I encourage all students to make use of additional instruction (AI) and to contact me frequently by email with any questions or concerns about the course. These are valuable ways to clarify confusing concepts, ask questions about readings, or receive feedback on classroom performance. It is also often easiest to reply to longer or more detailed questions in person.

**Overview**

Scholars of grand strategy frequently debate what goals states should pursue and how to achieve them. These accounts almost always overlook the inputs of grand strategy, or the available resources that enable and constrain states’ strategic options. Broadly speaking, we can think about these resources as what makes a state *powerful*. To say that a state has power means that it can influence others to get what it wants. Power, therefore, is what allows states to have more freedom in designing and implementing a grand strategy.

This class examines the diverse ways states may conceptualize power and how they can accumulate it. We will ask and begin to answer the following questions, among others: What are the different types of power, and what can they help you achieve? Why are some states more powerful than others? What policies can states adopt to increase their power? What are the strategic tradeoffs in focusing on some types of power over others?

Block I provides an introduction to the concept of power. We will learn different definitions and components of power to understand what exactly allows states to pursue grand strategies. Block II explores explanations for why some states have been historically more successful at generating and applying power, such as geography, political institutions, and cultural norms. It also examines the domestic policies states can adopt to pursue power. Block III goes into more depth on the military dimension of power: what are the different ways states can design their militaries, and how do these decisions affect their ability to achieve their goals? Block IV concludes with a case study of the sources of American power and strategy after World War II.
**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Through their studies in SS458, each cadet will:

1. Increase his/her knowledge of the different types of power and core theories about how states become powerful.
2. Further develop his/her ability to understand and articulate the logic behind theoretical arguments, as well as the application of theory to explain historical examples.
3. Further develop his/her critical reading, research, writing, and communication skills.
4. Develop knowledge of and an interest in the history and political conditions of a particular country through in-depth research.
5. Apply concepts and theories from class to better understand the policy choices of particular countries.

**REQUIREMENTS**

There are two required books for this class. They are available through West Point, or you can find them on Amazon. They are:


This course adopts the standard SOSH department grading scale, ranging from A+ to F. Grades will be based on the following:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Strategy Workshop (DUE 13 SEPT)</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Reading Critiques (MULTIPLE DATES)</td>
<td>225</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country Backgrounder (DUE 24 SEPT)</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country Research Paper Outline (DUE 11 NOV)</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country Paper Outline Peer Review (IN CLASS 12 NOV)</td>
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<td>Country Research Paper (DUE 17 DEC)</td>
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**Participation**

This course is taught in a seminar style. Therefore, participation is critical to facilitate active learning. Grand strategy is a complex, rigorous, and often divisive field of study and each lesson will provide ample opportunity for debate and discussion. Students are expected to come to class
having read and critically engaged with the assigned reading, and ready to express their reasoned thoughts and opinions during class. Students will be evaluated on the quality (not necessarily quantity) of their participation. Quality participation includes—but is not limited to—answering tough questions, responding thoughtfully to classmates’ comments, and asking relevant questions.

To prepare for class, be sure to take notes while you read. I have provided lesson objectives for each class topic. The readings provide guidance for answering these questions, so you should read with these in mind and come to class ready to cite arguments from the readings to support your answers. While reading, pay attention to key arguments. Often, the authors will describe other people’s arguments (often called a “literature review”) before describing their own contributions. You should know both the author’s original ideas/critiques/theories and the “state of the literature” or alternative explanations they describe. Think about the authors assigned for each lesson as being in conversation with each other—even though sometimes this may be only indirectly. What would they have to say to each other? Are they in agreement? What do they have to say about other authors we have read in previous lessons? Think about these questions once you have finished the readings. In addition to knowing what the authors are saying, this will help you develop your own ideas: do you agree with either author? Why or why not?

**Remember, these authors are essentially presenting their own ideas, and I encourage you to disagree, challenge, or extend them.**

**Grand Strategy Workshop**

On September 13, The Rupert Johnson Grand Strategy Program is hosting a workshop featuring several prominent grand strategy scholars. Your attendance at assigned parts of this workshop is mandatory. By attending, you will learn more about cutting edge research on grand strategy and you will learn more about the research process for professional academics. In each workshop session, a visiting scholar will present a draft book chapter. Each of you will be assigned one draft chapter to read closely. Before the workshop, you must provide me with a brief description of your thoughts and questions; after the workshop, you must write a 2-page double-spaced reflection on your experience. I will provide additional instructions as the date approaches.

**Reading Critiques**

Three times throughout the semester, you will write a short response paper (3-4 pages, double-spaced) to one of the assigned readings. You may only choose one reading each lesson and one lesson per block, and the reading you choose must be at least ten pages long. These responses should briefly describe the reading’s argument and contribution: identify the specific question asked by your reading, describe its argument, and tie it into broader themes in both the lesson and the class. Most of this response should be your evaluation of the author’s argument.
LESSON SCHEDULE

BLOCK I: POWER AS A CONCEPT
Block Themes: Why is power important in international relations? What are the different ways scholars have defined power? What are the various components of power? Can we measure power, and why should we want to? Can weak states still achieve success in international relations? Can states be both strong and weak at the same time?

1) 20 AUG: Introduction: Why Study Power?
Lesson Objectives: Get to know your classmates and understand the course requirements. Why is power central to the study of international relations and grand strategy? What are key questions leaders should ask about the definition of power?


2) 22 AUG: What is Power? ***Bring your laptop to class
Lesson Objectives: What does it mean to say power is relational? What are the different “faces” of power? How can we measure power?

- Nye, The Future of Power, Chapter 1 (22 pages)
- Skim the selections from the Correlates of War Project’s National Military Capabilities dataset codebook

3) 26 AUG: Military Power
Lesson Objectives: What are different ways states can use their militaries to get what they want? How effective is the military as a tool for employing power today?

- Nye, The Future of Power, Chapter 2 (26 pages)

4) 29 AUG: *Class Drop*
5) 5 SEPT: **Economic Power**  
Lesson Objectives: How can countries use economic tools to get what they want? Is economic interdependence good or bad for grand strategy?

- Nye, *The Future of Power*, Chapter 3 (30 pages)

6) 11 SEPT: **Gender and Power**  
Lesson Objectives: How are feminist conceptualizations of power different from others we have studied so far? How do socially constructed notions of gender norms influence our understanding of power? Reflecting on West Point’s Stand Down Day, how do institutional structures in the army and at West Point reinforce gender stereotypes as they relate to power? How might these gendered beliefs impact military and national capabilities?


7) 13 SEPT: **Grand Strategy Book Workshop**  
Lesson Objectives: What are key questions in the contemporary literature on grand strategy? How well do these questions and theories help us understand how countries accumulate and utilize national resources? What does the research process look like?

- *Review Assignment Instructions and report to the SOSH Conference Room in Lincoln Hall at your assigned times*

8) 17 SEPT: **Soft Power**  
Lesson Objectives: How does soft power differ from other types of power? Should we care about soft power? What can a country do to increase its soft power?

- Nye, *The Future of Power*, Chapter 4 (32 pages)

9) 19 SEPT: **Information Power**  
Lesson Objectives: Should we think about cyber as a distinct type of power, or simply a new realm in which traditional power struggles play out? How does the rise of information technology shift the balance of power in global politics? Does it make states stronger or weaker?
• Nye, *The Future of Power*, Chapter 5 (40 pages)

10) 24 SEPT: **International vs. Domestic Power** ***Bring your laptop to class***
Lesson Objectives: Why do we need to conceptualize power differently for international and domestic politics? How can a state be strong domestically but weak nationally (or vice versa)? What is the relationship between domestic and international power?


**BLOCK II: SOURCES OF POWER**
*Block Themes:* What factors explain why some states are more powerful than others? How do these factors influence a state’s ability and willingness to extract resources? How do these factors impact the strategies states can or want to pursue? To what extent can states change the hand they’ve been dealt? How well do explanations for military power translate to other types of power?

11) 26 SEPT: **Geography**
Lesson Objectives: How can countries overcome poor resource endowments or bad geography? Do these factors determine national success? To what extent is the “paradox of plenty” or “resource curse” based on geography?


12) 30 SEPT: **Legitimacy**
Lesson Objectives: What makes a government legitimate? Can outside actors increase a country’s legitimacy? Can illegitimate governments still wield considerable power?
13) 4 OCT: *Class Drop*

14) 8 OCT: **Institutions**
Lesson Objectives: How has the legacy of colonialism impacted development around the world? How do domestic and international institutions impact how countries extract and allocate resources? Do different types of democratic institutions only matter on the margins?


15) 10 OCT: **Culture, Ideas, and Norms**
Lesson Objectives: How do ideas and culture affect countries’ abilities to generate power? What do we mean when we say “culture matters?” Is it possible to speak of a single national culture?

- Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford University Press, 2010), Chapter 1. (9 pages)

16) 15 OCT: **Organizational and Bureaucratic Policies**
Lesson Objectives: How do militaries resemble other types of large bureaucracies? What does organizational theory tell us about when states will adopt optimal military policies? Can these theories apply to power generation outside the military?

17) 17 OCT: **Economics and Finance**
Lesson Objectives: What factors enable a state to have freedom to use its economic power? What is the relationship between economic and military power? Why was the United States’ economy able to weather the 2008 financial crisis?


**BLOCK III: THE MILITARY AND POWER**
Block Themes: What does it mean to be militarily effective? What are the different roles militaries can play in different states? Why do some states have different goals or interests for their militaries? How can states improve the effectiveness of their militaries? How do military policies impact domestic power? How do societies, domestic politics, and domestic resources affect military power?

18) 21 OCT: **The Modern System**
Lesson Objectives: What are the key obstacles for modern militaries on the battlefield? What is the “Modern System” of battle? What are some obstacles to implementing the modern system? How well do you think the modern system can explain success in modern warfare?


19) 25 OCT: **Unit Cohesion**
Lesson Objectives: What is unit cohesion? Do Castillo and Mackenzie agree? What arguments have people made about its relationship to military effectiveness? How can countries generate unit cohesion?
• Megan Mackenzie, *Beyond the Band of Brothers: The US Military and the Myth that Women Can’t Fight* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapter 5 (21 pages)

20) 29 OCT: **Authoritarian Militaries**
Lesson Objectives: Why do dictators’ armies perform poorly in battle? What are the different roles of militaries in dictatorships versus in democracies? To what extent can the problems described in these readings also apply to democratic countries?

• Michael S. Chase et al, *China’s Incomplete Military Transformation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015), pages 43-61 (19 pages)

21) 31 OCT: **Military Development in Weak States**
Lesson Objectives: Is the technologically-intensive, centrally controlled, conventional military the best model for all states? Why do states adopt inappropriate or ineffective policies?


22) 5 NOV: **Military Recruitment: Conscripts and Volunteers**
Lesson Objectives: What are the different types of ways states can raise armies? How might conscripts and volunteers be different in terms of military effectiveness? What are the tradeoffs to consider in choosing one recruitment system over the other?

23) 7 NOV: **Military Recruitment: Personnel Policies**

Lesson Objectives: What are the opportunities and challenges associated with diversity in the armed forces? How well do current US military recruitment, promotion, and retention policies contribute to military effectiveness? What can arguments about diversity in the military tell us about the consequences for national capabilities of diversity in the rest of society?


24) 12 NOV: *Country Paper Peer Reviews* ***Bring your laptop to class***

Lesson Objectives: How does peer-review improve the research and writing process? How can I help my classmates write a better paper? What advice can my classmates give me to improve my paper?

- TBD

25) 15 NOV: **Unconventional Operations**

Lesson Objectives: How well do our understandings of power and victory in conventional conflict apply to counterinsurgency? In what ways are insurgent or rebel groups powerful, and why do they often beat conventionally stronger actors?

- Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, “Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars,” *International Organization* 63 (2009), 67-106. ***Skip the sections “The Puzzle and Our Data” (69-72) and “Robustness Checks” (92-94). (33 pages)

**BLOCK IV: SOURCES OF AMERICAN POWER**

Block Themes: Why has the United States developed the mechanisms of power creation that it has? Are these the ideal strategies for the United States? How does the United States compare to other countries (including your assigned country) in terms of power creation? Is the strategic synthesis that Friedberg describes appropriate for future challenges facing the United States?

26) 19 NOV: **Power and the American State: Historical Analysis**

Lesson Objectives: What are the sources of and constraints on American power? How well is the United States able to generate power and extract resources from the population?
27) 26 NOV: **Power and the American State: Cold War Synthesis and Strategies**  
*Lesson Objectives:* What were the alternative strategies of power creation the United States could have used during the Cold War? Why did the United States adopt the strategy it did? What were the positive and negative effects of this strategy? How well would these strategies translate into success today?

28) 2 DEC: **Power and the American State: Money**  
*Lesson Objectives:* What explains levels of American defense spending? Would or more less defense spending be better for American power today? How do different mechanisms of funding wars impact the ability to win?

29) 6 DEC: **Power and the American State: Military Personnel**  
*Lesson Objectives:* What explains levels of support for conscription in the United States? What purposes could conscription serve in the United States today?

30) 10 DEC: **Contemporary Challenges to State Power**  
*Lesson Objectives:* What does the rise of private security companies tell us about future challenges to state power, both in the realm of military affairs and for other types of power? Is the pursuit of primacy a worthwhile goal for most states? What about for the United States?