

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

HKS211x
**CENTRAL CHALLENGES OF AMERICAN NATIONAL SECURITY, STRATEGY,
AND THE PRESS**
GRAHAM ALLISON, DAVID E. SANGER, AND DEREK REVERON

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SYLLABUS – FALL 2013

Description: Iran’s nuclear ambitions, the slaughter in Syria’s civil war, WikiLeaks and the publication of classified information — these are among the challenges to American national security that students in 211x will wrestle with this year. This introduction is based on one of the most popular, and dynamic, courses taught at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. In each case, students are cast as a trusted National Security Council (NSC) staffer to President Obama, or to another principal in the policy-making process. Each case requires not only reexamining current U.S. strategy, but also identifying alternative strategies for protecting and advancing national interests.

In this course, students wrestle with some of the hardest American national security challenges of the decade ahead. From the Arab revolutions and intervention in Syria to combating Iran’s nuclear ambitions, students’ assignments require strategic thinking: analyzing dynamics of issues and developing strategies in the real world of Washington today. This requires clear thinking in the swirl of a government whose deliberations are discombobulated by leaks, reports about internal differences among policymakers, and press analyses. Students are cast as participants of the policymaking process, in most cases as a trusted member of the NSC reporting to the President or National Security Advisor, where they are required to devise strategies and write “Strategic Options Outlines.” Strategic Options Outlines combine careful analysis and strategic imagination, on the one hand, with the necessity to communicate to major constituencies in order to sustain public support, on the other. A subtheme of the course explores coping with a world where a pervasive press makes secrecy more often the exception than the rule. In each case, we explore how media coverage affects decision making, including an examination of WikiLeaks; revelations about drones and secret, American-led cyberattacks; the National Security Agency affair; and other examples of the publication of classified information.

Learning Objectives: To enhance participants’ ability to: (1) analyze issues in international affairs from a “policy perspective;” (2) think strategically about feasible interventions; (3) communicate analysis of issues in Strategic Options Outlines; (4) operate within current national security policymaking processes surrounded by an intrusive, inquiring press; and (5) appreciate the complexities of communicating national security policies to multiple audiences.

Expectations: You may apply to be among 500 participants in the Harvard Online Classroom, or you may enroll in the course (no application required) as an auditor by clicking the blue "Register for HKS211.1x" button on the [edX course page](#). Those admitted to the Harvard Online Classroom will watch the videos, read approximately 75 pages a week, complete ALL assignments, including the assessment question associated with the video lectures and three Strategic Options Outlines, by the deadlines set in the course, participate in sections led by Harvard Teaching Fellows, and contribute to moderated discussion forums with students online and in the Harvard campus classroom. At the conclusion of the course, those students who have satisfied all the requirements will receive a HarvardX certificate of mastery. Those who choose to audit the course can watch the videos, read the assigned course materials at their own pace, think about the assignments, and engage with their classmates in the discussion forum. Auditors are not eligible for a certificate at the conclusion of the course.

Throughout the course of the semester, it is recommended that participants read portions of the books listed below:

- Allison, Graham and Philip Zelikow. [*Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*](#). Addison-Wesley, 1999.
- New York Times. [*Open Secrets: WikiLeaks, War and American Diplomacy*](#). Grove Press, 2011.
- Sanger, David. [*Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power*](#). Crown, 2012.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Assignments:

All assignments must be submitted via email by 6:00 PM Boston, Massachusetts time (U.S. EST) on the due date. All assignments must follow the formatting guidelines posted on the course page.

Certificate of Mastery: Students in the Harvard Online Classroom must complete three Strategic Options Outlines (one of which – the Syria Practice Case – is a required component of the application) in adherence with the posted guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs), as well as the assessment questions associated with the video lectures, in order to receive a certificate of mastery. Participation in weekly discussion forums is also required.

HKS211x
Course Schedule – Fall 2013

W	Sept 11	Application for the Harvard Online Classroom Opens (Assignment: Practice Case—Syria)
M	Sept 23	Application for the Harvard Online Classroom Closes, 6:00 PM, EST (Syria Case Due, 6:00 PM EST)
W	Sept 25	Final Participants Notified
T	Oct 1	Course Launch
T-F	Oct 1-4	Syria Case Discussion
T	Oct 8	An Examination of National Interests, Strategy, and Conceptual Frameworks Assignment: Iran: “Olympic Games,” and Instruments of Power in International Relations
T-F	Oct 8-11	Discussion of National Interests, Strategy and Conceptual Frameworks
T	Oct 15	Iran Case Due, 6:00 PM EST
T-F	Oct 15-18	Iran Case Discussion
T-F	Oct 22-25	Discussion of Red Teaming Iran Cases, Red Lines
T	Oct 29	Assignment: NSA/Wikileaks Case: Press, Power, and the Peninsula
T-F	Oct 29-Nov 1	Discussion of Press Element, Historical Cases
T	Nov 5	NSA/WikiLeaks Case Due, 6:00 PM EST
T-F	Nov 5 - 9	Wikileaks Case Discussions in Forums
T	Nov 12	NSA/WikiLeaks Case Returned to Students
T-F	Nov 12-15	Wrap-Up Discussion Forums

*All dates subject to change

**Course participants should expect video chat and discussion forum opportunities during the month of November