**STVXXXX Nuclear weapons and international conflict**

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*Course content*

This interactive class examines how nuclear weapons shape international conflict. Nuclear weapons influence the behavior of states that acquire them in different ways. In this class students will examine the nuclear strategies of different nuclear weapons states, ranging from small states to the most powerful states in the international system. We will study cases of crises and conflict involving nuclear weapons from the Cold War, and in the current international system. Delving inside the state, we will examine how perception and bias affects how decision-makers seek to operationalize these strategies.

The class is organized around three thematic clusters: the nuclear revolution, national nuclear strategies, and crisis stability. We will examine debates in international relations and political science about how nuclear weapons have affected international conflict, as well as how these weapons shape the doctrines and behavior of individual states. To tackle these questions, the class will examine past and current crises and negotiations. Students will be exposed to practitioner perspectives in analyzing how states seek to tackle the risks of a nuclear arms race in Europe. They will explore the dynamics of crisis escalation through a simulation exercise based on a nuclear crisis in northern Norway in 1995.

Students are expected to come prepared to play an active role in the seminars and the simulation.

*Learning objectives*

Knowledge

* Understand key debates about how nuclear weapons influence international conflict and state behavior
* Understand key features of nuclear postures in different states
* Understand basic concepts of nuclear strategy
* Weigh the risks and benefits of using force to prevent states from acquiring nuclear weapons

Skills

* Analyze policy challenges associated with nuclear strategy and nuclear proliferation
* Apply analytic perspectives to escalation dynamics during crises
* Work in teams preparing and presenting policy recommendations and conducting negotiations during the crisis simulation

Competences

* Students will learn the basic intellectual principles of nuclear deterrence
* Students will become equipped to carry out critical assessments of these principles and the evidence cited by scholars engaged in these debates
* Students will develop a better understanding of the risks of nuclear escalation and arms races

*Assessment (portfolio)*

* Response paper, assigned topic, 750 words (pass/fail)
* Essay, 2500 words, assigned topic from list of two questions (30% of final grade)
* School exam, answer 3 short questions and one longer essay (70% of final grade)

*Mandatory activities*

* Comment on other students' response papers
* Prepare questions for visiting practitioners
* Participate in simulation exercise