

The George Washington University
Elliott School of International Affairs

IAFF 6502
Writing for International Policymakers
Spring 2018

Instructor: Ross Wilson
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Virtual Office Hours: Instructor available by telephone on Mondays when the course is in session at 10am-12pm EST and at other times by arrangement

Course Description

Clear, concise, and persuasive analytical writing is an essential skill for international affairs professionals. Effective policy analysis succinctly assesses matters in ways that provide information, context, and insight and makes useful recommendations. Key characteristics include focus and comprehensiveness, but also brevity and accessibility. This course will involve short, written assignments – US National Security Council- (NSC) style briefing memoranda, press statements, demarches, and talking points – aimed at developing skills necessary to support, inform, and influence policymakers and to implement policy.

To develop a common platform and work from similar material, initial sessions of class will revolve around three international problems the United States faced in the past: the crisis when North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950, the circumstances as Georgia and Russia clashed in August 2008, and Egypt as the Mubarak regime weakened in early 2011.

For the course's final project, students will write on a topic they chose. It must be a current, real-life issue that is foreign/international in nature (not mainly a domestic matter), whose outcome is unclear, in which the United States has a stake, and on which decisions must be made. It can be a conflict, an immediate problem, or some other on-going matter. Students are responsible for the research necessary to support their final project. Many therefore select a topic they have already worked on for another class, which is fine as long as the writing is the student's own. International students wishing to write from the perspective of and notionally for their home country's government may do so, but should discuss this in advance with the instructor. Recent examples of final project topics include the following.

- Conflicting claims in the South China Sea
- Syrian refugees
- Ethnic cleansing in Myanmar
- Hydrocarbon development in the Arctic
- Terrorism in North and Central Africa

Class will convene online via Blackboard Collaborate at 5:10-7:00pm EST on Tuesdays, January 16, 23, 30 and February 6, 13, and 20. Student participation is essential and, as noted below, will be reflected in course grades. An in-person meeting with the instructor may be scheduled during one of these time periods (to be determined).

Learning Outcomes

Successful students will emerge from the class better able to analyze, write, and advocate in ways appropriate for supporting policymakers and, more generally, in the professional/applied world. Specific skill sets include identifying key issues from confusing or complex data; writing and presenting material in an effective manner; formulating policy advice and recommendations applicable in the real world where policymakers must choose among competing priorities; and articulating policy to the public, to other governments, and in an interagency setting.

Format

Assignments for this course should appear in **Courier New 12** font, which has been (at least to 2009) what NSC papers actually use, and be **single-spaced** with double-spacing between paragraphs (like this paper). They should have margins akin to the default settings for Microsoft Word – i.e., one-inch on all sides – making the writing space about **9x6½ inches in size**. Each assignment specifies overall **page limits**. **Submissions that do not conform to the font, spacing and length limitations specified in the syllabus may be penalized.**

Papers should be written in **Microsoft Word or a compatible program**, which facilitates their assessment using **Word's Review function**. When students' work is returned, fully downloading it may be necessary to access the Word Review commentary provided.

Evaluation and Participation

The best grades will go to those papers that most comprehensively and insightfully deal with the substantive issues and are well written and presented, per the criteria below.

Substance

- Problem/issue and current state of affairs are well defined and detailed
- Analysis is comprehensive, objective, and relevant to the policy problem
- Recommendations are realistic and consistent with the analysis
- Press statement articulates a policy and what is being and should be done pursuant to it
- Demarche explains a policy and delivers appropriate messages
- Talking points advocate for a policy and key specific recommendations
- Analysis, recommendations, and implementing pieces are consistent with one another

Writing

- Clear, active, succinct, and interesting language
- Proper syntax, grammar, and spelling
- Formatting adds to accessibility by focusing on essential elements
- Package meets the expectations described in the syllabus

Standards

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|---|--|
| A | Excellent, including complete substance and writing largely free of issues |
| B | Good, with some substantive and/or writing issues |
| C | Fair-to-poor: many major substantive and/or writing problems |
| D | Unserious and sloppy |

Participation in the class's online sessions and in the form of serious critiques of other students' material is essential. Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Final project (one-third)
- All other writing assignments (one-third)
- Participation (one-third)

Academic Integrity

Graded work must accord with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For details and the complete code, see: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity.

Textbook & Materials

A textbook, Analysis & Writing for International Policymakers, and reading assignments on the common topics of Korea, Georgia/Russia, and Egypt appear in Blackboard Electronic Reserves. The textbook addresses the course's writing assignments and provides examples.

Prerequisites

This course is open to Elliott School graduate students. No other prerequisites exist. Students should ensure they have the required technology and skills necessary to participate fully in this online course. The minimum technology requirements for online students at George Washington appear at <http://www.gwu.edu/technology-requirements>.

Average Class and Out-of-Class Time Expected

Over 6 weeks, students should expect up to 8 hours (480 minutes) in the online, synchronous sessions of class and about 25 hours (1500 minutes) for skills development assignments. This

amounts to under 2 hours weekly online instruction and 4+ hours per week over a six-week period on course assignments. Non-native speakers of English and those who need writing help may wish to consult the University Writing Center, information on which can be found at writingcenter.gwu.edu.

Attendance, Participation, and Late Work

Students are required to log onto all synchronous sessions on time, to participate in these sessions (speak up, ask questions, etc.), to have read the assigned reading prior to each session, and to complete assignments by the due dates specified. **Students who must miss a synchronous session or submit assignments late should advise the instructor in a timely manner.** Failure to adhere to these requirements will affect the grades awarded.

Instructor Response Time

The instructor, who lives outside the Washington area, has no office or office hours on campus. For the period of the course, he will endeavor to make himself available to talk by phone on Monday mornings (10am-12pm) and at other times by arrangement. Students are encouraged to send an email to set up a call and/or with questions they may have.

Netiquette

Please observe the following rules of netiquette for communicating online:

- Remain professional, respectful, and courteous at all times.
- If you have a strong opinion on a topic, it is acceptable to express it as long as it is not phrased as an attack. Please be gracious with differing opinions.
- When upset, wait before responding. Messages sent in anger are often regretted later.

Week 1: Course Introduction and Outbreak of the Korean War

Students produce a first briefing memorandum and press statement on the crisis at the start of the Korean War.

A synchronous discussion takes place online at 5:10-7:00pm EST, Tuesday, January 16.

Objectives

- Review course objectives, content, and requirements
- Examine the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950: events, essential background/issues, and items for decision
- Understand the nature, purpose, and formatting of briefing memoranda
- Understand the nature, purpose, and format of press statements

Lecture (in Blackboard Electronic Reserves)

- Video: Course Introduction
- Video: Overview of Korea and the situation in June 1950

Reading (in Blackboard Electronic Reserves)

- Acheson, Dean, Present at the Creation; My Years in the State Department (Norton, 1969), pps. 402-425.
- Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Korea, Volume VII (excerpts).
- Wilson, Ross, Analysis & Writing for International Policymakers, Chapters 1 and 2.

Writing Assignment: Submit by Friday, January 19 to wilsonrl@gwu.edu:

- Two-page briefing memorandum on the Korea crisis for a US National Security Council (NSC) meeting on Sunday night, June 25, 1950
- US government press statement on the Korea crisis

Week 2: Georgia/Russia

Students produce a briefing memorandum, press statement, and demarche on the confrontation between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 and decide on a final project topic.

A synchronous discussion takes place online at 5:10-7:00pm EST, Tuesday, January 23.

Objectives

- Assess lessons learned from week 1
- Examine Georgia/Russia: events, essential background/issues, and items for decision
- Understand the nature, purpose, and format of demarches
- Identify final project topics

Lecture (in Blackboard Electronic Reserves)

- Video: Overview of Georgia/Russia and the situation in August 2008

Reading (in Blackboard Electronic Reserves)

- Schwirtz, Michael, Anne Barnard, and C.J. Chivers, "Russia and Georgia Clash over Separatist Region," New York Times, August 8, 2008.
- Barnard, Anne, "Georgia and Russia Nearing All-Out War," New York Times, August 9, 2008.
- Barnard, Anne, Andrew Kramer, and C.J. Chivers, "Russians Push Past Separatist Area to Assault Central Georgia," New York Times, August 10, 2008.

- Traub, James, “Taunting the Bear,” New York Times, August 10, 2008.
- Wilson, Ross, Analysis & Writing for International Policymakers, Chapters 3 and 6.

Writing Assignment: Submit by Friday, January 26 to wilsonrl@gwu.edu:

- Two-page briefing memorandum on Georgia/Russia for a US NSC meeting the morning of August 11, 2008
- US government press statement on the Georgia/Russia situation
- Demarche of up to one page on the Georgia/Russia situation for delivery to a regional government (that should be identified)
- Short (1 line) description of proposed final project topic

Week 3: Egypt/Mubarak

Students produce a briefing memorandum, press statement, and talking points on Egypt as the Mubarak regime is under challenge in early 2011.

A synchronous discussion takes place online at 5:10-7:00pm EST, Tuesday, January 30.

Objectives

- Assess lessons learned
- Examine Egypt/Mubarak: events, essential background/issues, and items for decision
- Understand the nature, purpose, and format of talking points

Lecture (in Blackboard Electronic Reserves)

- Video: Overview of Egypt and the situation in February 2011

Reading (in Blackboard Electronic Reserves)

- Hamzawy, Amr, “The Day of Anger – a New Protest Scene in Egypt,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 28, 2011.
- Remarks by the President on the Situation in Egypt, The White House, February 1, 2011.
- Sanger, David E., “As Mubarak Digs in, US Policy in Egypt is Complicated,” New York Times, February 5, 2011.
- Center for a New American Security, “At Risk in Egypt’s Turmoil: US Military Access to the Middle East,” February 5, 2011.
- Landler, Mark and Mark Mazzetti, “Obama Faces a Stark Choice on Mubarak,” New York Times, February 10, 2011.
- International Crisis Group, “Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (I): Egypt Victorious?” Middle East/North Africa Report No. 101, February 24, 2011, pps. 1-14.
- Wilson, Ross, Analysis & Writing for International Policymakers, Chapter 4.

Writing Assignment: Submit by Friday, February 2 to wilsonrl@gwu.edu:

- Two-page briefing memorandum on the situation in Egypt for a US NSC meeting the morning of February 11, 2011
- US government press statement on the situation in Egypt
- Talking points of up to one page for use by the US Secretary of State at the NSC meeting

Week 4: Review and First Drafts of Final Projects

Students produce first drafts of their final course projects and provide reactions to/commentary on other students' first drafts.

A synchronous discussion takes place online at 5:10-7:00pm EST, Tuesday, February 6.

Assignment: Final Project – 1st Draft

Part One: Submit by Wednesday, February 7 to wilsonrl@gwu.edu:

- Two-page first draft briefing memorandum for a US NSC or other senior-level interagency meeting on the topic selected
- First draft US government press statement on that topic
- First draft, up to one page, of a demarche for presentation to one or more foreign governments (which should be identified) **or** of talking points for the US Secretary of State at an internal USG meeting on that topic

Students will receive from the instructor one or more other students' first drafts to review.

Part Two: Submit by Friday, February 9 to relevant student drafter(s) and the instructor commentaries on others' first drafts– i.e., regarding their content/substance, format/accessibility, and writing effectiveness. These commentaries will be evaluated as one form of student participation in the class.

Weeks 5 & 6: Final Project Second Drafts and Course Conclusion

Students conclude the editing and revising of their final projects before submitting a last, polished version at the course's end.

Synchronous discussions take place online at 5:10-7:00pm EST, on Tuesdays, February 13 and 20.

Assignment: Final Project – 2nd Draft**Submit by Wednesday, February 14 to wilsonrl@gwu.edu:**

- Two-page second draft briefing memorandum for a US NSC or other senior-level interagency meeting on the topic selected
- Second draft US government press statement on that topic
- Second draft, up to one page, of a demarche for presentation to one or more foreign governments (which should be identified) **or** of talking points for the US Secretary of State at an internal USG meeting on that topic

Assignment: Final Project – Final Version**Submit by Tuesday, February 20 to wilsonrl@gwu.edu:**

- Final version of a two-page briefing memorandum for a US NSC or other senior-level interagency meeting on the topic selected
- Final version of a US government press statement on that topic
- Final version, up to one page, of a demarche for presentation to one or more foreign governments (which should be identified) **or** of talking points for the US Secretary of State at an internal USG meeting on that topic

Instructor Biography

Ambassador Ross Wilson is a distinguished senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, a visiting lecturer in international affairs at George Washington University, and chairman of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Turkish Studies. Over the course of a thirty-year career in the US Foreign Service, he served as American ambassador to Turkey in 2005-08 and to Azerbaijan in 2000-03. Elsewhere overseas, he held assignments at the US embassies in Moscow and Prague and at the US consulate general in Melbourne, Australia.

In Washington, Ambassador Wilson was principal deputy to the ambassador-at-large and special advisor to the Secretary of State for the new independent states of the former USSR in 1997-2000. He also served as deputy executive secretary of the State Department for Secretaries Baker, Eagleburger, and Christopher; chief of staff to Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick; chief US negotiator for the Free Trade Area of the Americas; and in the State Department offices dealing with the USSR and Egypt.

In 2010-2014, Ambassador Wilson was director of the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, where he led the Council's work on the former Soviet states, Turkey, and regional energy issues and organized the Council's annual Energy and Economic Summit in Istanbul.

A native of Minneapolis, Ambassador Wilson received a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota and master's degrees from Columbia University and the US National War College. He is a recipient of the president's Meritorious Service Award, as well as numerous Department

of State awards and honors. He presently serves as vice chairman of the board of Global Minnesota and on advisory councils to the Eurasia Foundation and American Voices. He holds memberships in the Academy of American Diplomacy, the American Foreign Service Association, and the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs, and he is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He is married to Margo Squire, formerly a career diplomat with the US Information Agency and State Department.

University Resources and Policies

- University Policy on Religious Holidays: Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays.
- Disability Support Services (DSS). Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in Rome Hall, Suite 102 to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information, see: disabilitysupport.gwu.edu.
- Mental Health Services 202-994-5300. The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations, confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information, see: counselingcenter.gwu.edu.