

POGO 750

Conventional Military Operations

(As of 19 March '25)

Fall 2025

Tuesday 4:30 – 7:10

Van Metre Hall Room 313

Professor John Gordon

Office: Room 623 Van Metre Hall

jgordon@rand.org

jgordon1@gmu.edu

Purpose of the Course:

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the possibility of military conflicts in Asia over the South China Sea or Taiwan, and the increasing level of violence in the Middle East have resulted in renewed interest in conventional military operations. The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the terminology, techniques, technologies, organizations, and operational concepts associated with modern air, land, and naval operations. No prior military knowledge is required to take this course.

This form of conflict is normally associated with nation states, although well-armed non-state entities such as ISIS, Hezbollah, or Hamas have at least some ability to conduct conventional military operations along with the irregular warfare techniques that are normally associated with non-state actors. The course will focus on the air, land, and naval capabilities and operations of the U.S. military, but it will include information on other military forces such as Russia, China, North Korea, and selected NATO countries. The rapidly evolving nature of military operational concepts and technology will be highlighted in the course. How the U.S. creates and maintains its air, land, and naval forces will also be addressed.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be familiar with how conventional military operations are conducted. Topics in the course include how air, land, and naval operations are conducted, military operational concepts, technology, and organizations. Joint operations (where air, land, and naval capabilities are combined together) will be highlighted in this course. The course will provide students information on the conventional military operations and capabilities of other nations.

Required texts

- House, Jonathan M., *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (University of Kansas, 2001), ISBN 0700610987
- Budiansky, Stephen, *Air Power: The Men, Machines, and Ideas That Revolutionized War, from Kitty Hawk to Iraq*, (Viking, 2005, ISBN 9780141008301
- Speller, Ian, *Understanding Naval Warfare*, (Routledge: 2014) ISBN 9780415523455

In addition, a number of articles will be assigned, as announced in class, or as listed on the weekly class summaries, below.

The standard source of citation style used by the School of Public Policy is:

Hacker, Diana, *A Pocket Manual of Style*, 3rd Ed (NY: Bedford-St Martins, 2000)

The citation style required in this course is explained at the end of this syllabus.

Class Format

The course will be conducted as a combined lecture and seminar. It is important that students read each class period's assignments prior to arriving at class in order to be prepared for class discussions. Active class participation is mandatory. Professionals in public policy must be able to speak effectively in small groups as well as being able to make presentations of their work to an audience. The classroom environment will provide students an opportunity to develop these skills. Students will be required to orally summarize the material that will be due each week and participate in discussions about the material. In addition, research and writing skills are essential to the public policy professional. The term paper that will be assigned during the course will provide students with the opportunity to further their ability to prepare written reports.

Course Evaluation

Class participation	15%
Take home quiz	35%
Research Paper	50%

For purposes of this course, the grades of **A** or **A-** are reserved for sustained excellence and outstanding performance on all aspects of the course. The grades of **B** and **B+** are used to denote mastery of the material and very good performance on all aspects of the course. The grade of **B-** denotes marginal quality work that is not quite up to graduate student level standards. The grade of **C** denotes work that may be adequate for undergraduate performance, it is not acceptable at the graduate level. The grade of **F** denotes the failure to perform adequately on course assignments.

Attendance is required and will be taken into account in evaluation of the student's performance. While it is possible that the requirements of full time jobs may occasionally conflict with class times, missing more than two class sessions will make it difficult to earn a grade better than B for the course. Missing more than three sessions will make a grade of C likely.

Overdue papers will suffer a ½ grade penalty for each day they are late. For example, a paper due on Monday that would have received an A will be downgraded to an A- by the end of the day Tuesday. If the paper is not received until Wednesday it will be downgraded to a B+.

Even if you do not regularly use your GMU e-mail account, be sure to open it and place a forwarding address to the account that you regularly use so that you can get GMU, Schar School, and class announcements. Also be sure to empty your account occasionally, because if you do not and it exceeds the limit, you will not receive incoming e-mail until you have cleared the space.

Written Assignments

Each of your written assignments (quiz and final paper) must be submitted electronically, so that it can be checked through the school's data base service that surveys published and non-published papers, articles, and books for possible plagiarism. All papers must be in at least 12-point font, 1.5 spaced, and on standard 8.5 x 11 inch paper.

Take home Quiz

The quiz will be based on the readings and in-class discussions from roughly the first half of the course. Students will have several questions to select from. Content and writing style will be evaluated.

Research Paper

The research paper can be on a military technology, operational concept, or an actual military operation. Topics should be appropriate for the theme of this course. Paper topics will be submitted for approval no later than Class 5. The final paper will be due four days prior to the course's scheduled final exam.

Papers can be up to 15 pages (1.5 line spacing), with bibliography, foot or end notes, and space taken up by maps and diagrams (if any) not counted against that total.

Analytical Writing

For purposes of scholarly writing it is important to write analytically. Analytic writing is more than merely describing what others have said or describing institutions of government or public policy making (though description is often an essential aspect of analysis). Analysis involves more. In analysis you are asking and answering questions about the causes and consequences of whatever you are examining. You are seeking explanations for behavior. You are developing categories and frameworks that will help us understand political behavior and generalize insights from one case to other cases.

Ask the question: Of what is this an instance? When analyzing scholarly writing: Engage different ideas. Show how they differ and where they agree. Compare and contrast. Contrast different methods of understanding a phenomenon. What different types of evidence are adduced to make a point? Contrast different perspectives or approaches to a topic. Judge whether the reasoning is valid. Does the author's evidence support the conclusion of the article?

In Writing an Essay, remember: The introduction should say what the paper is about and how you will approach the topic. The paper should address one central question and have a thesis. The paper should be organized logically, with an evident structure. The reader should be told how each part of the paper is related to the other parts. Use subheadings to label different sections. Outline your paper after it is written to see if it flows logically. Proofread your paper for spelling and syntax. Be sure to cite all of your sources and use quotation marks when you use another's words.

Plagiarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable. Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that

arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined. Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F." This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.^[1]_{SEP}

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

Citations for Research Papers

The purposes of scholarly citations are several:

- 1) To show the source for a direct quote or fact not commonly known.
 - 2) To give credit for an idea to the author of a work
 - 3) To show the reader that you are familiar with other scholarship on your topic or to indicate where further information or analysis can be found.
 - 4) You may also use endnotes to explain something in the text or comment on the source.
- The intention is to give the reader enough information to find the source you are using so that he or she can see if you have quoted it correctly, interpreted it soundly, done justice to the author cited, or do further research on the topic in question themselves.

Format: use the standard Chicago Manual of Style format, also known as "Turabian." (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), or most recent edition.

Books: author, title (place of publication: publisher, date), page number(s). [Titles of books should be in italics or underlined.] Example:

1. John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1995). After the first full citation, you may use a shortened version: e.g.
2. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, page number(s).

Articles: author, title, name of journal (volume, number), page number(s). [Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks, names of journals underlined or in italics.]

Example:

1. Theodore J. Lowi, "The State in Political Science: How We Become What We Study," American Political Science Review Vol. 86, No. 1 (1992), pp. 1-7.

After first full citation, you may use a shortened version:

2. Lowi, "The State in Political Science," p. 3.

Chapters in edited Books: author of chapter (or article), title of chapter, "in" editor of book, title of book (place and date of publication), page numbers. Example:

Hugh Heclo, "The Changing Presidential Office," in James P. Pfiffner, ed. The Managerial Presidency (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), pp. 23-36

Web Site Citations: In addition to author, title, etc, include the following information: Who put up the site, full URL, date of access.

End Notes: Number endnotes consecutively for the whole paper, with each note referring to the number in the text with the number in superscript or parentheses. Endnote numbers should be placed at the end of the sentence containing the information being cited. A bibliography of all the sources used in the paper along with other useful sources may be useful or required.

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes

acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, coauthored pieces, and project reports.

- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. [The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures here.](#) Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services website](#) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor in advance of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see University Policy 1202: [Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#). Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in [Student Support & Advocacy \(SSAC\)](#), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), [Student Health Services \(SHS\)](#), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).