Missouri State University

Graduate School of Defense and Strategic Studies

Fall 2024 Selected Course Highlights

DSS 797 Special Topic: Adapting Deterrence Strategy to Two Nuclear Peers
Professor Jennifer Bradley
ZOOM modality: Thursday, 6-9 p.m. Eastern

The Congressional report on America's Strategic Posture stated: "The United States faces a strategic challenge requiring urgent action. Given current threat trajectories, our nation will soon encounter a fundamentally different global setting than it has ever experienced: we will face a world where two nations possess nuclear arsenals on par with our own." This course will examine the implications for deterrence strategy of a two-peer nuclear environment. It will consider how deterrence strategies must adapt, and how that adaptation impacts assurance and deterrence. Finally, it will examine the intersection of deterrence and escalation dynamics in a multi-peer environment.

DSS 797 Special Topic: Building Partner Capacity in Defense and Foreign Policy
Professor Chris Molino
In-resident (Virginia) and ZOOM modalities: Monday, 6-9 p.m. Eastern

This course aims to examine some of the fundamentals of U.S. defense and foreign policy in terms of capacity building activities in partner nations (and by default state building) and asks how approaches to achieve U.S. security policy outcomes vary across partners and geography, within both the intervening and the intervened. All within the very real and present context of the realities of great power competition.

DSS 737 Advanced Chemical and Biological Warfare
Professor Amanda Moodie
Prerequisite: DSS 727 Chemical and Biological Warfare
ZOOM modality: Monday, 6-9 p.m. Eastern

This course builds on elements of DSS 727, Chemical and Biological Warfare: Global and Community Perspectives. The purpose of the course is to allow the student an opportunity to delve more deeply into a specific aspect of the field that is of great interest to the student. Subjects that were covered in the earlier course that might be considered for in-depth review include decontamination, pertinent treaties and conventions, weapons monitoring, dangers presented by industrial chemicals, and historical analysis of the use of chemical/biological weapons. Additional topics that might be considered are the natural epidemiology of diseases like tularemia, plague or anthrax, or risk assessments for potential chemical/biological weapons used by specific nations or sub-national groups. Each student will choose a separate subject to explore.

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DSS 797 Special Topic: Cybersecurity: Understanding and Assessing Risk
Professor John Bell

ZOOM modality: Thursday, 6-9 p.m. Eastern

A variety of state and non-state actors have made trying to acquire sensitive, protected data a routine part of their offensive cyber-focused operations or their money-making criminal enterprise. Remote attacks such as ransomware, advanced persistent threats, denial of service, etc. are an unfortunate, pervasive risk every government and business must guard against. Among the myriad attack vectors available to malicious actors, targeting people with authorized access can be the most significant and more readily exploitable vulnerability.

This course will examine how to contextualize cybersecurity risk, devoting special attention to the underlying human component. It will consider the steps required to inventory and safeguard any entity's most sensitive information. Notably, it will delve into how authorized users can be the deliberate or inadvertent backdoor to help foreign intelligence service adversaries, criminals, or disruptive hackers achieve their own ends. This non-technologist counter-intelligence perspective aims to enhance any defense or security professional's awareness of identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks inherent in a compartmented, information technology system that relies on the integrity, discretion, and judgment of its approved users. Real-time monitoring and audit tools, together with Insider Threat programs, came into widespread use based on serious setbacks and hard lessons learned.

Course content also will explore the modus operandi of foreign adversaries, the human foibles they seek to leverage, and how the U.S. Government has organized itself over the last 10-15 years to combat cyber threats effectively. A critical element of that national defense involves public-private sector information sharing and collaboration. Participants will discuss and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of such cooperation and propose ways to improve and/or sustain it. A recurring theme will be this question: If technology is constantly evolving, but human nature remains fundamentally the same, what are the implications for protecting military, proprietary business, and intellectual property information?

Returning course for DSS doctorate students only…

DSS 840 National Security Strategies
Professors Susan Koch and Christopher Ford

In-resident (Virginia) and ZOOM modalities: Wednesday, 6-9 p.m. Eastern

This seminar focuses on the development and implementation of national security strategies. It is comprised of three components:

- The first examines the strategies of each successive presidential administration from the end of the cold war to the present. The emphasis will be on the perspectives of the principal practitioners: how they viewed the central geopolitical circumstances at the time; how they viewed the key national security challenges; what national level goals they pursued; and what tools of statecraft they emphasized in meeting the strategic challenges they faced.
- The second component focuses on the strategic challenges of the contemporary international and global security environment. These include the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the reemergence of peer nation adversaries, and the spread of dual-use, advanced technologies that have, in some instances, produced new threats to American interests such as in the cyber and biological realms. Strategies pursued by the current and previous administrations for dealing with these challenges will be examined and assessed.
- The third component consists of original research by each student on a strategic challenge of his/her choice (which can range from climate change to global pandemics) with the goal of developing a strategy, along with an integrated set of instruments, to respond to the challenge. Students will present their strategy in class for comment by their classmates who will be asked to provide their assessment of the feasibility of implementation and the prospects for success.