

WINTER SEMESTER
2022–2023



Wednesdays
11:00–12:20

Room 314

[Moodle](#)

[SIS](#)

POLITICS OF NUCLEAR (NON-)PROLIFERATION

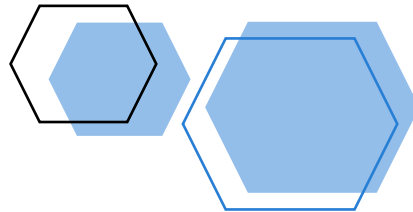
doc. PhDr. Michal Smetana, Ph.D.

- M.A. course about the role of nuclear weapons in international politics
- provides you with a basic introduction into the world of arms control diplomats, disarmament activists, nuclear experts, and scholars studying the causes and consequences of the spread of nuclear weapons
- is recommended for active students who enjoy interactive teaching methods, challenging debates, and scholarly puzzles



WHAT DO WE COVER IN THE COURSE?

As you are becoming experts on international relations, you simply cannot avoid the issue of nuclear weapons in the world politics of the 20th and 21st centuries. Whether you think that nuclear weapons represent the ultimate evil or they are the guardians of a long great-power peace, the spread of nuclear weapons is frequently placed among the top international security threats humanity is facing today. In this course, we will discuss the contemporary discords in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime; unpack new disarmament initiatives; elaborate on the current problems with nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea; assess the risk of nuclear weapon use in the Russo-Ukrainian war; and try to solve the big puzzles that keep nuclear scholars awake at nights – such as why countries develop nuclear weapons in the first place, what are the consequences of nuclear weapons spread, and why they have not been used in a military conflict since the Second World War.



WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE AND IN THE CLASS?

Most classes in this course are a lecture-seminar hybrid; while I try to share with you some basic overview of the current developments in the field and relevant academic concepts and theories, your own input and ideas are critically important for joint learning process. There will be some special lectures delivered by practitioners and other guests. Attendance in classes is compulsory, with up to three abstentions allowed (for whatever reason – no prior excuse is needed). For each class, I will ask you only for a brief preparation: usually reading a short policy article or document or watching a video.





WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE CLASS?

After each class, I will ask you to follow up on what we've learned and read, on average, two scholarly articles that will elaborate on our problem in more detail. There is good evidence that from a learning perspective, this approach works much better than the traditional "read first – attend the lecture second" approach. Readings for each class will be available for you in the [Moodle](#). After you read the articles, you will have time until Monday on the following week to provide me (and others in the class) with a brief reflection (approx. 250 words) on the readings in the Moodle forum: did it make sense? What is still unclear? How else can we approach the problem? What are some other possible applications of the concept/theory? Note that in order to pass the course, you need to read *all* the assigned readings and provide reflections for *all* of them – you can be late with your reflections up to three times during the semester but not more than that.

TERM PROJECT: NON-PROLIFERATION PODCAST

During this semester, you will also record your own video-podcast episode. You can either work alone or in a pair – your choice. The episode should have 40–50 minutes, half of it will be your discussion of the selected topic and the other half your interview with a foreign scholar or expert of your choice. I will provide you with a list of possible topics, but you are welcome to come up with your own: we will discuss them regularly on Moodle. Each of you should have a topic and an interviewee selected by week 5. You will submit the podcast outline/script by week 10 and the final podcast by January 15th. In addition to your own work, you will also provide feedback on the podcast outline of your classmates by week 11 (at least two detailed feedbacks!). We will upload the final podcast episodes on [YouTube](#), to be publicly accessed by anyone.



EXAM

The exam part of this course will probably be slightly different than you are used to. Whether you end up as an academic or a diplomat representing your country, you will often find yourself debating others on different issues, and this is exactly what you are going to do here as well. We will set up a debate in which you will be defending an assigned position against others, using everything you have learned during the semester. The point is not to “win” the debate and “defeat” your opponent but to use what you have learned during the course actively. I will set at least three available dates for these debates in January.

ONE MORE IMPORTANT POLICY

In all my courses, including this new one, we observe a strict no-laptop / no-tablet / no-phone policy; in other words, the students and lecturers are not allowed to use electronic devices during class. Please note that the motivation for this rule is not to discipline the students or to make it harder for you in any way – on the contrary. Using laptops for note-taking during class has, according to the latest studies in neuroscience and pedagogics, very high cognitive costs; it is a constant distraction for your brain, which is unable to focus on the lecture itself fully. This ‘no electronic devices’ policy has been tested at many renowned universities abroad, and the results are extremely positive. I encourage you to just listen to the lectures, pose questions whenever something is unclear or worth further elaboration, actively engage in the in-class debates, and just make a short note on paper when you feel it is something you would like to follow up on at home.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS COURSE

- Introduction: The Problem of Nuclear Proliferation in World Politics
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Birth of Nuclear Order
- Banning the Bomb: Politics of Nuclear Disarmament
- Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Causes of Nuclear Proliferation
- Nuclear Taboo or the Tradition of Non-Use?
- Curbing the Arms Race: The Practice of Nuclear Arms Control
- Threat of Nuclear Escalation in the Russo-Ukrainian War
- Technology of Nuclear (Non-)Proliferation
- Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Advocacy
- Monitoring and Verifying Nuclear Non-Proliferation
- Topic of Your Choice (*make a suggestion in the forum before December 13*)

Visit our [Moodle](#) page for more details on the course schedule.



OKAY...A SUMMARY

Before each class: check [Moodle](#) and read the assigned reading and/or watch the assigned video

During each class: listen, ask, discuss, challenge, think; up to three absences are allowed; we observe 'no-electronic-devices' policy

After each class: read the assigned readings and write a short reflection on them in Moodle (approx. 250 words) by Monday of the following week; you should upload your reflections for all the assigned readings and not be delayed more than three times during the semester

By November 2: discuss your podcast topic and interviewee in Moodle and have it pre-approved by me

By December 7: upload the outline/script of your podcast

By December 13: propose a topic of your choice for the last lecture

By January 15: upload the final version of your podcast on YouTube

Between January 10 and February 13: exam sessions



EVALUATION

After-class reflections:

0-22 points

Podcast:

0-25 points, -2 points for each day of delayed delivery

Exam:

0-38 points

In-class activity:

0-15 points

100-91 points: A

90-81 points: B

80-71 points: C

70-61 points: D

60-51 points: E

50-0 points: F

Remember that in order to pass the course, you need to get at least 50% of points in each of the four aspects of evaluation – that is, at least 5 points for in-class activity, 13 points for the podcast, 25 points for the exam, and 11 points for after-class reflections. Moreover, you must submit *all* in-class reflections (and not be delayed more than three times) and have less than three abstentions in the class.

ABOUT ME

Besides teaching at the Department of International Relations and the Department of Security Studies, I am also working as a head researcher at the Charles University's Center of Excellence [Peace Research Center Prague \(PRCP\)](#) and the [Experimental Lab for International Security Studies \(ELISS\)](#). My main research interests revolve around nuclear weapons in world politics, but I am also very interested in applying social/experimental psychology in IR, studying the dynamics of international norms and deviance, theorizing deterrence models, and exploring frozen conflicts in Europe and Asia. My articles and books are mostly available [here](#).

For consultations, please contact me at smetana@fsv.cuni.cz

You can also follow me on [Twitter](#).