POL211H1F: Intelligence, Deception, and Disinformation – Challenges of Global Governance in the Digital Age

University of Toronto
Department of Political Science
Fall 2021 Online (Zoom link shared via Quercus)

Instructor: Steven Loleski  
E-mail: steven.loleski@mail.utoronto.ca  
Office Hours: By appointment (Zoom link shared via Quercus)

Teaching Assistants (TAs):  
Roberta Rosania Gerevasi  
E-mail: roberta.rosaniagerevasi@mail.utoronto.ca

Jose Martini Costa  
E-mail: jose.martinicosta@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Overview

In this course we are going to introduce students to the study and practice of modern international relations through the lens of information and crisis decision making. Leaders and citizens alike depend on information to make political and economic decisions, but not all information can be trusted. Espionage and disinformation have a long history, but they are becoming more prominent because of the increasing interdependence of global affairs and humanity’s increasing dependence on technology. This course examines the changes created by the information revolution, comparing political and economic challenges in 21st century global governance to international politics in history. Students will develop critical thinking skills to evaluate information and understand how to make sense of political complexity.

By the completion of this course, students should be able to:

- explain the relevance of intelligence to policymaking, broader global politics, and global governance
- understand how individual and institutional biases shape our interpretation and influence of information in decision-making
- understand the debates about intelligence as a field of study
- explain how technology has transformed intelligence and international security
- apply theories and concepts to explain intelligence operations, crisis decision-making, and intelligence failure
- critically evaluate arguments and communicate ideas effectively
Course Evaluation

The assignments in this course are tailored specifically to address the learning outcomes explained above.

**Paper Proposal (10%)** – Due October 13

**Critical Reading Responses (2 x 10% each = 20%)** – Due October 6 & November 3

**Term Paper (40%)** – Due November 24

**Final Term Test (20%)** – December 8

**Tutorial Participation (10%)**

**Paper Proposal (10%):** Due October 13, 11:59 pm EST (Quercus)
This is a one-page prospective outline of your term paper that encourages you to select a topic early and provide a preliminary overview. One-page, single-spaced, 12-pt font and standard margins with page numbers (approx. 500 words). Any standard citation method is acceptable if it is consistently and correctly applied, and an additional bibliography page of sources cited is required but not included within the one-page requirement. Your proposal will be evaluated based on its: (1) content (question, case selection, preliminary background); (2) clarity and organization; (3) and citations.

**Critical Reading Responses (2 x 10% = 20%):** Due October 6 & November 3 (respectively), 11:59 pm EST (Quercus)
You will be required to submit two (2) critical reading responses during the term that engage with one of the readings assigned for that week or any preceding week after the last response deadline (i.e. response one covers weeks up and including Oct 6; response two covers weeks after Oct 6 to and including Nov 3). Each response will be no more than 3-pages, double-spaced, 12-point font and standard margins with page numbers (approx. 750 words). In-text citations can be used here for brevity.

These assignments are designed to assess your understandings of the readings and go beyond by evaluating the author’s argument. Your reflection should include a brief summary of the author’s argument outlining its key strengths and contributions before discussing the limitations or shortcomings of the argument. Some ways to go about doing this are to consider the context of the article, who the author is responding to, how are elements of the author’s story linked, and where certain parts may be unclear and/or underdeveloped. Other readings or weeks in the course may help inform other perspectives that could engage and develop your own critical analysis. Your responses will be evaluated based on (1) the comprehension of the readings/course materials and strength of your evaluation; (2) its clarity and organization; (3) use of citations.

**Term Paper (40%):** Due November 24 by 11:59 pm EST (Quercus)
You will be required to submit a research paper in this course due two weeks prior to the end of the last class. It will be 8-10 pages long, double-spaced, 12-pt font, and standard margins with page numbers (approx. 2000-2500 words). Any standard citation method is acceptable if it is consistently and correctly applied, and additional bibliography pages are not included within the page requirement.

Your paper will select a historical or contemporary intelligence failure or covert operation and address the question: what causal processes or factors contributed to a particular failure or what processes and factors shaped an actor’s strategy undertaking a particular covert operation? In other words, how did actors contribute to an intelligence failure or undertake a covert operation? Your paper will be expected to have a clear introduction outlining its research question, thesis statement, and outline of the paper (1 page). It should briefly summarize the case under investigation and what other scholars have said about it (1-2 pages), develop and rationalize a theoretical approach (2-3 pages), trace how this theory applies to the case (3 pages) and conclude with a summary of the paper’s argument, contributions, and implications (1 page). Your paper will be evaluated based on its content, clarity/cohesion, and citations. There are proposed paper topics and some preliminary sources at the end of the syllabus or you may select your own topic with the consultation and approval of your TA.

**Final Term Test (20%)**: December 8 (online instructions TBA)
Students will have a time-limited, online final test designed to test a student’s ability discuss key course materials and their significance. This final test will have two parts with choice given in each section. Part 1 will involve defining and discussing key concepts (4 of 6 concepts) and Part 2 will be a longer essay question (1 of 2 questions) addressing broader course themes.

**Tutorial Participation (10%)**
Students are expected to and strongly encouraged to consistently attend and participate in weekly tutorials. Tutorials provide a unique space where students can share thoughts and reflections on the readings, course materials, and current events to strengthen their understanding of course content. Most importantly, students should view tutorials as an opportunity to ask questions to their peers and TAs. Tutorials will be evaluated according to attendance and as assessment of the quality of a student’s participation. One way to prepare for tutorials is to do the readings beforehand and coming up with 2-3 potential questions or comments that can be used as the basis for discussion and/or to build off a colleague’s comments. Please speak with your TA early should you face barriers to participation and require accommodation.

There will be no accommodation for missed tutorials and TAs and instructors reserve the right to determine what may constitute legitimate grounds for missed tutorials. These are typically reserved for unavoidable or unforeseen circumstances (i.e. illness, personal/family emergencies) and religious observances. Please speak with your TA prior to a tutorial as missed tutorials cannot be excused afterwards unless the nature of circumstances has occurred prior to the tutorial. Attending fewer than half of the term’s tutorials will result in a zero.
Course Organization

This course is organized in three parts: Part (1) will introduce students to the history and context of intelligence through key debates and theoretical approaches; Part (2) will discuss how technological change has affected intelligence in contemporary global politics; and finally, Part (3) will evaluate the implications of these developments in the context of domestic and international governance.

There will be a weekly, online lecture delivered synchronously during our allotted lecture time (Wednesday’s 12-2 pm EST) through Zoom. Please be sure to have a registered UofT Zoom account (https://utoronto.zoom.us/) and familiarize yourself with UofT’s minimum technological requirements (https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/tech-requirements-online-learning/).

You are strongly encouraged to attend these sessions synchronously and a recording will be posted to the Quercus page the following day. In addition, there will be weekly tutorial sessions that will encourage you to discuss and evaluate key course materials alongside contemporary events. Consistent attendance and participation are key ingredients to your academic success in this course.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIT/WEEK</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Sept 15)</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Sept 22)</td>
<td>What is Intelligence? What is Deception?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Sept 29)</td>
<td>Intelligence Analysis – <em>Tutorials begin</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Oct 6)</td>
<td>Institutional Bias (<em>Reading Response Due</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Oct 13)</td>
<td>Secrecy and Intelligence-Policy Relations (<em>Proposal Due</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (Oct 20)</td>
<td>Technological Renaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (Oct 27)</td>
<td>Political Economy of Surveillance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (Nov 3)</td>
<td>The Digital Age and The Future of War (<em>Reading Response Due</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (Nov 17)</td>
<td>Information Operations &amp; Disinformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (Nov 24)</td>
<td>Local and Domestic Governance (<em>Term Paper Due</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 (Dec 1)</td>
<td>International Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 (Dec 8)</td>
<td>Conclusions and Future Directions (<em>Final Test</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Readings

*Week 1 (September 15): Introduction*
Week 2 (September 22): What is Intelligence? What is Deception?

Readings:

Recommended

Week 3 (September 29): Intelligence Analysis – Tutorials begin

Readings:

Recommended


**Week 4 (October 6): Institutional Biases – Reading Response 1 Due**

*Readings:*


*Recommended*


**Week 5 (October 13): Secrecy and Intelligence-Policy Relations – Paper Proposal Due**

*Readings:*


*Recommended:*

**Week 6 (October 20): Technological Renaissance**

*Readings:*


*Recommended:*

- Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, 83-146.

**Week 7 (October 27): Political Economy of Surveillance**

*Readings:*


*Recommended:*


• Shoshana Wodinsky, “It Doesn’t Matter Who Owns TikTok,” Gizmodo (August 6, 2020):
  https://gizmodo.com/it-doesn-t-matter-who-owns-tiktok-1844595163

Week 8 (November 3): The Digital Age and The Future of War – Reading Response 2 Due

Readings:
• Thomas Rid, “Cyber War Will Not Take Place,” Journal of Strategic Studies 35, no. 1

• Dina Temple-Raston, “How the U.S. Hacked ISIS,” NPR, September 26, 2019,

• Lennart Maschmeyer, Ronald J. Deibert, and Jon R. Lindsay, “A Tale of Two Cybers - How
  Threat Reporting by Cybersecurity Firms Systematically Underrepresents Threats to Civil
  Society,” Journal of Information Technology & Politics 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 1–20,

Recommended:
• Austin Carson, “Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation
• Sam Biddle, “How to Destroy the Internet,” Gizmodo (May 23, 2012):
  https://gizmodo.com/how-to-destroy-the-internet-5912383

Fall Reading Week (November 8-November 12): No class
Last day to drop F courses without penalty: November 8

Week 9 (November 17): Information Operations and Disinformation

Readings:
• Alexander Lanoszka, “Disinformation in International Politics,” European Journal of

• Emanuel Adler and Alena Drieschova, “The Epistemological Challenge of Truth
  Subversion to the Liberal International Order,” International Organization, March 8,

Recommended:
• Lowenthal, Intelligence, 229–51.

**Week 10 (November 24): Local and Domestic Governance – Paper Due**

**Readings:**


**Recommended**

• Edward Snowden TED talk, 2014: https://www.ted.com/talks/edward_snowden_here_s_how_we_take_back_the_internet

• NSA response to Snowden, 2014: https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_ledgett_the_nsa_responds_to_edward_snowden_s_ted_talk

**Week 11 (December 1): International Governance**

**Readings:**


**Week 12 (December 8): Final Test**

**Course Policies**
**Correspondence:** Course announcements and updates will be regularly communicated through Quercus and students are expected to regularly check our course page for updates and connect through Zoom for lectures. Zoom links for lectures and office hours will be posted to Quercus.

Students should be able to connect with their UofT credentials to create a UofT Zoom account ([https://utoronto.zoom.us/](https://utoronto.zoom.us/)). Participants can change their names in-meeting if you allow it in your Zoom settings ([Links to an external site.](https://utoronto.zoom.us/)) (Meeting tab, In Meeting (basic)). Participants can set a preferred pronoun and choose how it is shared ([Links to an external site.](https://utoronto.zoom.us/)) in their client application.

**Readings:** All readings will be made available through the Quercus course page and found through the University Library. There are no required textbooks for purchase in this course, however, a strongly recommended background textbook is Mark Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*, 8th Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2019 (abbreviated in the syllabus as Lowenthal, *Intelligence*). This book does a good job of conveying key debates and issues within intelligence.

**E-mail:** I will respond to e-mails within 24 hours on weekday and 48 hours on weekends. Please include POL211 in your e-mail subject line.

**Online etiquette/participation:** Please be respectful of others and their viewpoints during lectures and tutorials.

**Submission methods:** Please submit your assignments through our Quercus course page and keep a backup copy of your work.

**Deadlines, late penalties, and extensions:** Deadlines are firm, and students should plan their schedules and competing course priorities accordingly.

If, however, you are unable to complete your assignment on time, late submissions will be accepted until a maximum of one week after the deadline. Late submissions for the two critical reading reflections and paper proposal will be one point per day, including weekends (i.e. a 8 submission will be deducted to 7). The late penalty for the term paper will be 2 points per day, including weekends (i.e. a 70 paper will receive a 2 point deduction to 68).

Extensions will be considered only in unavoidable or unanticipated circumstances (illness, personal/family emergencies) or religious observances. In these exceptional circumstances, students should contact their TA and instructor before a deadline to see if an extension can be granted. Extensions are not open-ended and will be negotiated with reasonable fixed deadlines considering the circumstances affecting academic work. Extensions cannot be granted after a deadline has passed unless the circumstances can be demonstrated to have occurred before the deadline. Other course assignments are not grounds for an extension. For more information about requesting an extension, see: [https://sidneysmithcommons.artsci.utoronto.ca/how-do-i-request-an-extension/](https://sidneysmithcommons.artsci.utoronto.ca/how-do-i-request-an-extension/)
Absences: For 2021-22, the Verification of Illness (or “doctor’s note”) is not required. Students who are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) and who require consideration for missed academic work have been asked to record their absence through the ACORN online absence declaration. The absence declaration is considered sufficient documentation to indicate an absence and no additional information or documentation should be required when seeking consideration from an instructor. Students should also advise their instructor of their absence. Instructors can contact their Undergraduate Administrators if they have questions or would like confirmation for a particular student.

Grades and appeals: Course grades are not an indication of your intelligence or future potential and more accurately reflect the execution of work on a particular assignment. Take grades in stride, understand the feedback given, and use it as an opportunity to address any feedback in future work. If comments are unclear, students should speak to their grader.

Should you feel unhappy with the grade on significant term work, you may appeal the grade first to your TA. Appeals will not be considered outside of the substantive requirements of the assignment and the feedback received. The appeals process involves submitting a one-page, single-spaced (max.) written appeal to your grader that outlines how your work addressed the feedback given. Your TA will decide based on the merits of your appeal and review of your work. If you are dissatisfied with the reasoning behind this outcome, you may appeal directly to the instructor for a final round of review where the instructor will grade the original work.

Institutional Policies and Support

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

On Academic Integrity:
Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

1. Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
3. Making up sources or facts.
4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
2. Looking at someone else’s answers during an exam or test.
3. Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:

1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html).

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to the University’s plagiarism detection tool website for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the University’s plagiarism detection tool reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the University’s plagiarism detection tool service are described on the company web site. Students are permitted, under our conditions of use, to opt-out of using the University’s plagiarism detection tool. If a student chooses not to submit their assignment through the University’s plagiarism detection tool, instructors will find rigorous alternatives with students in order to review their work. Students are expected to keep rough work and drafts saved of term work.

Q: When should I cite and what is common knowledge?
https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/citing-your-sources/what-common-knowledge

When in doubt, cite your sources.

**COPYRIGHT**

If a student wishes to copy or reproduce lecture presentations, course notes or other similar materials provided by instructors, he or she must obtain the instructor's written consent.
beforehand. Otherwise all such reproduction is an infringement of copyright and is absolutely prohibited.

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

SERVICES and SUPPORT

The following are some important links to help you with academic and/or technical service and support

- General student services and resources at Student Life
- Full library service through University of Toronto Libraries
- Resources on conducting online research through University Libraries Research
- Resources on academic support from the Academic Success Centre
- Learner support at the Writing Centre
- Information about Accessibility Services

Information for Technical Support/Blackboard Support (Portal Info)

Mental Health and Wellness


Are you in immediate danger? For Personal Safety - Call 911, then Campus Community Police*
Centre for International Experience Safety Abroad 416-946-3929.
*24/7/365; Campus Community Police can direct your call to the right service.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)

The University of Toronto is committed to the protection of privacy, and protects your personal information consistent with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA).

The University notifies you of the purposes for which your personal information is to be used and consistently protects your information according to these notices. Your information is only shared within the University as necessary for official University tasks and needs.
This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session.

Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation, and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the instructor. For questions about recording and use of videos in which you appear please contact your instructor.

**Guidance for Potential Risk in Remote Learning**

If you are a citizen of another country, and/or accessing your courses at the University of Toronto from a jurisdiction outside of Canada, you may be subject to the laws of the country in which you are residing, or any country of which you have citizenship. The University of Toronto has a long-established commitment to freedom of expression, with this right enabled by an environment valuing respect, diversity, and inclusion. In your classes, you may be assigned readings, or discuss topics that are against the law in other jurisdictions. I encourage you to become familiar with any local laws that may apply to you and any potential impact on you if course content and information could be considered illegal, controversial, or politically sensitive. If you have any concerns about these issues, please contact me directly to discuss them.
Potential Paper Topics

Cold War intelligence (background)


Early Cold War and CIA “Golden Age” Covert Operations (1947-61)


Cuban Missile Crisis


• David R. Gibson, “Avoiding Catastrophe: The Interactional Production of Possibility during the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *American Journal of Sociology* 117, no. 2 (September 1, 2011): 361–419, https://doi.org/10.1086/661761.


• Dominic Tierney, “Pearl Harbor In Reverse: Moral Analogies In The Cuban Missile Crisis,” *Journal Of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 49–77.


**Intelligence Warning and Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968)**


**Intelligence Warning and the Yom Kippur War (1973)**

**Intelligence Warning and the Iranian Revolution (1979)**


**Operations Denver, AIDS Disinformation campaign (1985-89)**


**CIA Covert War in Afghanistan (1980s)**


**Western public diplomacy during the Cold War--Radio Free Europe & Voice of America**


**Intelligence Warning and 9/11 Terrorist Attacks**

A list of key articles revisiting intelligence and terrorism:
https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/fint20/collections/Revisitingthe9-11TerroristAttacks20yearson

**Intelligence Estimates and the War in Iraq (2003)**


**Global Financial Crisis and Warning (2008)**


**Russian interference in Ukraine (2013-)**


**Brexit Vote (2016)**


**Russian Electoral Interference in 2016 US Presidential Election**


• David Shimer, *Rigged: America, Russia, and One Hundred Years of Covert Electoral Interference* (New York: Knopf, 2020).


**Covid-19 Global Pandemic (2019-): Intelligence Warnings and Origins; Public Health Responses and Covert Action**


