DETERRENCE THEORY AND PRACTICE I

(DT5510)

SYLLABUS

AY 19

SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED NUCLEAR DETERRENCE STUDIES

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
21st Century Leaders for 21st Century Challenges
FOREWORD

This syllabus for the Deterrence Theory & Practice I course for School of Advanced Nuclear Deterrence Studies (SANDS) at the Air Command and Staff College, October - December 2018, provides both an overview of the course narrative, objectives, and questions, as well as a detailed description of each lesson to assist students in their reading and preparation for lecture and seminar. Included herein is information about course methods of evaluation, schedule, and the fulfilment of joint professional military education core goals.

SIGNED

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DETERRENCE THEORY & PRACTICE I
COURSE OVERVIEW

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is the first of a two-course sequence designed to introduce students to the origins and evolution of modern deterrence theory, strategy, and policy. This course traces the evolution of deterrence theory and practice from its classical origins to the end of the Cold War. It provides a foundational basis in both classical and conventional deterrence theory and practice before moving to a detailed examination of modern rational deterrence theory and its various extensions and implications, including the logic of mutually assured destruction and the stability-instability paradox. The course additionally examines alternatives to rational deterrence theory, including those based in psychology and behavioral economics.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend classical origins of rational deterrence theory.
2. Analyze the theoretical and practical differences between conventional deterrence and nuclear deterrence.
3. Assess the impact of the adoption of rational deterrence theory as a guiding principle by policy-makers in decision-making during the Cold War.

COURSE QUESTIONS
1. What is the relationship between classical deterrence and modern deterrence theory?
2. What are the similarities and differences between deterrence using conventional arms and nuclear weapons?
3. How was U.S. nuclear strategy and policy-making affected by the writings on the subject of deterrence and assurance?
4. Was the introduction of nuclear weapons revolutionary in terms of warfare strategy? How do we know?

COURSE ORGANIZATION AND NARRATIVE
This course will provide students with a knowledge of deterrence principles and a comprehension of the thought behind the theories developed in the Cold War. Through the historical case studies injected throughout the course, students will be able to see the principles applied and assess if the theory and the operationalization of that theory was a success.

As this course traces the origin and evolution of both deterrence theory and practice, the course adapts a chronological approach. It begins with a discussion of both classical and conventional deterrence theory, paying particular attention to the logic and assumptions of each so that students will gain an understanding of the differences and similarities between them and their modern (or nuclear) variants.

The course then engages the classic writings on the subject of deterrence, including works by Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, and Herman Kahn, to provide a solid knowledge of the theoretical debates that came to both dominate and define the field. Additionally, students should comprehend the underlying logic of extended deterrence, arms races, and arms control.
that emanate from these classical works. Students will analyze how these theoretical ideas influenced the creation of policy in the early post-war period and how these decisions, in many ways, contributed to the onset of the Cold War.

The course then turns to an exploration of the role of nuclear weapons in the development and implementation of strategy during the Cold War by both the United States and, by extension, the Soviet Union. Students will analyze how the development of the ICBM changed the Cold War deterrence structure as well as the mentality and culture of Strategic Air Command (SAC).

The course concludes with a two-part lesson that seeks to assess the impact nuclear weapons, and more specifically U.S. nuclear strategy, had on the outcome of the Cold War. Students will assess the historical record to determine if nuclear weapons revolutionized the conduct of international relations, both in theory and in practice, or were simply an evolution of existing capabilities and theory.

JOINT LEARNING AREAS AND OBJECTIVES (JPME-1)

Learning Area 1 - National Military Capabilities Strategy
a. Comprehend the capabilities and limitations of U.S. military forces to conduct the full range of military operations in pursuit of national interests.
   • DTP 2, DTP 12, and DTP 13 explore deterrence theory and options available to military commanders in order to fulfill national security objectives.

b. Comprehend the purpose, roles, authorities, responsibilities, functions, and relationships of the President, the Secretary of Defense, National Security Council, Homeland Security Council, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Combatant Commanders, Joint Force Commanders (JFCs), Service component commanders, and combat support agencies.
   • DTP 8 and DTP 12 use historical case studies to illustrate how guidance from the President and the NSC were translated into military options and subsequently executed.

c. Comprehend how the U.S. military is organized to plan, execute, sustain, and train for joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations.
   • DTP 8 and DTP11 use historical case studies to show how the nation trained and sustained a nuclear deterrent during the Cold War.

Learning Area 2 - Joint Doctrine and Concepts
  c. Apply solutions to operational problems in a volatile, uncertain, complex or ambiguous environment using critical thinking, operational art, and current joint doctrine.
     • DTP 1 analyzes the application of conventional deterrence to changing environments.

Learning Area 3 - Joint and Multinational Forces at the Operational Level of War
  c. Comprehend the interrelationships among the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war.
     • DTP 5 explores the topic of extended deterrence and how strategic objectives are translated into operational plans and concepts followed by execution at the tactical level.
d. Comprehend how theory and principles of joint operations pertain to the operational level of war across the range of military operations to include traditional and irregular warfare that impact the strategic environment.
   - DTP 1 and DTP 4 explore the notion of deterrence theory and how to operationalize theoretical concepts.

Learning Area 4 - Joint Planning and Execution Processes
a. Comprehend the relationship among national objectives and means available through the framework provided by the national level systems.
   - DTP 3, DTP 8 and DTP 9 analyze policy and strategy since the advent of the ICBM and ask students to assess how the strategy fulfilled national security objectives.

Learning Area 6 - Joint Operational Leadership and the Profession of Arms
b. Comprehend critical thinking and decision-making skills needed to anticipate and recognize change, lead transitions, and anticipate/adapt to surprise and uncertainty.
   - DTP 2, DTP 4, DTP 5, DTP 6, DTP 7, DTP 8, DTP 9, DTP 10 and DTP 14 all challenge the students to think critically about deterrence theory, the operational environment, and how to tailor deterrence to meet national objectives.

c. Comprehend the ethical dimension of operational leadership and the challenges that it may present when considering the values of the Profession of Arms.
   - DTP 2, DTP 5, and DTP 9 use historical case studies to explore the challenges national leadership faces when dealing with a nuclear threshold decision.
COURSE DELIVERABLES & EVALUATION

1. SEMINAR PARTICIPATION (20%) - Before attending seminar, students should complete all assigned readings for the day. Students are encouraged to read the explanation given in the syllabus before reading the assigned books and articles. Participation in the seminar discussions is vital to the success of the course, as it will demonstrate student knowledge and comprehension of the material; therefore, each member of the seminar is expected to contribute to the discussion.

2. RESPONSE PAPERS (40%): The second requirement of this course is a series of four response papers (each worth 10% of the course grade) focusing on the supplemental readings found in the course schedule below. These papers force the students to critically analyze the topics addressed in class broaden their exposure to the literature on the subject by incentivizing students to explore and comprehend additional material available on given subjects. Papers may be turned in during ny four weeks of the term. For example, a student could respond to the first four supplemental readings listed in the course schedule and be done for the duration of the course. Alternately, a student could choose to space out the papers and explore different topics in-depth.

Papers should be between two and three pages in length, double-spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman font. Papers are due at the beginning of class. No papers will be accepted late. These papers are to be your own original analyses.

In drafting your response papers, think about what the author is saying (or trying to say) and critically assess their argument. The student response paper should focus on presenting your argument in a logical, concise, and well-thought out manner. For each sentence you write, the student should ask, “Is this the best way that I can say this?” Formal citations are not required, simply putting the author last name and the page number in parentheses is sufficient.

Papers should include a header at the top right that lists student name, the class period topic, what number response paper this is for you, and the date. The student should also include a page number centered at the bottom of your paper.

3. FINAL EXAM (40%): There will be an open-book, in-class, comprehensive examination on the last day of the course, which will require students to assess and apply the concepts presented in the class. Further details will be announced during LESSON 14.

COURSE ADMINISTRATION

There are two types of readings in this course: 1) selections from books issued by SANDS; and 2) chapters and articles posted on Canvas. To avoid confusion, the syllabus denotes all readings
posted online as “EL” (“electronic”). Students can access the syllabus, course calendar, and selected readings as well as other supplemental materials online.

SANDS provides students with the following books, which do not have to be returned upon the conclusion of the course:


LESSON OBJECTIVES
1) Comprehend the classical origins of modern deterrence theory.
2) Comprehend conventional deterrence theory in the analysis of conflict.
3) Comprehend the practice of conventional deterrence prior the advent of nuclear weapons.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S) – Deterrence Theory and Practice before the Nuclear Age
Overview: This lesson is comprised of two parts. The first part introduces students to classic deterrence theory, as developed by utilitarian thinkers in the mid to late 18th century. Students will gain exposure to the works of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, and in particular their writings on criminal deterrence and rational choice, in order to develop an understanding of the historical foundations of general deterrence theory.

The second part of this lesson will introduce students to the practice of conventional deterrence in both a classic and modern context. Students will discuss, in detail, the role of deterrence in the practice of conventional warfare, based on the arguments presented in John Mearsheimer’s Conventional Deterrence.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS
1. Mearsheimer, John, Conventional Deterrence, Read Intro, Chap 1, 6, 7, and 8 (107 pgs.). Students should skim 3, 4, and 5 to comprehend how deterrence theory was applied in these historical cases.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Assess the impact of the introduction of atomic weapons on the conduct of war.
2. Comprehend the impact of the introduction of missile technology on the conduct of war.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI: Atomic Weapons: A New Way of War?
Overview: The introduction of atomic weapons at the end of WWII led many to speculate how the conduct of warfare might change as a result. Central among them was Bernard Brodie whose oft-cited axiom about the avoidance of war in a world in which nuclear weapons existed suggested a fundamental change in the way that strategists and policy-makers should think about the role of warfare itself. This lesson will challenge students to assess the impact of nuclear weapons in the immediate post-WWII environment, 1945-1948, and attempt to predict what effect first atomic and later nuclear weapons might have on the role of interstate warfare.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS
1. Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age, Read Chaps 1, 5-8, 10-11 (227 pgs.). Students should skim Chaps 2-4 to understand why Brodie argues against an offensive posture in the nuclear age. Students should skim Chapter 9 as there will be a future lesson on Limited Nuclear War.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
DAY 3

DT1-503 (S) – BRINKMANSHIP & RATIONAL DETERRENCE THEORY

DATE: 22 OCTOBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Assess the basic concepts in game theory and its application to the study of conflict.
2. Assess the dynamics of the brinkmanship game.
3. Comprehend the logic and implications of rational deterrence theory.
4. Assess the contribution of Thomas Schelling to U.S. nuclear strategy and policy-making during the Cold War.

LESSON OVERVIEW

DTPI (S) – Brinkmanship & Rational Deterrence Theory

Overview: Considered the father of rational deterrence theory, Thomas Schelling used game theory to demonstrate a unique solution to the brinkmanship game, likened to “the game of chicken.” Schelling’s solution demonstrated how something seemingly irrational, the threatening of the use of nuclear weapons, could be made rational. Students will be introduced to basic concepts of game theory before moving on to a detailed discussion of the brinkmanship game and its unique solution. This will then segue into a discussion of rational deterrence theory and its many variations and implications as well as assessing Cold War deterrence strategy and policy.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS

2. Schelling, Arms and Influence, Chaps 5-7 (190-286).

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

DAY 4
DT1-504 (S) – WHAT MAKES DETERRENT THREATS CREDIBLE? THE SCHELLING-KAHN DEBATE

DATE: 25 OCTOBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze the difference of Herman Kahn’s approach to deterrence with that of Schelling.
2. Analyze the ramifications of the U.S. government’s adoption of Schelling’s approach to deterrence, as detailed in Payne’s *Great American Gamble*.

LESSON OVERVIEW

DTPI (S): What Makes Deterrent Threats Credible? The Schelling-Kahn Debate

Overview: Standing in stark contrast to the prescriptions of Thomas Schelling, Herman Kahn suggested not only that the United States could win a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union, but must prepare to do so if it wished to avoid having to engage in such a conflict. Deterrence, Kahn argued, occurred only when a state signals that it is willing to do what it takes to win prior to the onset of conflict. Furthermore, he suggested that the United States could manipulate escalation up the ladder in order to achieve victory against the Soviet Union. This lesson will give students a knowledge of Kahn’s argument as well as a comprehension of how the U.S. government adopted more aspects of Schelling’s model over Kahn’s. Finally, students will assess how this work impacted the Bush NPR previously discussed in the elective.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS


SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

DAY 5
DT1-505 (S) –THE LOGIC OF EXTENDED DETERRENCE

DATE: 1 NOVEMBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the logic of extended deterrence.
2. Analyze the role of the United States’ nuclear umbrella in its approach to foreign policy-making during the Cold War.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Extended Deterrence
Overview: This lesson is composed of two parts. The first part of the seminar asks students to understand and comprehend the logic of extended deterrence. The lesson will explore the question of whether deterrence can actually be extended and what it means, in both a theoretical and strategic sense, to do so. The second part of the lesson analyzes the role of extended deterrence in U.S. policy during the Cold War and how the U.S. approach to extended deterrence evolved over time.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
DAY 6
DT1-506 (S) – CHALLENGES TO RATIONAL DETERRENCE THEORY

DATE: 5 NOVEMBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the major criticisms of and alternatives to rational deterrence theory.
2. Assess the impact of the major criticisms and alternatives on policy-making.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Challenges to Rational Deterrence Theory
Overview: The lesson exposes students to various criticisms and alternative approaches to rational deterrence theory, paying particular attention to psychological and cognitive approaches. Students will comprehend the rational behind these alternative views and assess their impact on policymaking. Furthermore, students will be introduced to the work of Robert Jervis, who, in both The Psychology of Deterrence and the seminal Perception and Misperception in International Politics, challenged the conventional wisdom and underlying logic of rational deterrence theory.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
2. Jervis et al., The Psychology of Deterrence, 1-88, 125-152.
LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Analyze the theoretical underpinnings of nuclear escalation, including such key concepts as escalation control and dominance and the stability-instability paradox.
2. Comprehend the evolving approach to nuclear escalation adopted by both the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Escalation Dynamics and the Stability-Instability Paradox
Overview: Perhaps the principle concern of the great powers during the Cold War was how to prevent escalation by either party to the level of nuclear weapons use while simultaneously signaling a willingness to do so if necessary. This dynamic gave rise to a vast literature on how to both manage and take advantage of crisis escalation. This lesson provides students a comprehension of the underlying dynamics of escalation, as practiced and theorized about during the Cold War. Students will analyze escalation in order to understand what Glenn Snyder famously termed the “stability-instability paradox.”

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Analyze the causes and consequences of mutually assured destruction (MAD).
2. Assess the difference between mutual destruction and mutual vulnerability.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Mutually Assured Destruction and the Stability-Instability Paradox
Overview: For much of the Cold War, mutually assured destruction (MAD) was the prevailing dynamic underlying almost all of the interactions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Often mistakenly considered a doctrine or strategy, MAD forced both superpowers to rethink their approaches to conflict (which led to proxy wars), and their approaches to the conduct of international relations. Particularly affected was each party’s approach to extended deterrence. Students will assess the early Atomic Air offensive developed by Strategic Air Command based on the deterrence principals previously presented. Furthermore, students will assess the logic and thinking surrounding MAD as presented by Wohlstetter.

REQUIRED READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
DAY 9
DT1-509 (S) – THE LOGIC OF ARMS RACING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ICBM

DATE: 19 NOVEMBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the logic of arms races and its relationship to deterrence.
2. Analyze the role of the development of the ICBM in U.S. nuclear strategy during the Cold War.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): The Logic of Arms Racing and the Development of the ICBM

Overview: Often considered to be the promptest leg of the nuclear triad, the ICBM has been a mainstay of U.S. nuclear strategy for more than half a century. Students will comprehend the history of the development of the ICBM, the U.S. response to the Soviet program achieving first launch, and the integration of the ICBM in U.S. nuclear strategy. Each student will also analyze how the ICBM changed the Cold War dynamic as well as alert posture.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS
Sheehan, A Fiery Peace in a Cold War, Read Books 5, 6, and 7 (pgs. 231-459). Students should skim Books 1-4 for the historical context.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS
1. Jervis, Robert. Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton University Press, 2017 (Ch. 3)
DAY 10
DT1-510 (S) – ARMS CONTROL & DISARMAMENT

DATE: 26 NOVEMBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend the logic of arms control.
2. Analyze the history of disarmament endeavors during the Cold War.
3. Analyze the non-proliferation regime and the United States’ role in both creating and sustaining it during the Cold War.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Arms Control & Disarmament
Overview: This lesson introduces students to the logic and history of arms control and disarmament. The seminar begins by understanding the groundbreaking work of Robert Axelrod, who in his *Evolution of Cooperation*, showed that, even in an anarchic, self-help world, cooperation could and does occur. From there students will comprehend the conditions leading to the conclusion of the various arms control and disarmament treaties accepted by the United States and Soviet Union both during and after the Cold War. The discussion will conclude by analyzing the implications of both the history and logic of arms control and disarmament for future endeavors.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Analyze the development of SAC culture and the nuclear enterprise.
2. Comprehend how Gen LeMay affected a culture change within Strategic Air Command and how he built a force-in-being.
3. Analyze how realistic training, inspections, and competition were used to build a credible deterrent force.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): SAC Culture and its Impact on U.S. Strategy

Overview: Today, the United States strategy to use strategic bombers and atomic weapons as a deterrent to a large Soviet conventional army is retroactively labeled the “first offset.” In this lesson, student will gain knowledge and comprehension of how Gen Curtis LeMay and his band of ‘bomber general’ operationalized deterrence. SAC built a ‘force-in-being’ by training and preparing SAC warriors for the mission at hand. More importantly, students will analyze the culture of SAC leading up to the Cuban Missile Crisis and discuss what elements of that culture are still relevant today. Students will also analyze how leaders can change the culture of an organization.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS
1. Deaile, Always at War, Intro, Chaps 1-5.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
DAY 12
DT1-512 (S) – DETERRENCE SUCCESS VS. DETERRENCE FAILURE

DATE: 3 DECEMBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Comprehend what is success and failure in deterrence
3. Analyze the Cuban Missile Crisis as a case study in determining the criteria for success and/or failure in deterrence.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Deterrence Success vs. Deterrence Failure?
Overview: Much debate in recent years has occurred about how we should distinguish between cases of deterrence success and deterrence failure. The classic example of this is the Cuban Missile Crisis, where arguments can be made on both sides of the coin. Students will use the Cuban Missile Crisis as a way to comprehend the success or failure of deterrence. Furthermore, this case study allows students to assess when deterrence is considered successful. Finally, the lesson concludes by analyzing the criteria necessary to determine deterrence success.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS
1. Dobbs, One Minute to Midnight, Skim Chaps 1-3 for the context of the parties involved. Read Chaps 4-14 (pgs. 84-342).

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
DAY 13
DT1-513 (S) – RECONSIDERING THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN COLD WAR U.S. STRATEGY

DATE: 6 DECEMBER 2018

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Analyze the evolution of U.S. presidential decision-making surrounding the use and non-use of nuclear weapons.
2. Assess the lasting impact of the non-use of nuclear weapons during the Cold War.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Reconsidering the Role of Nuclear Weapons in Cold War U.S. Strategy
Overview: This lesson reviews the last two decades of the Cold War and the significant changes in both U.S. and Soviet nuclear strategy and doctrine during that period. The seminar begins with an analysis of various presidential administrations and their respective approach to deterrence and the roles of nuclear weapons in national security. It first explores the potential use of nuclear weapons by the Nixon administration during the Vietnam War in what is commonly termed a “madman” strategy. It then discusses President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), aka “Star Wars,” and its impact both on Soviet nuclear strategy and its decision to adopt the dual policies of glasnost and perestroika. As the seminar ends, students are asked to assess how deterrence worked during the Cold War.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. Assess the impact of nuclear weapons on the conduct of international relations during the Cold War.
2. Assess whether or not nuclear weapons revolutionized military strategy.

LESSON OVERVIEW
DTPI (S): Were Nuclear Weapons Revolutionary?
Overview: This concluding lesson of the course asks the fundamental question, “were nuclear weapons revolutionary?” Students will take a holistic approach to assessing whether the introduction of nuclear weapons changed the conduct of international relations, as well as determining the extent to which they influenced the outcome of the Cold War competition between the United States and Soviet Union. As the seminar continues, students will also assess if nuclear weapons revolutionized military strategy as well as what lessons can be learned from the Cold War that are applicable to current U.S. strategy and policy.

CONTACT HOURS: 3.0-hour seminar

REQUIRED READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS