

Marine Corps War College
National Security

National Security Course Overview

COURSE DESCRIPTION: National strategy is the application of ends (goals), ways (concepts, policies, doctrine), means (resources), and risk to advance the national interest. Joint Professional Military Education II is based, in part, on seven elements of national power: Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economics, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement (DIME-FIL). History and current events demonstrate that to successfully formulate and implement national security policies, strategic leaders must wisely orchestrate each of these elements. Successful military senior leaders understand the interplay between these components, give sound military advice, and help develop prudent military strategy for the civilian leadership. Without this understanding, senior leaders can become marginalized in important discussions of national security.

The National Security (NS) course provides the student with an extensive understanding of national security affairs, showing how textbook explanations fall short of what really happens in national security and decision making. Arrow charts showing a National Security Strategy flowing into lower level documents are one thing, but the fact of the matter is that there has yet to be a Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the Department of Defense's strategic document, published after the National Security Strategy. NS will teach the theory and the actual practice of national security.

For students who have been focused on one aspect of the DIME-FIL, NS will be an uncomfortable experience. Cognitive dissonance should happen often (whereby two seemingly incongruent statements/facts are both true). This is the course where all elements of national power are considered towards national ends using a risk assessment (a skill developed more thoroughly in Joint Warfare). There will be no easy choices, but an array of bad and less bad options.

NS takes several field studies and receives special visitors to enhance student learning. Given the dependency on outside actors for the timing of those field studies, students will be kept updated as scheduling decisions are made, but understand that since we always attempt to get the best speakers, *schedule changes, even the day of the event, are the norm.*

NS will develop students' abilities along each of MCWAR's four program outcomes, most directly Program Outcome #1 to "serve as critical and creative thinkers, able to frame ambiguity, evaluate information and arguments, ask the right questions, and find creative solutions to the challenges of a complex and dynamic security environment" and Program Outcome #2 to "serve as military strategists, able to apply the framework of ends, ways, means, and risk; evaluate the integration of all instruments of national power; and evaluate the utility (and limitations) of employing force or the threat of force in the pursuit of political ambitions."

NATIONAL SECURITY STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Each lesson will contribute to the students achieving the following Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Evaluate national security principle actors', cultures, incentives, characteristics and relationships.

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2. Evaluate the formal and informal governmental processes and frameworks that contribute to national security strategy, policy development, and implementation.

3. Evaluate how historical, contemporary, and future security environments affect strategies in support of national objectives.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

1. **Overview.** This course is seminar based, which means you are expected to participate fully in the discussion during each class period. The *quality* of your contributions is more important than the *quantity*, and sustained class involvement is preferred to sporadic engagement. Each week's total amount of reading is limited as compared to many other graduate programs that assign hundreds of pages each class. The tradeoff is that you are expected to *read each class assignment before coming to class*, and have spent time thinking about issues the reading elicited. You should also follow current events relevant to this course. All readings are either student-issued books, available on the internet, or on MCWAR's Moodle site, as indicated below.

One of NS's core objectives is to increase your ability to think critically and creatively. Accordingly, instead of solely writing several formal papers, students will keep a professional journal and challenge themselves with other non-traditional assignments. Sometimes, the NS professors will assign journal topics. Other times, students will be able to pick their own topics drawing on class readings or discussions, current events, or the like. The journal entries should be approximately 250 words each, unless otherwise directed. Grammar and organization are less important than the quality of your thinking (that said, your product has to be readable). Students can anticipate having approximately one journal entry per month, although NS will attempt to deconflict with other MCWAR requirements. Students will post their work in Moodle's "Journal". These journals are for the students' professional/cognitive thinking alone, will be ungraded *per se* (unless late or not submitted), but be taken into consideration for the student participation grade.

NS's midterm is a timed writing event. You will (have) often been tasked with producing written products for your boss in a compressed timeframe. This is a skill that must be honed. The midterm exam is an opportunity for you to practice expressing your analysis in concise, rigorous language under a deadline. The NS Written Examination at the end of the year is an open book/notes paper, which covers the entire year.

Please note that deadlines are strict; no extensions will be granted in the absence of a genuine emergency. The policies for late work as outlined in the Student Handbook will be strictly enforced.

Thus far, most MCWAR students have focused on the tactical/operational level. Our job is to get student comfortable at the strategic level of national security, which also means becoming more comfortable with ambiguity, managing versus solving problems, and the like.

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MCWAR’s job is not to teach students *what* to think in terms of content, but *how* to think. Learning how to think is as much about coming up with the right question as it is about coming up with the right methodology to answer tough questions. Asking the right question as a leader is the much more important than formulating PowerPoints that skirt the real issues.

National Security specifically deals across DIME-FIL, which are executed by different agencies that possess divergent strategies, cultures, and policies. We examine the roles, functions, missions, doctrine, and capabilities of various USG departments and agencies, as well as possible changes to Title 10 responsibilities and authorities being driven by high-level guidance and policies and on-going DoD initiatives. Influential external actors, such as think tanks and the media, are also considered.

2. **Lesson Sequence.** Topics are subject to change due to guest speaker availability and current events. Although these changes will be flagged, it is the students’ responsibility to regularly check the MCWAR calendar for updates.

NATIONAL SECURITY LIST OF CLASSES	
8400	Introduction to National Security: <i>The Ugly American</i>
8401	Principles of American Government: <i>The Federalist Papers</i>
8402	Principles of American Government: The Constitution Field Study
8404	Civil-Military Relations
8406	The Department of Defense: The Office of the Secretary of Defense Field Study
8407	The Intelligence Community and Mission
8409	The National Security Strategy
8412	The Media Panel
8418	US National Security in the Future
8421	National Security Scenario: On War...in 2042
8436	The Presidency
8439	Think Tanks (Council on Foreign Relations Field Study)
8442	National Security Scenario: Fiction, American War
8444	National Security Scenario: Current Operating Environment (Yemen)
8445	Communication Education and Practical Application
8446	National Security Actors, Missions, and Cultures
8450	How Washington <i>Really</i> Works
8451	Modern Social and Political Philosophy
Assessments	
8499A	National Security Fall Assessment
8499B	National Security Assessment: Final Exam

3. **Summary Course Hours.** All hours are approximate and subject to change. See individual lesson cards for specific hours.

Lecture	Seminar	Practical Application	Field Study	Exam	PSPT	Total
	47.5	7.5	16.5	3	126	191.5

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ASSESSMENT MEASURES: Your grade will be based on a variety of assignments for two reasons: One, there is really no single point of failure in National Security. If you take a risk and fail, your grade is recoverable. Two, everyone has different strengths, and this wide mix of assignments means that everyone has an opportunity to excel in at least one assessment. The assignments are broken down as follows, and more details are to follow during the year:

Seminar participation (Fall): 15%
Seminar participation (Spring): 15%
Professional Journal: 0%
Mid-Term: 35%
Final Examination: 35%

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION: The College is very attentive to what many educators call “Institutional Effectiveness” – that is, how well we are achieving our objectives. The critique allows the student to register views on the methodology of each segment of the course. All participants are required to contribute their constructive criticisms and their suggestions for improvements. Surveys are electronically tallied, studied by faculty, including members engaged in courseware revision, and eventually archived for use in future institutional research.