



MA(DLB)0858

Politics of Nuclear Weapons and the Global Nuclear Order

Spring 2026

Course Information

Course Duration: 15 weeks

Credit Hours: 4 hours (3 hours lecture, 1 office hour)

Meetings: Prior appointment by email

Location:

Prerequisites:

Equivalent Courses:

Exclusive Courses:

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Shivani Singh

Biography: Dr. Shivani Singh is an Assistant Professor at the Jindal School of International Affairs. She worked as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the ERC-funded Third Nuclear Age project at the University of Leicester, U.K. She finished her Ph.D from department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University, U.K and obtained her M.A. and M.Phil degrees in politics with specialisation in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, India. Her expertise spans nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, radiological nuclear security, and the study of Global South countries within the nuclear order, with a particular focus on South Asia. She has written extensively on nuclear and security issues in India's major daily newspapers such as the Hindustan Times, renowned digital platforms such as the South Asia Voices, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), Nine Dash Line as well as journals including the International Spectator. Shivani was the recipient of the AberDoc and President's scholarship and a 2023 fellow of the Nuclear History Boot Camp organised by the

Wilson Centre's Nuclear Proliferation International History Project. She also served as the Vice-Chair and later, Chair of the Postgraduate Network Committee of the British International Studies Association (BISA) from 2021-2023. Shivani also served as a Senior Researcher in the Nuclear Security Programme at a Delhi-based think tank, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS).

Email:

Phone:

Office:

Office Hours: Wednesday, 12-1 pm

Homepage:

1. Course Description

The possession, manufacture and use of nuclear weapons continues to be a decisive factor in international politics and security. Eight decades since the nuclear age began, certain questions remain. What problems do nuclear weapons pose? Why do some states continue to possess nuclear weapons while others practice abstinence? What is the purpose of the nuclear order? Is nuclear deterrence a thing of the past? What would a world without nuclear weapons look like and how can that world be constituted?

This module seeks to answer these questions by introducing the students to the core issues and concepts that undergird the problem of nuclear weapons. The module will begin with a brief history of the conception of the nuclear order with the first atomic test in 1945, followed by a critical discussion of some traditional concepts like deterrence and arms control that are often invoked when studying the politics of nuclear weapons. The aim of this module is to situate nuclear weapons within the larger framing of great power politics and rising nuclear powers in the international order. We will also examine other important ways of 'knowing' what we 'know' about nuclear weapons from a feminist, critical, postcolonial and de-colonial lens, amongst others. Lastly, this module will encourage students to immerse in critical thinking on a world without nuclear weapons and brainstorm tangible ways in which this can be brought to fruition.

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
Demonstrate critical knowledge of core concepts associated with nuclear weapons and the global nuclear order such as nuclear (non) proliferation, deterrence and disarmament, nuclear	Weekly lectures with active class participation	Mid-Term and End-Term examination

order-making processes, nuture and so on.		
Familiarity with competing claims and debates in the nuclear politics discourse and an ability to situate each debate within the larger framework of the global nuclear order	Weekly lectures with active class participation	Mid-Term and End-Term examination
Have a decent understanding of different domestic, regional and global case studies in the literature and their historical context	Weekly lectures with active class participation	Mid-Term and End-Term examination
Ability to situate the historical and theoretical literature within contemporary strategic landscape and policy framing	Individual presentations and group activities like simulation exercises	Internals comprising of presentation and group work
Communicate arguments clearly and concisely through structured and evidence-based analysis.	Individual presentations	Internals comprising of presentation which will test the speaking skills and the ability to organize thoughts and opinions

3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Internals

Class Participation and Attendance (10%): It is important to create an environment for civil debate and discussion in class. Students will be expected to be respectful in their interactions with classmates and be open to considering new perspectives and ideas- even those they do not ultimately find persuasive. Part of their growth as future thought leaders, researchers and academics depends on their willingness to engage both critically and civilly with unfamiliar ideas and concepts that might challenge their assumptions about several topics covered in the course.

Presentation (40%): This will have the following components:

- Individual presentations on application of any nuclear concept or theory of student's choice to a contemporary world event and reflect critically upon relevant developments in real-time (25%)

Or

The Big Picture- Students will analyse 2-3 news articles of their choice on nuclear/security issues and critically reflect upon the rhetoric and reporting style, and critique the underlying assumptions that shape public opinion

- A simulation exercise (or a wargaming exercise depending on the students' choice) that will put the students in the shoes of policymakers, diplomats and strategists to test their decision-making skills, especially in times of a crisis. The students will be divided into teams and will be provided a set of materials including a fictitious scenario based on which each team will have to take a set of policy decisions at the government/military level. The students will be graded on their quality of engagement and contribution as a team member as well as on their individual performance (15%)

Midterm Examination (20%)

Externals

Endterm Examination (30%)

4. Grade Definition

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	Comments
O	80 and above		Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75-79		Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70-74		Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65-69		Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60-64		Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55-59		Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50-54		Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45-49		Pass 1: Pass with basic understanding of the subject

			matter.
P2	40-44		Pass 2: Pass with rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40		Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

5. Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas without proper acknowledgment. Any idea, sentence, or paragraph you take from a web source or printed material must be credited with the source. If you paraphrase or directly quote in the exam or essays, the source must be explicitly mentioned. You should not plagiarize content, be it from scholarly sources (i.e., books and journal articles) or the Internet. As per JSIA attendance policy, you are required to have a minimum of 75% attendance to be able to not obtain a "no-bar" status for this course. You will receive an attendance only if you attend the entire class. Please refrain from coming up with any excuse for a late show-up in the class.

6. Session Plan

Week 1: History of Nuclear Weapons and the Global Nuclear Order

Core Readings

Horsburgh, Nicola. *China and Global Nuclear Order: From Estrangement to Active Engagement* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, Introduction, pp.1-38.

Walker, William. "Nuclear Order and Disorder", *International Affairs*, 76 (2000), pp.702-724.

Hedley Bull, "Arms Control and World Order", *International Security*, 1(1), Summer 1976, pp. 3-16.

Craig, Campbell and Ruzicka, Jan. "The Non-Proliferation Complex." *Ethics and International Affairs*, 27 (2013), pp.329-348.

Further Readings

Walker, William. *A Perpetual Menace: Nuclear Weapons and International Order* London: Routledge, 2012.

Bull, Hedley. *The Control of the Arms Race: Disarmament and Arms Control in the Missile Age* New York: Praeger, 1961.

Freedman, Lawrence, and Jeffrey Michaels. *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* 4th ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Scott Sagan, Why do states make nuclear weapons? Three models in search of a bomb", *International Security*, 21:3, Winter 1996/1997, pp. 54-86.

Week 2: Concept of Deterrence

Core Readings

Waltz, Kenneth N. "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better." *Adelphi Papers* 21, no. 171 (1981): 1-32.

Christopher H. Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies", *World Politics*, 41:2, January 1989, pp. 143-169.

Pelopidas, Benoit. "The Unbearable Lightness of Luck: Three Sources of Overconfidence in the Manageability of Nuclear Crises." *European Journal of International Security* 2, no. 2 (2017): 240-262.

Scarry, Elaine. "The Extortionist's Doctrine." In *Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing Between Democracy and Doom*, 3-32. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.

Further Readings

Lebow, Richard Ned, and Janice Gross Stein. "Deterrence and the Cold War." *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (1995): 157-181.

Brodie, Bernard. "Implications for Military Strategy." In *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, edited by Bernard Brodie, 57-89. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1946.

Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Week 3: Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler, "The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear NonProliferation Treaty" *International Affairs*, 86: 1, January 2010, pp. 69-85.

Roger K. Smith, "Explaining the Non-Proliferation Regime: Anomalies for Contemporary International Relations Theory", *International Organization*, 41: 2, Spring 1987, pp. 253-281.

Anne Harrington de Santana, "The Strategy of Non-proliferation: Maintaining the Credibility of an Incredible Pledge to Disarm", *Millennium* 40(1), 2011, pp. 3-19.

Egeland, Kjølv, "The Ideology of Nuclear Order", *New Political Science*, 43 (2021), pp.208-230.

Week 4: Arms Race, Arms Control and the Three Nuclear Ages

Core Readings

Charles Glaser, "When Are Arms Races Dangerous? Rational versus Suboptimal Arming", *International Security*, 28 (2004), pp. 44-84.

Waltz, Kenneth N. "The Stability of a Bipolar World." *Daedalus* 93, no. 3 (1964): 881-909.

Avis Bohlen, "The Rise and Fall of Arms Control", *Survival*, 45(3), 2003, pp. 7-34.

Sagan, Carl, "Nuclear Winter" essay, *Parade Magazine*, 1983

Futter, Andrew, and Benjamin Zala. "The Emerging Third Nuclear Age." *Survival* 63, no. 5 (2021): 185-204.

Further Readings

Kahn, Herman. *On Thermonuclear War* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.

Bracken, Paul. *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger, and the New Power Politics* New York: Times Books, 2012.

Futter, Andrew. *The Politics of Nuclear Weapons* London: SAGE Publications, 2015.

Tannenwald, Nina. "The Third Nuclear Age: How I Learned to Start Worrying and Love the Bomb." *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 5, no. 1 (2022): 64-85.

Week 5: Bomb in the Popular Imagination

Core Readings

Taha, Hebatalla, "Atomic aesthetics: gender, visualization and popular culture in Egypt", *International Affairs*, 98 (2022), pp.1169-1187.

Raminder Kaur (2009), "Gods, Bombs and Social Imagery" in Itty Abraham (ed.), *Atomic Publics and the State in India and Pakistan*, Indiana University Press.

Gusterson, H. (1999) 'Nuclear Weapons and the Other in the Western Imagination', *Cultural Anthropology*, 14(1), pp. 111-143.

Pantoliano, Carolina, "Playing doomsday: Video games and the politics of nuclear weapons", *Review of International Studies*, 51(2025), pp.686-706.

Cohn, C. (1987) 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12 (4): 687-718.

Week 6: Revision

Week 7: Individual Presentations

Week 8: Challenging the Nuclear Order

Core Readings

Abraham, Itty. "Decolonizing Arms Control: The Asian African Legal Consultative Committee and the Legality of Nuclear Testing, 1960–64." *Asian Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 3 (2018): 314-330.

Biswas, S. (2014b) 'Whose Nuclear Order? A Postcolonial Critique of an Enlightenment Project'. *Nuclear desire: power and the postcolonial nuclear order*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 22 pp 75-108.

Paul, T.V., "The systemic bases of India's challenge to the global nuclear order", *The Nonproliferation Review*, 6 (1998), pp.1-11.

Singh, Shivani, "Exploring 'Accommodation' to Understand the Behaviour of Rising Powers in the Global Nuclear Order: The Cases of India and Brazil", *The International Spectator*, 58 (2024), pp.110-127.

Mazrui, Ali A. "The Political Culture of War and Nuclear Proliferation: A Third World Perspective." In *The Study of International Relations*, edited by Hugh C. Dyer and Leon Mangasarian, 119-144. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989.

Further Readings

Horsburgh, Nicola. *China and Global Nuclear Order: From Estrangement to Active Engagement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Sarkar, Jayita. *Ploughshares and Swords: India's Nuclear Program in the Global Cold War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022.

Olamide, Samuel, and Andrew Futter. "Accommodating Ntopia: The Nuclear Ban Treaty and the Developmental Interests of Global South Countries." *Third World Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2022): 505-523.

Week 9: Mid-Term Exam

Week 10: Nuclear Governance

Core Readings

Findlay, Trevor. "Global Nuclear Governance: 'Hard' and 'Soft' Institutions in a Time of Change." *International Journal* 71, no. 3 (2016): 441-462.

Allison, Graham, and Richard Falkenrath. "Strengthening Global Nuclear Governance." *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2010): 21-32.

Abraham, Itty. *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State*. London: Zed Books, 1998.

Further Readings

Born, Hans, Bates Gill, and Heiner Hänggi, eds. *Governing the Bomb: Civilian Control and Democratic Accountability of Nuclear Weapons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Perkovich, George. *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Week 11: Simulation Exercise

Week 12: Beyond Deterrence

Core Readings

Choi, Sine, and Catherine Eschle. "Rethinking Global Nuclear Politics, Rethinking Feminism." *International Affairs* 98, no. 1 (2022): 197-216.

Hecht, Gabrielle. "Nuclear Ontologies." *Constellations* 13, no. 3 (2006): 320-331.

Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Taha, Heba. "Hiroshima in Egypt: Interpretations and Imaginations of the Atomic Age." *Modern Asian Studies* 54, no. 4 (2020): 1047-1083.

Adams, L. (2019) 'The Human Cost of Nuclear Weapons is Not only a Feminine Concern', *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*.

Further Readings

Acheson, Ray. *Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy*. Lanham and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers/Rowman & Littlefield International, 2021.

Biswas, Shampa. *Nuclear Desire: Power and the Postcolonial Nuclear Order*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Vaughan, Tom. "Post-Nuclear Worldmaking and Counter-Hegemony: Against Catastrophic Failures of Imagination." *International Affairs* 98, no. 1 (2022): 179-196.

Week 13: The Nuclear Abolition Debate: Shifting Paradigms

Core Readings

Lewis, Patricia. "A New Approach to Nuclear Disarmament: Learning from International Humanitarian Law Success." Research Report No. 13, International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, 2009.

Mian, Zia. "Beyond the Security Debate: The Moral and Legal Dimensions of Abolition." *In Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: A Debate*, edited by George Perkovich and James Acton. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009.

Ford, Christopher A. "Debating Disarmament: Interpreting Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", *The Nonproliferation Review*, 14 (2007), pp.401-428.

Sharon Squassoni (2009), "The New Disarmament Discussion", *Current History*, 714: 33-38.

Sauer, Tom, and Paul Meyer. "The Nuclear Ban Treaty: A Sign of Global Impatience." *Survival* 60, no. 2 (2018): 61-72.

Further Readings

Egeland, Kjølsv. "Arms, Influence and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons." *European Journal of International Relations* 27, no. 2 (2021): 384-405.

Gibbons, Rebecca. "How Great Powers Resist Emerging Norms: The United States and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons." *Global Policy* 13, no. 1 (2022): 5-17.

Goddard, Stacie E., and Colleen Larkin. "Nuclear Shibboleths: The Logics and Future of Nuclear Nonuse." *International Organization* 78, no. 1 (2024): 1-35.

Week 14: Revision

Week 15: End Term Exam