionmaker really need, and how do you best give it to them? How much detail? How do you self-edit your work? When doing an oral briefing, how do you anticipate questions, and how do you keep them and the decisionmaker's comments from pushing you off track? How do you control your nerves ... and even have fun?

Preparation:
1. Read: *A Guide to Producing Actionable Intelligence.* Communicating Your Analysis. The Importance of Words, Grammar, Sentences. The Technology of

Writing. What about AI? Principles and Tips. How to Write Analysis (pp 77-126).
2. ASSIGNMENT: Using the Briefing Preparation form, build a well-structured five-minute briefing that gives the policymaker your message in a digestible, prioritized format. Bring one printed copy to class for each classmate and the professor.

SESSION 8: Arming the Policymaker for Action now … and in the future (14 Jan)

You deliver a full oral briefing to a decisionmaker who is under great pressure to formulate a policy response to the problem on which you have expertise (and have been working over the previous seven sessions). First, what actionable analysis do you give them, without crossing the line into making recommendations? Later, putting on your policy hat, what do you recommend they do? All the while, how do you protect your tradecraft and integrity? How do you handle interruptions and challenges to your analysis? How can you adapt this approach to analysis and customer service in other situations you will encounter?

Preparation:
1. Read: *A Guide to Producing Actionable Intelligence.* Pulling it All Together. Other Challenges, including Politicization, Institutional Cultures, and Maintaining Morale (pp. 127-131).

ASSESSMENTS:

The final course grade will be based on student performance in both Cluster A (70 percent) and Cluster B (30 percent).

The elements of Cluster A will be worth:

Class participation, including contributions to discussion of readings and related topics; presentations on chosen topics; and feedback on classmates' assignments in team exercises.	50 percent
Quality of assignments identifying drivers and trends; scenarios and implications; completed analytic worksheet; and briefing preparation sheet.	25 percent
Oral briefing rehearsal and final presentation.	25 percent