THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR

First Year Seminar, Fall 2026
Will Reno: reno-at-northwestern-dot-edu
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00 to 12:20,
Scott Hall 201—The Way of War Room
This syllabus is available at www.willreno.org

OVERVIEW

This course traces the development of American military strategy in the pursuit of political objectives. The course begins with the War for Independence when US forces waged a guerrilla war campaign to defeat a far superior British force and compel Britain's political leaders to recognize American political autonomy. The US Civil War turned the tables: Victory followed a military strategy of applying overwhelming force to defeat separatists and bend them to the US government's political will. The application of overwhelming force to annihilate an adversary shaped US involvement in the First and Second World Wars. Resort to overwhelming force remains a vital influence on strategic thinking that continues to shape the organization and the culture of our armed forces. Yet the recent record shows how much weaker forces (Afghanistan's Taliban, Iran's Islamic Republic) can withstand and even prevail against US military might.

This historical legacy and its' influence on American strategic thinking confronts serious challenges, the focus of the second part of this course: What is the utility of force in our nuclear age when its use against a nuclear-armed adversary risks massive retaliation and mutual annihilation? The Iraq War of 2003-2011 and the 20-year US military operation in Afghanistan raise questions about the utility of force when seemingly weaker adversaries prevail against the mighty. Yet the campaign against the Islamic State from 2014 to 2019 shows how the selective application of superior US military force can play an important role in annihilating an adversary.

Our attention then turns to contemporary American military strategy and attendant debates. How are national interests defined in an increasingly competitive global environment and what is the role of the US military as a tool of American power and influence in the world? How do rivals and potential adversaries respond to US power and influence? We consider the continued expansion of domains of warfare, such as the weaponization of information, of societies against themselves.

We consider specific challenges these new conditions and an array of technological developments pose to the American military strategy. This section considers integration of AI into warfighting and debates about trust and reliance at the warfighter / AI interface. Autonomous weapons systems, drones, etc. are considered, as are the challenges the rapid pace of innovation of these dual military /civilian use technologies raises about whether US weapons procurement systems can adapt to rapid innovation. These concerns are related to the issue of whether contemporary US military strategists are empowered to learn from others' recent and ongoing conduct of warfare and incorporate these lessons into US military doctrine and planning. The course ends with attention to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in an increasingly competitive world and its meaning for the maintenance of deterrence—a key national interest and foundation of US military strategy, and a broader consideration of the future of warfare and US efforts to address related challenges.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Students need to complete the reading assignments listed under each meeting before the actual class meeting. Assignment tips and grading criteria can be found toward the end of this syllabus. Grades will be based on the following criteria:

- **Attendance and Participation** (20%): Every student is expected to attend every class meeting. Be prepared to engage required reading material and fellow students. Questions are provided with each meeting's reading assignment to provide a basis for discussion, and of course students are most welcome to raise other questions and issues.

- **Way of War Diary** (40%): Each student will receive a notebook in which to record thoughts and analyses of important ideas encountered in readings and class discussions. Notebook entries are to be hand-written. Diaries will be collected for grading on **Tuesday, 27 Oct** (20% of course grade) and again on **Thursday, 19 Nov** (remaining 20%)

- **Whiteboard Exercise & Essay** (20%): Each student will use a portion of class time at the white board to provide a concept or idea from prior reading and discussions for the class to discuss. The student will take notes directly on the whiteboard to develop that concept / idea further. The student will then use that exercise as the basis for pursuing that idea / concept further in a brief (1,000 word) essay to be submitted via the course Canvas site. **Varied due dates, beginning with the Thursday, 1 Oct class meeting.**

- **Way of Future War Briefing** (20%): Each 2-person team will present a 2-page PPT presentation, "Preparing for the Future of Warfare." The team will have 10 minutes to make their presentation, prepared to be interrupted by classmates and the professor to address questions and comments. Each team is to write a memo of no more than 2 pages that explains the team's rationale for including information in the PPT brief and why other information was left out. The PPT and memo are to be submitted via the course Canvas assignment site prior to the final class meeting day, **Tuesday, 24 November**.

BOOK & OTHER READING MATERIAL

Russell Weigley. 1973. *The American Way of War*: *A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. Indiana University Press (ISBN: 978-0-253-28029-9)

➔ This book is available via your favorite book seller & the course Canvas site.
➔ Other readings are available via electronic syllabus links & the Canvas site for this course.

COURSE GOALS

The primary goal of this course is to lead students to their own understanding of theories and empirical evidence regarding historical and contemporary debates about US military strategy. This will require reading course material, discussing it in class, and writing essays based on readings, discussions and analysis of core issues related to fighting wars. Additional goals include:

- Educate students regarding the nature and evolution of American warfighting strategies.
- Understand the substance of debates over American warfighting strategies.
- Examine questions that these warfighting strategies present to policy makers and citizens.
- Recognize the priorities and underlying assumptions of policy responses to conflicts.
- Promote critical analysis of the impact of technological innovations on warfighting.
- Gain an understanding of past and current norms concerning the conduct of war.
- Understand debates about the role of international law in the conduct of warfare.
- Promote student capacities to read social science research, and understand and be prepared to debate its approaches and findings,

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Have the capacity to distinguish different warfighting strategies in their analysis of any conflict that they encounter.
- Evaluate the relative efficacy of different strategies in armed conflicts and understand why various actors in conflicts adopt specific strategies.
- Understand and explain why actors in some conflicts are more prone to certain kinds of violence against noncombatants.
- Understand and explain the role official policies (i.e., counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, et al.) play in contemporary conflicts.
- Make informed judgements about the efficacy of policies and policy choice tradeoffs.
- Think about and discuss plausible directions in which US military strategy might evolve to address new challenges.
- Critically evaluate how social science theories can inform the public and government officials about the nature of warfighting generally and about specific contemporary conflicts.

In addition, College Seminars are designed to enable students to:

- Set and evaluate academic goals
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
- Study effectively
- Think critically
- Understand and meet Northwestern's standards of academic integrity
- Know when and how to ask for help

PLEASE NOTE: Materials for this course may contain graphic imagery of war and references to such that some may find distressing. At various stages of the course videos will be shown. Students will be warned of content and provided with accommodations, should they wish to refrain from exposure to such material.

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university's established accommodation process (e: accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

The University's Academic Integrity Policy sets the terms for the pursuit of knowledge and academic achievement at Northwestern. You are responsible for following this policy in all courses. Read it and make sure that you understand it. Read any school-specific Academic Integrity guidance as well. Any form of cheating or plagiarism, including technology and improper use of content generated by artificial intelligence, constitutes a violation of the University's Academic Integrity Policy. If you have questions about the permitted use of artificial intelligence in your class, bring those questions to your instructor.

PROHIBITION OF RECORDING OF CLASS SESSIONS BY STUDENTS

Students may not record a class, advising session, office hour conversation, or other academic activity without permission from the instructor, classmates, and anyone else in the room. Unauthorized recording violates University policy and, in some cases, may violate state law. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Students who engage in unauthorized recording or unauthorized use of a recording will be referred to the appropriate University office for potential disciplinary action. If you have an accommodation to use assistive technology that has been documented with AccessibleNU, be sure to request activation of that accommodation for a particular class through the ANU portal and discuss the accommodation with your instructor and/or ANU before recording.

SUPPORT FOR WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Religious and Spiritual Life (RSL) and the Center for Awareness, Response and Education (CARE). Additional information on all of the resources mentioned above can be found here:

https://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/
https://www.northwestern.edu/religious-life/
https://www.northwestern.edu/care/

UNDERGRADUATE POLICY ON IN_PERSON ARRIVAL AND COURSE ENGAGEMENY

The start of the term is a crucial time for students to learn about course expectations and to familiarize themselves with the structure of their classes. It is also a valuable time to meet classmates and get to know instructors. In addition, early and regular course attendance is vital to achieving optimal learning outcomes.

Therefore, undergraduate students enrolled in courses with in-person class meetings are expected to be on campus and in attendance no later than the end of the first week of the quarter and must plan to remain until the end of the quarter. Note in some cases, students must attend the first class meeting to avoid being dropped. This will be clearly identified in CAESAR and the syllabus.

If exceptional circumstances arise during the quarter that require a student to be off campus for more than a week, students are expected to speak with their school adviser. Failure to meet these expectations may result in administrative withdrawal from a term or drop or withdrawal from individual course(s).

POLICY ON ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Consistent with Northwestern's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, every reasonable effort should be made to accommodate members of the University community for their religious observance without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations.

If a class meeting, exam, or assignment deadline conflicts with a religious observance for you, consult with your instructor by the end of the second week of the term. If the conflicting exam is specifically a common midterm (i.e., a midterm scheduled outside of the regular class meeting time) or a final exam, submit an accommodation request using the Office of the Provost's religious accommodation request form.

For more information, see the full page on Northwestern's Policy on Academic Accommodations for Religious Observance.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part I: From Wars of Attrition to Wars of Annihilation

Thursday, 24 September: Course orientation and brief discussion of the wars in Ukraine and Iran as a lens through which to consider what contemporary warfare looks like and that this means for the American Way of War as it has been and may become.

No assigned readings for this class meeting

Tuesday, 29 September: Waging war with limited resources and a strategy of attrition. Winning by surviving through avoiding enemy concentrations. Nathaniel Greene: Crafting a guerrilla warfare strategy that forced the dispersal of superior British forces and leveraged guerrilla relations with non-combatants. The guerrillas show how to make a strong army weak as it fights the weak.

Weigley. 1973. *American Way of War,* 3-58

Thursday, 1 October: The defensive naval strategy and the impact of steam powered warships. Winfield Scott applies Antoine-Henri Jomini's strategy in Mexico. The influence of the ideas of Dennis Hart Mahan and Napoleon's strategy of annihilation on the conduct of the Civil War. The Confederacy's defensive strategy of winning through surviving transformed under R.E. Lee to an offensive-defensive strategy to take battles to the North. Sherman and Grant develop a military strategy of mass and concentration to wage war against the adversary's economy and political system. The logic of terror campaigns against civilians. Do terror campaigns work?

Weigley. 1973. *American Way of War*, 59-163.

Tuesday, 6 October: Combatants and civilians in the Civil War—who is a combatant and who is a non-combatant? What is the relationship between different uses of violence (discriminate versus indiscriminate) and non-combatant behavior? What is the role of international humanitarian law in the conduct of war, including in contemporary wars?

Clay Mountcastle. 2009. "Proving Ground for Punishment: Pope, Halleck and Schofield in Missouri," in his *Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals,* (University of Kansas), 21-55.

Stephen Ash. 1995. "Rebels and Conquerors," in his *When the Yankees Came: Chaos and Violence in the Occupied South*, (University of North Carolina), 38-75.

Thursday, 8 October: Sea power and Empire: Stephen B Luce and Alfred Thayer Mahan explain why it is in the national interest of the US to maintain a strong navy to project force. The Great War demonstrates the use of mechanized forces to break a defensive deadlock that led to prolonged battles of attrition. Billy Mitchell argues for air power to regain and support offensive capabilities. Plan ORANGE these strategic innovations to plan for a Pacific Ocean war, a rehearsal of the US's World War II military strategy

Weigley. 1973. *American Way of War*, 167-265

Tuesday, 13 October: The strategic logic of A.T. Mahan that argued for maritime dominance and the destruction of Japan's battle fleet. UK—US debate in the European war over envelopment versus concentration and mass strategy. The application of concentration and mass to destroy the German army. Strategic bombardment and debate over the appropriate target—German civilians (Giulio Douhet's doctrine) or Germany's economy (daylight precision bombing)?

Weigley. 1973. *American Way of War,* 269-359.

Thursday, 15 October: Transformational technologies: How did atomic weapons lead to a strategic revolution? What is the impact of the strategy of deterrence on warfighting plans? Can combat be included in a viable nuclear strategy? Are discipline and restraint compatible with the maintenance of a military geared toward winning wars through the destruction of the enemy's armed forces?

Weigley. 1973. *American Way of War*, 363-440

Tuesday, 20 October: Vietnam and the dilemma of combining a strategy of annihilation to a war of limited objectives. Can wars of annihilation defeat struggles for self-determination? Are counterinsurgency and nation-building remedies? The Powell Doctrine and the return to the strategy of annihilation in Gulf War 1.0. The start of US military's three decades-plus engagement in Iraq. Is there still a place for annihilation in US strategy?

Weigley. 1973. *American Way of War*, 441-477.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. 1992. *National Military Strategy of the United States*. [The Powell Doctrine]

MAJ Frank Hoffman. 1994. *Decisive Force: The New American Way of War?* Naval War College, 156-193.

Part II: Wars of Attrition and Strategic Confusion

Thursday, 22 October: How does one fight wars of attrition with a military largely designed to fight a war of annihilation? How does counterinsurgency (COIN) define victory? Is COIN a strategy or a collection of tactics? Are lessons from guerilla warfare integrated in the development of COIN? Would those lessons be relevant or feasible in a contemporary context?

Max Boot. 2003. "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs,* 82: 4, (July / Aug), 41-58.

Eliot Cohen, Conrad Crane, Jr., John Horvath & John Nagl. 2006. "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, (March-April), 49-53.

Gian P. Gentile. 2009. "A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army," *Parameters: Journal of the Army War College* (Autumn), 5-17.

Steven Metz. 2017. "Abandoning Counterinsurgency: Revising Antiterrorism Strategy," *Parameters*, 13-23.

Tuesday, 27 October: What are the lessons of 'limited' warfare against militarily weaker adversaries in the wake of failure in Afghanistan? What are the necessary conditions for measured applications of force to achieve strategic objectives? What specific military capabilities are needed to accomplish such ends?

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. 2021. "Introduction," "Context," and "Monitoring and Evaluation" in *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*. Arlington, VA; SIGAR, 1-8, 71-94.

Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress. 2024, *Operation Inherent Resolve and Other U.S. Government Activities Related to Iraq and Syria*, 30 June.

Lt. Col. Jahara Matisek & William Reno. 2019. "Getting American Security Force Assistance Right," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 92, 65-73.

Virtual visit of LTC, US Army, CJ5- Operational Planner, Headquarters, ISAF Kabul (2009-2011) & Iraq, 173rd Airborne

- **War Diaries (first installment) due**

PART III:
The End of the American Dominance

Thursday, 29 October: Parsing national interests in a global environment of greater competition between Great Powers. What is the role of military force as a tool of American power and influence? How should that military be prepared to fight (if necessary) in this age of competition?

White House. 2025. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (29 pgs.)

Brookings Institute. 2025. *Breaking down Trump's 2025 National Security Strategy*, [various scholars reflecting on the new NSS's implications for US foreign policy].

Tuesday, 3 November (Election Day): Jomini's Shadow: Does the US have a decisive battle bias? The fallacy of the short war. Are there lessons from counterinsurgency warfare that should be heeded, even if from wars we prefer to forget? operations. What is the place of lethality in training, and what is its relation to other aspects of training?

Department of Defense. 2022. *Summary of the Joint All-Domain Command & Control (JADC2) Strategy*.

Ryan Easterday. 2023. "The Fallacy of the Short, Sharp War: Optimism Bias and the Abuse of History," *Strategy Bridge*, 16 March.

Herb Lin. 2026. "Revenge of Rumsfeld's Fourth Quadrant—Closing the Strait of Hormuz," Lawfare

Virtual visit of Lt Col, J3 Deputy Command Center Director, US NORTHCOM

Thursday, 5 November: Domain Expansion: Is "hybrid warfare" old-fashioned political warfare with new tools? How does one know if one is at war? What is the line between acceptable political activities and subversion? Consider non-American views on hybrid warfare and challenges they pose to defense and military strategy.

George Kennan. "Policy Planning Memorandum," 4 May 1948, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 273, Records of the National Security Council, NSC 10/2.

Frank Hoffman. 2009. "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 52, 34-39.

General Valery Gerasimov. 2013. "The Value of Science in Prediction." originally published in *Military-Industrial Kurier*, 27 February.

Xiao Tianliang, et al. 2020. "Military Conflict in Cyberspace" & "Military Conflict in the Intelligent Field," *The Science of Military Strategy*. China Aerospace Studies Institute, 148-155, 174-180.

Tuesday, 10 November: Focus on information warfare: What is the role of information operations in an offensive strategy? Is the offense–defense distinction applicable in the information domain? Schismogenesis ("the creation of division") to weaponize society. The challenge of social media warriors to internal defense. How can an open society defend itself?

Jahara Matisek & Buddhika Jayamaha. 2022. "Civil Society and the Contemporary Battlespace," and "New Battlespaces and Strategic Realities," in their *Old & New Battlespaces: Society, Military Power, and War*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 117-157.

Steven Lee Myers, et al. 2024. "Russia Secretly Worms Its Way Into America's Conservative Media," *New York Times,* 7 Sept. (The indictment for those interested.)

Will Reno & Lt.Col. Jesse Humpal. 2024. "The World Is Not About Us: Information and Power in the Current Strategic Environment," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 114:3, 92-100.

Virtual visit, Col Jesse Humpal, former National Security Council White House Staff

Part IV: The (Rapidly) Changing Character of Warfare: New Tech, New Models of Military-Society Relations

Thursday, 12 November: Indecisive and protracted warfare: lessons from Ukraine. What is the role of technology, adaptive modes of organizing for warfare and new model civilian–military relationships? Are old ideas about insurgency warfare and resistance under occupation relevant amidst warfare between highly developed countries with urbanized populations?

Seth Jones & Riley McCabe. 2025. *Russia's Battlefield Woes in Ukraine*, CSIS Briefs, June 2025 [16p].

Additional materials specific to Ukraine's contemporary battlefield.

Review essay is due by the end of the day (23:59) via Canvas

Tuesday, 17 November: Age of Defense Stalemate, redux? The problem of the rapid depletion of high-cost munitions and its limits on the use of force. The effects of persistent surveillance on the concentration of mass and battlefield maneuver. The significance of the apparent trend of cheap,

easily available weapons destroying very expensive weapons considering American reliance on costly platforms like tanks, stealth fighters, and aircraft carriers.

Sean Lynn-Jones. 1995. "Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics," *Security Studies*, 4,4 (Summer), 660-91.

T.X. Hammes. 2021. "The Tactical Defense Becomes Dominant Again," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 103 (4th Q), 10-17.

Tim Sweijs, et al. 2026. Lessons that Transfer: Observations from the Russo-Ukraine War," Hague Centre for Strategic Studies [12 pgs.]

Virtual visit, combat medic, 225th Assault Brigade (Ukraine)

Thursday, 19 November: Autonomous weapons in military operations. Tech proliferation and its implications for civilian enterprise – military relations and for weapons procurement processes. Legal, moral, and ethical questions about autonomous weapons. What happens when America's Big Defense meets the buzz saw of cultures of innovation?

Peter Guest. 2024. "How the Ukraine-Russia War Is Reshaping the Tech Sector in Eastern Europe," *MIT Technology Review*.

Katerina Bondar. 2025. How Ukraine's War is Reshaping C4ISR for the Modern Battlefield. Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, May.

- **War Diary due (2nd installment)**

Tuesday, 24 November: New and old nuclear dilemmas: What does effective deterrence look like in the context of intensified competition among great and regional powers and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. What should one expect of crisis and wartime behavior in a world with multiple nuclear armed competitors? How can nuclear risks be mitigated?

Caitlin Talmadge. 2022. "Multipolar Deterrence in the Emerging Nuclear Era," 13-38, and Vipin Narang & Scott Sagan, "The Dangerous Nuclear Future," 230-250, both in Vipin Narang & Scott Sagan, eds. *The Fragile Balance of Terror: Deterrence in the New Nuclear Age*. Cornell University Press. NOTE: This entire book is open-access.

- **Way of Future War Briefings – Presentations in class and submission via Canvas Monday 23 November by 23:59 & some change.**

WCAS reading period begins Monday, 30 November & Fall term examinations begin on Monday, 7 December. Have a great Winter Break!

FUTURE WAY OF WAR BRIEFING EVALUATION METRIC

Your Presentation of the 2-page PPT:

Criterion	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Strategic implication	Clearly identifies how your war fits in changes in larger global order	Mentions strategic implications but doesn't fully explain significance	No clear connection of your war to wider changes in global order
Engagement with Concepts / debates	Question or confirm ideas encountered in readings & class don't explain relevance	Mentions readings & class content but adds few details	Scant attention to readings & class content; just a tip of the hat to content
Professionalism & Clarity	Slides polished and well-organized and concise, speakers keep to time limit	Slides adequate but minor issues (e.g., too much / micro-text	Slides messy, disorganized; unprepared speakers just reading text; over time limit
Handling the Q&A, audience and Imposter President feedback	Responds to questions with precision, acknow-ledge limitations, engage constructively	Answer questions but vague and defensive, partially address feedback	Cannot answer questions; dismiss or ignore feedback, seem unfamiliar with project

Your Notes (to be submitted with your PPT presentations)

Excellent: Notes give the reader a clear picture of how you arrived at the decision to include information on the two slides. Did you find ideas and arguments from course materials to be especially compelling? Notes include debates and even disagreements between team members that are relevant to the decision process leading to the PPT. Notes also include information that you considered including but decided to leave out. Explain why that information was not included.

Satisfactory: Notes provide rationales to support the inclusion of information in the PPT presentation. The notes mention material considered but not included in the presentation, and there is an indication of the team's decision process. The relevance of course materials is noted. Problems with organization and clarity of the notes may exist

Needs Improvement: Notes partially explain why information was included in the PPT presentation, but the reader is left with only a partial picture of the decision process that produced the presentation. A few authors / ideas from the course are mentioned, but more as name dropping rather than explaining their relevance. The notes may have significant problems with clarity.

WHITEBOARD EXERCISE EVALUATION METRIC

Excellent: The student identifies a topic or concept that is central to the American way of war (i.e., jointness, air superiority, expeditionary warfare, etc.) and then in conjunction with student input identifies how this concept is translated into operations and doctrine, how it works and how it breaks down. The student's subsequent essay accurately captures this whiteboard exercise, along with the student's thoughtful analysis

Satisfactory: The student identifies a topic or concept and then in conjunction with student discussion develops a straightforward model that does more to define the topic or concept than to identify topic or concept nuances and where different choices would matter or where the concept might break down.

Needs Improvement: The concept or idea turns out not to be central to the course material at hand, the discussion with students is lackluster, and the essay reflects this superficial concept development.

WAY OF WAR DIARY EVALUATION METRIC

Excellent: Evidence of engagement with assigned readings, classroom discussions and other materials the student may find relevant or interesting. Excellent diary entries can be all text but also can include drawings, diagrams and other devices that help the diarist to grasp and present the material. Taking chances in expressing one's own ideas and arguments is valued, even if expressed tentatively.

Satisfactory: Entries show evidence of familiarity with readings and attention to classroom discussions, but there is little / uneven addition of the writer's reflections and thoughts. Some entries may be of a higher quality, but often the quality of entries drops over time, indicating deficiencies in budgeting time to this exercise or a series of "catchup" entries as the assignment due date draws near.

Needs Improvement: Sporadic entries summarize readings / discussion topics without the writer's reflections and thoughts. There is repetition across entries without clear evidence of the evolution of the writer's thoughts.

PARTICIPATION EVALUATION METRIC

Excellent: Active engagement on a regular basis; demonstrates preparation through familiarity with assigned readings and classroom conversation and discussion prompts for each class meeting in the class schedule. Ask questions. Respectfully respond to the arguments of others is valued, as is creativity and risk-taking in comments.

Satisfactory: Almost always present but limited participation in class discussions. Evidence of adequate preparation when presenting one's own ideas but signs that student did not listen to the contributions of others.

Needs Improvement: Non-participatory, unexplained absences, scrolling though social media during class meetings. Uncivil behavior.

Additional Resources

War on the Rocks provides what they call "experience-based commentary and analysis on national security affairs." The site features commentary and analysis that brings together debates about policy and operations. It's generally regarded among experts as among the more credible fact-based online venues of this sort. It attracts contributions from leading figures in the field.

Strategy Bridge publishes essays on strategy, national security, and military affairs. Its *Journal* focuses on 'big picture' topics and reviews of recent books. Its podcast series provides in-depth interviews with academic and policy experts on enduring issues that occupy the minds of people who think about strategy.

Small Wars Journal "facilitates the exchange of information among practitioners, thought leaders, and students of Small Wars, in order to advance knowledge and capabilities in the field." It is run by a private foundation, and its editor-in-chief is a retired USMCR Intelligence and Counterintelligence / HUMINT officer. Contributions tend to be from diverse perspectives and are sourced to varying degrees of reliability.

Lawfare publishes essays at the intersection of law, legal institutions, and national security topics, which include (among many others), topics such as cybersecurity, targeted killing, and secrecy & leaks, etc. The site is generally regarded as having a moderate-liberal bias, is reliably sourced, and usually has more academic contributors than most other sites. Contributors include scholars, and military and civilian experts. The editor-in-chief is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institute.

The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs is a think-tank affiliated with Harvard University, a big school out East. I suspect that the more seasoned among you may already know it. This center's mission includes advancing policy-relevant information about threats to U.S. national interests and international security threats. It is widely regarded as superior in terms of unbiased and well sourced factual reporting.

The Center for a New American Security is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank which specializes in U.S. national security issues. It strives to produce research that will inform bipartisan policy debate. The co-founders include a former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and a former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

Defense One is an online news site that reports primarily on matters relating to national defense and security and is owned by Atlantic Media. It reports on recent developments and provides policy analysis. It is regarded as reliably well-sourced and accurate among "security professionals" that include government officials, members of the military, and industry.

Task & Purpose provides news and analysis by and for the military community and the interested wider public. The site also covers general topics of military culture, history, opinion, and essays on post-military career advice. (For US military humor, try Duffelblog.)