

PSCI 3500

Human Security

University of North Texas - Fall 2026



Course Information

Meeting Information: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:35–10:55 AM, LANG 310

Instructor Information

Name: Dr. Melissa McKay
UNT Email: Melissa.McKay@unt.edu

Office Hours and Location

- Mondays, 7:00–8:00 PM on Zoom
- Thursdays, 11:00 AM–12:30 PM, Wooten 137
- By appointment throughout the week

Office: Wooten 137

Preferred Contact Method: Email or via Canvas “Inbox”

Expected Response Time: 24–48 hours

About PSCI 3500

Welcome to PSCI 3500. This course asks us to think beyond the traditional question of whether states are secure and instead ask whether people are secure. We will examine how political institutions, conflict, development, governance, rule of law, and public policy affect people's everyday safety and well-being.

This is a discussion- and engagement-heavy course. I do not expect you to arrive with every concept mastered. I do expect you to complete the assigned reading, come prepared to think aloud with your classmates, ask questions, test ideas, and revise your understanding as the semester develops.

My goal is for you to finish the course able to recognize human-security problems, explain the political and institutional forces behind them, and evaluate realistic responses — not simply memorize definitions.

Learning Outcomes and Alignment

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Distinguish national, international, and human security.
- Explain how development, governance, state capacity, conflict, and rule-of-law institutions shape human-security outcomes.
- Apply course concepts to contemporary and historical country cases using credible evidence.

- Analyze political incentives, institutional constraints, authority, capacity, and responsibility during complex security crises.
- Evaluate policy proposals for both likely effectiveness and political/institutional feasibility.
- Communicate a concise, evidence-based human-security assessment in written, visual, and oral formats.

Course Structure

The semester will typically follow a predictable pattern:

- Tuesdays will emphasize core concepts, short reading-comprehension checks, guided discussion, and application of the assigned reading.
- Thursdays will focus on discussing our common-read books, application to students' project countries, Country Assessment workshops, or structured peer reviews.
- During our "Reacting to the Past" simulation, the normal weekly rhythm pauses, and class meetings are devoted primarily to gameplay and debriefing.
- All required coursework is planned to be completed by December 3, before finals week.
- All due dates, assignment details, additional readings, or any other supplemental materials for this class are provided via Canvas.

Course Materials

Title	Author(s)	Publisher / Year	ISBN
National, International, and Human Security: Protection Against Violence (3rd ed.)	Laura Neack	Rowman & Littlefield, 2023	9781538168028
The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It	Paul Collier	Oxford, 2007	9780195311457
The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence	Gary A. Haugen & Victor Boutros	Oxford University Press, 2014	9780199937875
The Needs of Others: Human Rights, International Organizations, and Intervention in Rwanda, 1994	Kelly McFall	UNC Press, 2022	9781469670683

Used copies of all four texts are typically available through online and second-hand booksellers.

Course-Specific Technology

In order to be successful in this class, you will need at least:

- Consistent access to a laptop or computer
- Consistent internet connection to access Canvas and shared resources
- Consistent access to UNT email
- A device or laptop on which you can use iClicker (UNT has paid for the license; you will need it installed or accessed online)

Major Assignments and Assessments

Assessment Category	% of Grade
Reading & Preparation	15%
In-Class Activities & Discussions	15%
Midterm Policy Memo	15%
Reacting to the Past Simulation	20%
Country Assessment & Policy Analysis	35%

Reading and Preparation Checks — 15%

Reading and comprehension checks will usually contain a small number of questions covering the most important concepts and arguments from the assigned reading. Additional iClicker questions may be used during discussion for application or opinion and may be graded differently from comprehension questions.

In-Class Activities & Discussions — 15%

Short reading-comprehension checks, group discussions, concept-application activities, Country Concept Diagnostics, peer review, and other low-stakes in-class work fall in this category. Most reading checks will use iClicker and focus on central concepts rather than minor details.

Midterm Policy Memo — 15%

The midterm is an individual policy memo completed before the Rwanda simulation. Students will analyze a human-security problem in an assigned/approved country, apply first-half course concepts, and make a realistic policy recommendation.

Rwanda Simulation — 20%

Students will participate in the Reacting to the Past Rwanda 1994 simulation across seven game sessions. Assessment emphasizes preparation, substantive engagement, role responsibilities, and a short post-simulation Responsibility & Accountability Reflection - not whether a faction "wins."

Country Assessment — 35%

The semester-long Human Security & Governance Country Assessment is built in stages. Phases 1–4 address (1) development/governance/state capacity, (2) conflict/political violence/institutional resilience, (3) rule of law/justice/everyday violence, and (4) policy response/feasibility. Students revise and integrate the stages into a final assessment and communicate key findings in a one-page policy poster for the final gallery walk.

Grading and Feedback

Low-stakes activities are intended to reward preparation and engagement without making every class meeting feel like a high-stakes test. Major written assignments are graded using the rubric posted with the assignment in Canvas. Country Assessment stages are scaffolded so that students receive workshop time and peer feedback before later integration into the final report.

Assignment Instructions and Details

Detailed instructions, rubrics, due times, and any updates will be posted in Canvas. Standard mathematical rounding is used to record earned grades:

Letter Grade	Numeric Range
A	90–100
B	80–89
C	70–79
D	60–69
F	Under 60

Course Calendar — Fall 2026

Week / Dates	Topics
Week 1 — Aug. 18–20	Introduction to security and human security
Week 2 — Aug. 25–27	The meaning of security and national security
Week 3 — Sept. 1–3	Human security and internal security
Week 4 — Sept. 8–10	Conflict, development, and the conflict trap
Week 5 — Sept. 15–17	Natural resources, geography, and development
Week 6 — Sept. 22–24	Governance, state capacity, and policy responses
Week 7 — Sept. 29–Oct. 1	International security and introduction to simulation
Week 8 — Oct. 6–8	The United Nations and Rwanda simulation
Week 9 — Oct. 13–15	Rwanda simulation
Week 10 — Oct. 20–22	Rwanda simulation
Week 11 — Oct. 27–29	Rwanda simulation conclusion
Week 12 — Nov. 3–5	Everyday violence and the public justice gap
Week 13 — Nov. 10–12	Rule of law, corruption, and impunity
Week 14 — Nov. 17–19	Institutional reform, policy, and feasibility
Nov. 24–26	Thanksgiving — No class
Week 15 — Dec. 1–3	Course synthesis and country policy presentations

Dr. McKay reserves the right to make changes to this schedule as the needs of the semester change.

Authorized Absences Policy

An absence will be excused by the university for:

- Religious holy day, including travel for that purpose
- Participation in an official university function
- Required military service, including travel for that purpose
- Pregnancy and parenting under Title IX
- When the University is officially closed

For more details and procedures regarding UNT Authorized Absences, see Policy 06.039.

Absences that do not fall under Title IX, Required Military Service, and Official University Absences (religious holy days, participation in an official university function, and when the University is officially closed) are deemed a matter between the student and their faculty member. If the absence is due to an illness or extenuating circumstance that exceeds 5 consecutive days, the faculty member may request that the student provide documentation through the Dean of Students' office.

Course Absence Policy

Show up for yourself

Attendance at every class meeting is expected and is more than simply showing up and sitting in a seat. To do well in this class, you must show up for yourself by being present and doing the assigned coursework and collaborate in a positive and valuable manner.

A few notes about attendance:

- Attendance will be recorded via iClicker or other interactive engagement.
- Attendance is not directly calculated as part of your semester grade. However, it may be considered when assessing your Engagement grade and when evaluating requests for extensions or other flexibility.
- If you are absent, assigned homework is still due unless you have made arrangements with me prior.
- Check the LMS, refer to the syllabus, and ask a classmate for any missed notes or other insight into what you missed. It is your responsibility to stay on top of your progress.
- You are not required to email me to let me know you won't be able to attend a class meeting.
- After an absence, please do not email me asking what you missed. Everything is in the syllabus and organized in detail in Canvas.

UNT Academic Integrity Policy

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Course Academic Integrity Policy

- If work is found to be academically dishonest, the instructor reserves the right to reassess past assignment submissions and regrade accordingly.
- If cheating, plagiarism, or any other academic dishonesty is discovered, the assignment or exam will automatically receive a zero with no opportunity for resubmission.
- This includes any un-cited AI-generated content, AI-generated content submitted as the student's own, or any other unauthorized use of AI.
- **Any attempt to represent GenAI output as a student's own work will be considered plagiarism, fabrication, and/or cheating as determined on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to an academic integrity violation report.**

AI Use Practice

In this course, the use of GenAI tools is limited as directed by the instructor. Any additional use requires explicit permission, proper citation, and authentic student work.

Course-Level Practices

Late Assignment Policy

- Due dates and times are clearly marked in Canvas for each assignment; allowing students to turn in homework late is not an equitable approach to learning. All students have the same number of days to complete the same work.
- All assignments are due by 11:59 PM on the assigned due date.
- There are no makeup opportunities for in-class activities or discussions.
- Important: If you miss an assignment, it will not be the end of the world. If you become ill for an extended time or another barrier presents itself, reach out immediately so a plan can be made to get caught up.

Miscellaneous Grading Policies

- Please do not request extra credit for yourself. If there is an activity that the instructor feels would be relevant, it will be offered to the entire class.
- If you have any questions about how an assignment was graded, see a potential error in grading, or have any other question regarding a recorded grade, you have 14 calendar days to request a meeting to raise the question or dispute a grade. After 14 days, older closed assignments will not be reopened for regrading.
- Students should review the assignment details and reflect on the quality of the work turned in. To meet, email the instructor to set up a time (grades cannot be discussed over email). Come to the scheduled meeting with evidence that demonstrates you earned a higher grade than received. Missing the scheduled meeting forfeits the right to the grade dispute.

Use of Canvas

Copies of the syllabus, assignments, grades, instructor contact information, calendar, and other important course documents can be found on the course Canvas site. Assignments will be submitted via Canvas. Written work may be submitted using a plagiarism detection software program.

Individual technical issues are the responsibility of the student. Late assignments, retakes, and/or make-ups will not be granted due to electronic malfunctions. Plan ahead to ensure reliable internet service and address any potential technical issues in advance.

Syllabus Change Policy

Due dates for assignments can be found in the course schedule and in Canvas. In the case of a date change for an assignment, exam, or any other syllabus change, the instructor will notify students through an announcement in Canvas and in class.

Academic Support and Student Services

Technology Support

Part of working in the online environment involves managing the inconveniences and frustrations that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. UNT's Student Help Desk can assist with Canvas or other technology issues:

- Phone: 940-565-2324
- Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Academic Support Services

- UNT Academic Resource Center — bookstore, registration and advising, tuition, and financial aid information
- UNT Academic Success Center — academic support services and free individual tutoring
- UNT Writing Lab
- UNT Libraries

Student Services

- Counseling and Testing Services
- Student Affairs Care Team
- Student Health and Wellness Center
- Student Legal Services
- UNT Food Pantry

Civil Discourse

As a leading public university, the University of North Texas has a fundamental responsibility to create enduring value for the public good. The fulfillment of our mission as a university depends upon the free exchange of ideas in the pursuit of knowledge. We bring these commitments into action by centering civil discourse in our culture and curriculum. We define civil discourse as the practice of constructive dialogue to broaden understanding, grounded in our shared values and deep respect for each other's potential. By committing to this practice, we seek to equip every student with skills and mindsets to engage, contribute, and lead — at UNT and throughout your lives.

My role as an instructor is to equip you to understand and evaluate scholarship pertaining to the topics of this course, facilitate discussions, and support critical thinking. Facts, questions, and ideas you encounter may sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable. Individuals may not always share the same viewpoints, and we should expect disagreement to be part of the learning process. At times, we may need to move on from a conversation without resolving every difference, while still treating each other with mutual respect. While we may engage in vigorous debate about competing ideas, speech that violates the Student Code of Conduct, including speech that harasses a specific individual or disrupts the course, is not acceptable and works against our educational mission.

University Policies

ADA Accommodation Statement

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. See the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (e.g., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, refer to the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom, and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Access to Information — Eagle Connect

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, visit eagleconnect.unt.edu.

Survivor Advocacy

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. Campus resources are available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources on and off campus.

- Survivor Advocates: SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or 940-565-2648 (Dean of Students Office)
- Title IX Coordinator (non-confidential reports): oeo@unt.edu or 940-565-2759

Pregnancy Modifications Under Title IX and Parenting Resources

UNT is committed to supporting students who may need pregnancy and parenting modifications in compliance with Title IX. Pregnant students or those with a pregnancy-related condition should visit report.unt.edu and complete the 'Request Pregnancy/Parenting Modifications' form. Parenting students who may need resources can seek support and guidance from the Dean of Students and the Eagle Engagement Center. See Pregnant and Parenting Students Policy number 16.008.

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