**Course description**

The moment of crisis is the moment of discrimination: it forces decisions of obvious consequence, pitting rival theories and their proponents against one another. The crisis is *par excellence* the moment at which theory and practice meet.

This course offers two analytical perspectives based on the study of twelve diplomatic and military crises that are frequently seen as turning points in the modern era. To contextualize each crisis, we explore what the dominant strategic theories were at the time and how they were deployed in practice in the heat of the crisis. (Think of this as a vertical, historically oriented axis of understanding.) Then we examine the linkages between crises. Are there modes of behavior or thought that are of general utility in such moments? Can strategic thought ever truly claim to be universally applicable? Did decision-makers learn and apply lessons from previous crises, and with what success? (Think of this as a horizontal, thematic axis of understanding.)

At its core, the course is an argument for bringing history back into the core of strategic thought. In short, it is an exercise in applied history.

The seminar will meet once a week, and each week will focus on a particular crisis. As far as possible, readings will available on the course iSite.

Participation in discussion will account for 20% of the final grade. A mid-term essay will take the form of a written case study based on one of the assigned topics. It will account
for 30% of the grade. As a final assignment, students will write a case study on a crisis not covered in the course. This will account for 50% of the final grade. Late submissions will be penalized.

Participation will be evaluated on the following basis:
A: No unexcused absences, thought leader and frequent participant, shows engagement with readings
A- to B+: No more than one unexcused absence, regular participant, shows some engagement with readings
B: No more than one unexcused absence, very limited participation and/or engagement with readings
B- and below: Unexcused absences or excessive lateness, limited participation

**Weekly Syllabus**

**Jan. 28 – Introduction**

Niall Ferguson, “K of the Castle”, *Times Literary Supplement* (November 26, 2014)

President Obama, “State of the Union Address” [foreign policy sections] (January

*NB All students wishing to be considered for this course will be expected to write a short two-page response paper in answer to the question “Does American foreign policy have a strategy or is it in crisis?” This paper is due by 9 a.m. on January 29. Papers should be emailed to nfergus@fas.harvard.edu.*

**Feb. 4 – The Revolutionary Wars and the Birth of Modern Warfare: The Battle of Jena and Carl von Clausewitz**

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (abridged) transl. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (1976), ed. Beatrice Hauser, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Book I, chs. 1 (pp. 13-31), 4-7 (pp. 61-73); Book VIII, chs. 1-6 (pp. 221-252). Please also read the two notes to future readers that Clausewitz wrote in the late 1820s, anticipating his own death: pp. 7-10.

Peter Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War, Prussia 1806* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), chs. 1 (pp. 1-32), 2 (pp. 79-103) and 3 (pp. 104-128). This book is available online on HOLLIS.


**Feb. 11 – Sea Power and the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1897-1912**


Feb. 18 – **The Outbreak of World War I, July-August 1914**


Ferguson, *Pity of War*, ch. 6.

Feb. 25 – **Munich, 1938**


March 4 – **The Korean War and Containment**


March 11 – The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962


March 18: SPRING BREAK: MID-TERM ESSAY DUE MARCH 25


John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno* (London: Macmillan, 2000), Introduction, ch. 5 (pp. 94-115) and Conclusion


Robert Osgood, *Limited War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). Introduction, chs. 4-5 (pp. 61-123), chs. 9-10 (pp. 194-287) and Conclusion.


April 1 – Escalation in Vietnam, 1965

1965

78. Notes of Meeting, Washington, July 22, 1965, 3-4:20 p.m.
85. Notes of Meeting, Camp David, Maryland, July 25, 1965, 5 p.m.


George C. Herring, LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), chs. 2 and 3 (pp. 25-88).


Neustadt and May, Thinking in Time, ch. 5.

VanDeMark, Brian, Into the Quagmire: Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995), chs. 8, 9 (pp. 153-214).

April 8 – New World Disorder: The Bosnian War and Peace


Chollet, Derek, The Road to Dayton (U.S. State Department Internal History) 5-30.

Fukuyama, Francis, The End of History and the Last Man, Introduction.

Holbrooke, Richard, To End A War, 60-75, 153-215, 288-312.


April 15 – **Double or Quits: Iraq and the 2007 Surge**


April 22 – **The Longest War: Afghanistan**


FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 8