

# Political Science 4403F Course Outline 2025-26

## 1. Course Information

### Course Information

*War on Terror*, POLS 4403F; undergraduate fall term; in-person on Monday, 2:30-4:20PM in Social Science Centre room 7210.

### Prerequisites

Political Science 2237E or Political Science 2537F/G.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

## 2. Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office	Phone	Office Hours
Dr. Nandita, Biswas Mellamphy	nbiswas[at]uwo.ca or mohuya[at]protonmail.com (either one is fine and both are unnecessary since I check both).	Social Science Bldg., Room 7316	519-661-2111 Ext. 8116 1	Mon 1:30-1:20PM, or schedule appointment.

## 3. Course Syllabus, Schedule, Delivery Mode

### Course Description:

What happens when war and militarization extend out of the space of the battlefield and become integrated into the civilian space of everyday life? Just as we have witnessed the global integration of information, communication, and trade which are no longer confined by territorial boundaries, so too can 'war' be seen as no longer confined to its classic theatre of operation, the battlefield. Today, in combination with the technological and informational revolutions characteristic of the 21st century, the governance of terror in the name of security has effectively led to the tactical and indefinite extension of war into all spheres of life.

The War on Terror, which began as a specifically American military doctrine, became a global-scale war on terrorism that has set the stage for global counter-terrorist mass- and micro-surveillance systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This course explores the War on Terror, the political theory of fear, and the consequences of global counter-terrorism surveillance systems on the erosion of civil liberties.

The course material draws from a growing international field of scholarship that researches the problematization of politics, security and war from the perspectives of critical security studies, political theory, surveillance studies, and communication studies.

Please note that this is a heavily theoretical course that draws on empirical materials. For those who would like some background reading on International Relations theories, please consult: *Critical Approaches to International Security* by K.M. Fierke and/or *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* by Cynthia Weber (these books have **not** been ordered at the Bookstore).

Weekly Course Topics include:

- Critical approaches to War on Terror
- Security and Insecurity
- War on Terror Narratives and the Politics of Fear
- Gendered Narratives of War on Terror
- States of exception and Asymmetric warfare
- Predation and Drone Warfare
- Social Media and Hybrid Warfare
- Biometrics and Surveillance
- Legislation, Policy, and Dissent
- Digital Information Warfare and Cognitive Warfare

### **Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse theories and methodological approaches in political science and recognize the ethical dimensions and problems of methodologies.
- Demonstrate an awareness of how power, culture and history condition/influence knowledge formation and be able to situate knowledge historically and contextually.
- Demonstrate understanding of the controversial nature of politics and recognize the limits of your own political knowledge, in light of exposure to information, concepts, theories and experience.
- Demonstrate well developed, independent information literacy and research skills and be able to identify goals for their own professional development and further learning.

- Work effectively with others, demonstrating the skills of giving constructive and critical feedback to peers, responding to feedback, and using active listening.

### **Delivery:**

This course has been designed to give you a holistic educational experience that combines various instructional methods:

- in-person/in-class active learning (i.e., discussions, debates, and structured in-class exercises),
- knowledge transmission (i.e., mini in-class lectures, reading academic works, multi-media viewing/listening)
- student communication activities (i.e., scholarly writing, and oral presentations)

This is an in-person course with 3 mandatory components:

**1-Weekly in-class component: Attendance and participation at in-person seminar** on Monday from 2:30pm-4:20pm. Attendance will be taken in class and no alternate assignments can be substituted for this component because the whole point is to have the opportunity for active in-class learning, discussions and debates. Class attendance and participation are important for meeting the class objectives.

If you cannot make it to class (e.g. due to an emergency), make sure you have the contact information of a couple of '**note-buddies**' in the class with whom you can trade notes when necessary. Next time you are in class, just introduce yourself to the person sitting next to you and exchange email addresses so that you have a class contact. Remember, **notes will NOT be provided by the instructor**, so it is your responsibility to get notes from your note-buddy if you miss class. The fundamental rule in this classroom is mutual respect for everyone, especially your colleagues. Please be mindful not to share your note buddy's information with anyone without permission from that person.

### **Think Labs**

I will begin each class with introductory remarks, followed by what I call a 'Think Lab' which is two back-to-back structured and guided round-table sessions that participants can prepare for in advance. For the first round, we will go around the table analyzing the weekly assigned readings picking out important points, themes, arguments and debates. Each round-table participant will get 2 minutes (timed) to identify analyze the readings and provide a critical synthesis of the main takeaways from the week's readings. Participants are expected to take good notes while the first round. At the end of the first round, participants will be given 8 minutes to prepare for the second roundtable session in which each participant will get 1 min (timed) to respond to a significant point made by one or more their peers from the last round table. Finally, the last 30 minutes will be devoted to writing an individual in-class essay based on a question posed by the instructor.

Students should bring their laptops to class so that they can type their essay using the course Brightspace website.

For instructions and guidelines for Think Labs, see [Think Lab Instructions and Guidelines](#)

For the grading guide for Think Lab participation, see [Grading guide for Think Lab participation](#)

**2- Weekly out-of-class component:** During the week, you will be expected to go to the course website to access the weekly assigned readings schedule and content. Be sure to take good notes because they will help inform your in-class participation and discussion. You can prepare ahead for the weekly Think lab roundtables.

**3- Scheduled Assignment:** In addition, there is one scheduled assignment in the form of a 'Final Project' that is to be submitted through the course Brightspace website via the 'Assignments' link (no print copies required). The assignment is due Dec 9, 2025 by 9AM (EST) and is worth 20% of your final grade. See below in the 'Methods of Evaluation' section for more detail.

### Schedule of Weekly Topics

Week 1/Sep 8	911 and the War on Terror: Introduction to course participants, outline, themes, and mechanics
Week 2/Sep 15	Critical Approaches to International Security and the 'Global War on Terror'
Week 3/Sep 22	The War on Terror and (In)Security: The United States and Canada
Week 4/Sep 29	War on Terror Narratives: War on Terror and the Politics of Fear
Week 5/Oct 6	Gendered Narratives of War on Terror
Week 6/Oct 13	Thanksgiving; no class
Week 7/Oct 20	Who is Friend and Who is Enemy? Asymmetrical Warfare
Week 8/Oct 27	Predation and Drone Warfare
Week 9/Nov 3	Fall Reading Week; no class
Week 10/Nov 10	Social Media and Hybrid Warfare
Week 11/Nov 17	Gender, Race and Biometric Surveillance
Week 12/ Nov 24	Liberty and/or Security? Legislating Anti-Terrorism and Criminalizing Dissent
Week 13/Dec 1	Understanding Digital Information Warfare
Week 14/Dec 8	Last class: Presenting your Final Project; each participant will get up to 2 minutes to present the main takeaway from their Final Project assignment (Pass/Fail)

### Relevant Key Sessional Dates for this course

September 4      First Day of Fall Term Classes

September 30	No classes - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
October 13	Thanksgiving Holiday
November 3–9	Fall Reading Week
December 9	Fall Term Classes end

### **Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning**

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on Brightspace for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

## **4. Course Materials**

### **Course Materials, Required Textbooks, Brightspace website**

False Security: The Radicalization of Canadian Anti-Terrorism by Craig Forcese and Kent Roach, Irwin Law Inc.

America's War on Terror: The State of the 9/11 Exception from Bush to Obama by Jason Ralph, Oxford University Press.

Taking Liberties: The War on Terror and the Erosion of American Democracy by Susan N. Herman, Oxford University Press.

The Bookstore will order the newest available edition, but older editions are acceptable. Other articles may be assigned to accompany your reading of the primary texts. All articles not found in the course textbooks are available on the course website (OWL).

All additional course material will be posted to course Brightspace website. Students are responsible for checking this course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the course site, they can seek support on the Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

### **Technical Requirements**

A functional computer with a wireless internet connection is required to bring to class and to complete the online component of some of the assignments. If you have concerns about this requirement, please contact the instructor immediately to discuss.

## **5. Methods of Evaluation**

- Seminar (Think Lab) Participation= best 4 out of 10(weeks 2-13)= each worth 10% for a total of 40% (based on Thinklabs, ie. making one 2m. oral presentation on takeaways from the readings and one 1m of peer feedback).
- In-class essays = weeks 2-13 will be graded and the best 4 out of 10 will count towards the final grade; each worth 10% for a total of 40 %.
- Scheduled Assignment=Final Project: Choose ONE of the following options for your final project:
  - Comparative Critical Book Review (of 3 course texts)= 20% due Dec 9, 2025 no later than 9 AM (EST). After this period, no further accommodation (except for emergencies) will be given to anyone without a penalty of 2%/day (including weekends and holidays). Research how to write a scholarly critical comparative book review and write one, reviewing the 3 main course textbooks. A guideline for the total length of the document is 10 double-spaced pages including a Works Cited page.

**OR**

- Policy Brief written for the government of Canada on Terrorism and Counter-terrorism= 20% due Dec 9, 2025 no later than 9 AM (EST). After this period, no further accommodation (except for emergencies) will be given to anyone without a penalty of 2%/day (including weekends and holidays). Research how to write a policy brief and write one for the government of Canada analyzing the topic of Terrorism and Counter-terrorism, and making policy recommendations. A guideline for the total length of the document is 10 double-spaced pages including a Works Cited page.

Be prepared to orally present the main takeaway of your final project at the last class of the course; each participant will get up to 2 minutes to present; this will be graded as Pass/Fail.

You cannot opt out of any of the assignments to pass the course; all are necessary to fulfill the course requirements. To pass the course, you must attend and participate in-person in 10 think labs, and submit a minimum number of 10 in-class essays (wks 2-13), and 1 final project (either a comparative critical book review of the 3 course textbooks, or a policy brief). Satisfying these requirements will demonstrate the minimal level of engagement to complete the course. You will not be penalized for failing to meet a requirement due to circumstances beyond your control but you will have to apply formally for academic consideration through your faculty Academic Counselling office.

### **Absences & Academic Consideration**

[https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic\\_consideration.html](https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html)

We all know that short-term absences can occur because all students must contend with ailments, varying demands, and the pressures of everyday life. Missing an occasional class/lecture/quiz

will not have a significant impact on your academics as a whole, and for the most part, you are able to catch up without incident. Part of being a student means learning to cope with and manage these ailments, demands, and pressures – all of which are reasonably expected to surface during the school year.

What will **not** qualify for academic consideration:

[https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/exams/index.html#No\\_AC](https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/exams/index.html#No_AC)

- Sleeping in
- Misreading the timetable
- Flight arrangements
- Moving

Professors are not required to set a special examination and requests of this nature will be denied. Students are expected to schedule their personal business such as changing residence, vacations and flights so that these activities do not conflict with the exam schedule.

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found [here](#).

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

#### **Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade**

There are no alternate assignments for missed classes (unless you have documentation proving that you had an unforeseen and unavoidable emergency/accident preventing you from attending the class in which case, the instructor may decide upon an alternate assignment; you must contact the instructor and provide your documentation as soon as possible).

#### **Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:**

For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

Note: missed work can only be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is not sufficient on its own. You should check the Western website to see what directives for COVID are to be followed. Western University has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

## **7. Accommodation and Accessibility**

### **Religious Accommodation**

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

### **Accommodation Policies**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

## **8. Academic Policies**

The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>.

In accordance with policy,

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies\\_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf),

the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

### **Policy on Using AI Tools in this Course**

Using AI tools can be useful for some disciplines. But for this course, AI tools can be more harmful and unreliable than useful for research. For instance, tools like chatGPT often fail to cite correctly, adequately, or reliably. For these reasons, The use of generative AI tools (such as



ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) **are not permitted** in this class; therefore, any use of AI tools for work in this class may be considered a violation of the University of Western Ontario's Academic Misconduct which may constitute a Scholastic Offence. The use of unauthorized AI tools can result in: a failure to receive full grades, the need to resubmit the assignment, need to orally present the assignment in office hours, or a failure to complete the requirements of the course.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university. The University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously (even when these are unintended because you should know when you are doing it).

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids
- Communicating with someone else during an exam or test
- Misrepresenting your identity when you knew or ought to have known you were doing it.

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes when you knew or ought to have known you were doing so.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from their instructors or from other institutional resources.

**Scholastic offences** are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

All required essays are subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

## **9. Support Services**

### **Academic Counselling**

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca/ssac/)

**Accessible Education**

For issues of accessibility contact Accessible Education at  
[http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

If you have any questions regarding academic accommodations, contact  
([http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/academic\\_accommodation.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/academic_accommodation.html))

**Health and Safety**

**Students** who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western  
(<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html).

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

**Learning Success Centre**

Learning-skills counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

**University Student Council**

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

*I hope you enjoy the course and wish you every success in completing it!*