

SPECIAL TOPICS: CONTEMPORARY POLITICS
Critical Security Studies: Theory and Practice in a Global Context
POLSCI 4ST3E
Fall 2021

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Course Description

This course explores the theoretical developments in international security from a critical perspective. As a burgeoning subfield of international relations, critical security studies examines the practice of security in a diverse range of contexts. In doing so, we look to examine some of the main theoretical underpinnings of critical security studies while also exploring the various ways these perspectives help to shape the way we look at security issues in a globalized context. In the first half of the course, we will examine some of the various theoretical approaches that shape critical security studies including, constructivism, critical theory, poststructuralism, securitization theory as well as feminist and postcolonialism. The second half of the course shifts from a theoretical interrogation of critical security studies, to examining some of the main thematic issues analysed within the field. To examine the application of these theoretical perspectives, we will look specifically to issues surrounding the intersections of security studies and the environment, health, migration, technology, warfare, terrorism as well as human (in)security and resilience. The course will conclude with brief student presentations in the form of a 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) where each person will provide an overview of their research project that will be developed throughout the course.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand and apply the diverse range of theoretical perspectives that underpin critical security studies
- Identify and explain the emergence of critical security studies and the various theoretical shifts that have occurred throughout the evolution of the subfield
- Develop individual research and writing skills through applying course content and independent research in the development of an independent research project
- To develop presentation skills and be able to effectively incorporate feedback from their peers and instructor

Required Materials and Texts

- Peoples C. and N. Vaughan-Williams (2021) *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd edition. New York: Routledge

We will be using the Peoples and Vaughan-Williams textbook throughout the semester. Please ensure that you have the 3rd edition. This is a useful resource that provides a strong theoretical and thematic overview of critical security studies. Each week there will also be 2-3 additional required readings from journal articles, book chapters and popular media for students to read through. These additional sources will be provided by the instructor.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Participation – 15%, ongoing during the semester
2. Weekly Summaries – 10%, due weekly, beginning Week 2 (September 15th)
3. Seminar Leadership – 10%, once during the semester
4. Critical Reflection Paper – 15%, due one (1) week following reading/theme
5. Proposal – 5%, due Week 5 (October 6th)
6. Research Paper – 40%, Due Week 14 (December 8th)
7. 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) – 5%, Due Week 14 (December 8th)

Course Evaluation – Details

Participation (15%), due ongoing

This course is designed to operate as an interactive seminar where students are expected to engage in discussion on the weekly readings. The intent is to foster a dynamic, engaging and collegial environment in which students can work through the thematic issues presented each week. By moving beyond a descriptive recitation of the key points of the readings for that week, we will have the opportunity to dig deeper into the points of contention or uncertainty that remain. Throughout each week, think about the following: What is unsettled or uncertain? What are the strongest arguments or observations involved? Where are the ambiguities or tensions? How is this related to the broader literature in the field? Students are expected to attend all class sessions having completed the required readings in order to participate in active class discussions. Participation in these discussions is an integral part of this course. Involvement in these discussions that shows evidence of critical thinking, the ability to apply theoretical perspectives, and constructive engagement with peers to encourage further discussion will contribute toward the overall participation grade.

Weekly Summaries (10%), due weekly, beginning Week 2

Beginning in Week 2, students will submit a short summary of the readings at the beginning of class each week. Students are expected to attend class having completed the required readings and written summary before their arrival. Each submission will include identifying key terms that emerge from each reading along with a brief summary (4-5 sentences) that captures the essence of the argument and 1-2 questions that emerge from the text. This intent is to think about how to summarize the arguments that arise within each topic. Think about what stands out as the integral aspects of the articles/chapters. What are the key ideas/arguments being developed? What questions remain? What gaps exist? We will draw on some of the key terms and questions from these submissions to help guide our discussion. Students will be expected to submit their weekly summary by Monday at midnight, before that week's class. This will allow the students responsible for that week's seminar leadership to collect, collate and develop a one-page handout that captures some of the important key terms, and questions from the required readings. This handout will serve as an informal agenda for the discussion that week and allow students to shape the direction and focus of the seminar that week.

Seminar Leadership (10%), due once during the semester

Each week, one or two students (depending on class size) will take charge of leading the seminar for that particular week. The student(s) leading the discussion will provide a brief overview of the required readings for that week and then be responsible for guiding the class discussion for that particular week. The overview of the readings should last no longer than 15 minutes to allow ample time for discussion. As noted above, the students responsible will be required to collect, collate and develop a one-page handout that captures some of the important key terms, and questions from the required readings. Students will be able to use this handout as an informal agenda for discussion that week and allow students to shape the direction and focus of the seminar that week.

Critical Reflection Paper (15%), due one (1) week following reading/theme

Each student will submit a short reflection paper on the required readings. Students will choose **one week/theme** from the course and write a short reflection on those given readings. The paper will be submitted one week following the discussion of those readings in class. For example, if a student wishing to write their reflection on the readings from Week 4 – *Feminist and Postcolonial Interventions on Security*, they are expected to submit their reflection in class during Week 5. The idea of this assignment is not to simply provide a summary of the articles, but to encourage critical evaluation and reflection on the conceptual application of critical security studies being explored in the readings. Students are encouraged to dig into the points of contention or uncertainty that they are seeking to examine or clarify.

- Word Count: 1,500 words

Research Proposal (5%), due Week 5

The proposal is designed to get students thinking about the research paper. In effect, the proposal can be thought of similarly to an article abstract. While not a “grade heavy” submission, the proposal is an important step in the development of the research and will provide an opportunity to get feedback in the early stages of the project. Students are welcome to submit a proposal on any thematic area with a connection to borders, migration, security. Given the broad scope of the course, students are encouraged to think creatively about the application of these concepts. As students will be required to submit a research paper later in the semester that builds on this proposal, they are encouraged to explore some area of personal interest to them. Proposals will be returned with comments following the submission. This will allow students ample time to conduct the remaining research for their paper and address any issues that arise at the proposal stage. Each proposal submission will include:

- a brief overview of the thematic focus of the paper
- a tentative thesis statement/argument
- a proposed line of inquiry or roadmap outlining the paper's argument
- an annotated bibliography listing 10 academic, peer-reviewed sources relevant to your topic and a short (3-5 sentence) summary of the article, similar to the weekly submissions
- Word Count: 500 words + annotated bibliography

Research Paper (40%), due Week 14

The research paper is an opportunity for students to engage with the literature and develop a strong, cohesive piece of academic scholarship. The research paper is required to reflect the research proposal unless given prior approval for a thematic change.

- Word Count: 4,000 words

3-Minute Thesis (5%), due Week 14

Students will present their research papers in the form of a 3-Minute Thesis. These are short presentations designed to provide a very brief overview of the key arguments of the research paper. Students are allowed to have one visual slide to accompany their presentation. There will be small prizes awarded for first and second place, as voted on by the students in the class. Please see the Avenue course page for more information regarding the format of the 3-Minute Thesis.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (September 8th)

Course Introduction

No Assigned Readings

Week 2 (September 15th)

Constructing Security

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Introduction: Mapping critical security studies and travelling without maps
 - Ch.1 – Constructivist theories
 - Ch. 2 – Critical Theory
- Mark Salter et al. (2019) Horizon Scan: Critical security studies for the next 50 years. *Security Dialogue*. 50(4S): 9-37.

Notes: *Weekly Reading Summary Submissions Begin*

Week 3 (September 22nd)

Securitization Theory and International Political Sociology

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Ch. 6 – Poststructuralism and International Political Sociology
 - Ch. 7 – Securitization theory
- Jonna Nyman (2013) "Securitization Theory" in Laura J. Shepherd, ed. *Critical approaches to security: an introduction to theories and methods*. New York: Routledge: 51-62.
- Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit (2020) Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School. *Security Dialogue*. 50(1): 3-22.

Week 4 (September 29th)

Feminist and Postcolonial Interventions on Security

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Ch. 3 – Feminist and Gender approaches
 - Ch. 5 – Postcolonial perspectives
- Randolph B. Persaud (2018) 'Security Studies, Postcolonialism, and the Third World', in Randolph B. Persaud and Alina Sajed, eds., *Race, Gender, and Culture in International Relations: Postcolonial Perspectives*. New York: Routledge: 155-179.
- Laura J. Shepherd (2013) 'Feminist Security Studies' in Laura J. Shepherd, ed. *Critical approaches to security: an introduction to theories and methods*, New York: Routledge: 11-23.

Week 5 (October 6th)

Borders, Migration and (In)Security in a Mobile World

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Ch. 12 – Migration and border security
- Tugba Basaran (2008) Security, law, borders: Spaces of exclusion. *International Political Sociology*. 2(4): 339-354.
- Harsha Walia (2013) "What is Border Imperialism?" Oakland, CA: AK Press – Chapter 1
- Jason de Léon et al. (2015) "By the Time I Get to Arizona": Citizenship, Materiality, and Contested Identities Along the US–Mexico Border. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 88(2): 445-479.

Notes: *Research Proposal Due*

Week 6 (October 13th)

Mid-term recess, No Class

Week 7 (October 20th)

Human Security and the Neoliberal Development Narrative

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Ch. 10 – Human Security
- Cecilia Jacob (2014) Practising civilian protection: Human security in Myanmar and Cambodia. *Security Dialogue*. 45(4): 391-408.
- Mark Duffield (2012) Challenging environments: Danger, resilience and the aid industry. *Security Dialogue*. 43(5): 475-492.
- Catherine Besteman (2018) Militarized Global Apartheid. *Current Anthropology*. 60(S19): 26-38.

Week 8 (October 27th)

Information, Technology and the Intersections of Human Security

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Ch. 11 – Information, Technology, Warfare
- Philippe Frowd (2017) The Promises and Pitfalls of Biometric Security Practices in Senegal. *International Political Sociology*. 11(4): 343-359.
- Katja Lindskov Jacobsen (2015) “Humanitarian Technology” in *The Politics of Humanitarian Technology: Good Intentions, Unintended Consequences and Insecurity*. New York: Routledge: 1-14.
- Benjamin Muller (2011) Risking it all at the Biometric Border: Mobility, Limits, and the Persistence of Securitisation. *Geopolitics*. 16(1): 91-106.

Week 9 (November 3rd)

Environment and Health in Critical Security Studies

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Ch. 8 – Environment
 - Ch. 9 – Health
- Stefan Elbe (2014) The pharmaceuticalisation of security: Molecular biomedicine, antiviral stockpiles, and global health security. *Review of International Studies*. 40(5): 919-938.
- Reece Jones (2016) ‘Borders, Climate Change, and the Environment’, in *Violent Borders*. London: Verso: 140-161.
- Ian Urbina (2021) Purgatory at sea. *The Atlantic*. June Issue.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/06/quarantine-ships-italy/618712/>

Week 10 (November 10th)

Terrorism and (In)Security

Readings:

- Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies*
 - Ch. 13 – (In)Security and the everyday
 - Ch. 14 – Terror, Risk and Resilience
- Richard Jackson, Harmonie Toros, Lee Jarvis & Charlotte Heath-Kelly (2017) Introduction: 10 Years of Critical Studies on Terrorism. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 10 (2): 197-202.
- Thomas Nail (2016) A Tale of Two Crises: Migration and Terrorism after the Paris Attacks. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*. 16(1): 158-167.
- Gargi S. Bhattacharyya (2009) Spectatorship and the War on Terror: Creating Consensus through Global Audiences. *Globalizations*. 6 (1): 77-90.

Week 11 (November 17th)

Industry, Labour and the Economy of Security

Readings:

- Reece Jones (2016) 'Bounding Wages, Goods and Workers', in *Violent Borders*. London: Verso: 145-167.
- Ruben Andersson (2014) 'Introduction: The Illegality Industry at Europe's African Border', in *Illegality, Inc. Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 1-25.
- Deb Cowen (2010) A Geography of Logistics: Market Authority and the Security of Supply Chains. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 100(3): 600-620.
- Mike Bourne, Heather Johnson and Debbie Lisle (2015) Laboratizing the border: The production, translation and anticipation of security technologies. *Security Dialogue*. 46(4): 307-325.

Week 12 (November 24th)

Indigeneity, Settler-Colonialism and Security

Readings:

- Audra Simpson (2015) 'Borders, Cigarettes, and Sovereignty', in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham: Duke University Press: 115-145.
- Liam Midzain-Gobin (2019) 'Come out and live on your land again': Sovereignty, Borders and the Unist'ot'en Camp. *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*. 5(1/2): 12-28.
- Delacey Tedesco and Jen Bagelman (2017) The 'Missing' Politics of Whiteness and Rightful Presence in the Settler-Colonial City. *Millennium* 45(3): 380-402.
- Eileen M. Luna-Firebaugh (2002) The Border Crossed Us: Border Crossing Issues of the Indigenous People of the Americas. *Wicazo Sa Review*. 17(1): 159-181.

Week 13 (December 1st)

Towards Resilience?

Readings:

- James Brassett, Stuart Croft and Nick Vaughan-Williams (2013) Introduction: An Agenda for Resilience Research in Politics and International Relations. *Politics*. 33(4): 221-228.
- Mark Neocleous (2013) Resisting resilience. *Radical Philosophy*. 178: 2-7.
- Myriam Dunn Cavelty, Mareiele Kaufmann and Kristian Sjøby Kristensen (2015) Resilience and (in)security: Practices, subjects, temporalities. *Security Dialogue*. 46(1): 3-14.
- Philippe Bourbeau and Caitlin Ryan (2018) Resilience, resistance, infrapolitics and enmeshment. *European Journal of International Relations*. 24(1): 221-239.
- David Chandler (2012) Resilience and human security: The post-interventionist paradigm. *Security Dialogue*. 43(3): 213-229.

Week 14 (December 8th)

3-Minute Thesis Presentations & Course Wrap Up

Readings:

No Assigned Readings

Notes: *Research Paper Due*

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignments will be due at the beginning of class. Students are expected to upload their assignments to the designated drop box located on the Avenue2Learn course page as well as a hard copy submitted at the beginning of class. Electronic versions of the assignments should be submitted in Word document format.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Students must submit their assignments at the beginning of the class on the week the assignment is due. After the class begins, the submission will be considered late. Unless students have made arrangements to alter the submission date, all assignments submitted after the due date will be subject to a 2% penalty per day (including weekends) for a maximum of seven (7) days. If you have questions or concerns regarding submission deadlines, please speak to the instructor well in advance of the due date.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Courses With An On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.