POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT
U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
CAPSTONES
AY19 Spring

Capstones (Intended for First Class Political Science Majors only)

FP471A – Ethnic Conflict in Developing Countries. This course examines how identity groups – such as ethnic groups or tribes – influence politics in developing countries. We will examine what "ethnicity" and "tribalism" are, and why they matter in politics and mobilization for violent conflict in Sub-Saharan African countries as well as Afghanistan, India, Iraq and others. We will read some of the "classic" works and cutting edge research on this topic, with the aim of preparing midshipmen to conduct their own research projects. (Lewis)

FP471B - China's Rise & U.S. – China Relations. China's great-power ascent represents presumably the most important geo-strategic issue for the 21st century. In many ways, it has already become a peer competitor to the United States at the bilateral, regional, and global levels. The United State-China relations are considered the most significant bilateral relationship in the world. This capstone seminar explores the realities and implications of China's growing power with a focus on the economic, political, and military/security challenges for the United States. (Deng)

FP471C - The Politics of European Security. This capstone will explore the current state of European security and security institutions (e.g. EU, NATO, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)), the new European strategic environment, Russia and Ukraine as well as the future of NATO and Common European Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) of the EU. It will include the Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland where the US has now stationed troops and some of you may be sent. Potential research topics include all of the above plus any other US bilateral or multilateral allied relations (Australia, Japan, OAS, etc.) and the security considerations of various European nations. (Mattox)

FP471D – Sources of International Conflict. This capstone examines how and why conflict arises between countries. Each student will develop an independent research project to evaluate a theoretical explanation of conflict origins. While centered on international relations, there is ample opportunity for students with interests in other concentrations to examine the origins of conflict from the perspective of comparative or American politics. (Crothers)

FP471E - Politics in the Digital Age: Does the Internet Change Everything? This seminar will examine the effects of the Internet and social media on politics and society broadly defined. From enhancing the surveillance of states, to empowering the voices of citizens seeking new forms of agency, the digital age is characterized by such forces for political transformation as the Arab Spring Uprisings, WikiLeaks, and the Occupy movement. We like, tweet, post selfies, blog, snap-chat, and YouTube our politics in the digital age. This seminar will seek explanations as to why these new ways of communicating matter for politics and relations of power, locally and globally. Will authoritarian governments collapse in the face of social media-armed publics? Does the Internet change the way we think? Is there any privacy in the digital age? What will our global future look like as the Internet of things wires our lives? Does the Internet promote global civil society and integration? Or divide us digitally into information rich and information poor? These are some of the questions we will consider in this seminar, as we tackle Bill Gates' famous argument that the Internet changes everything. (Wheeler)

FP471F – Unilateral Executive Power in the U.S. and the Americas. Presidents all over the globe are powerful. They possess a range of formal and informal powers, from decrees, executive orders, signing statements, and presidential memoranda, to things like bureaucratic and judicial appointment power, judicial review, and partisan powers, all of which have consequences for parties, voters, and democracy. This seminar asks the following questions: when do presidents use executive orders or decrees to make policy? What other formal and informal "unilateral powers" do presidents possess, and when do they use them? Are there differences across presidents and countries? Lastly, what implications does the use of unilateral executive power have for democracy? The capstone will use historical accounts and the scholarly literature to unpack these topics and others, as it examines executive policymaking and the changing nature of presidential power in the U.S. and Latin America. The course begins with a focus on the U.S. presidency before moving to a comparative analysis of American and Latin American presidential power. We will use a "president vs. presidency" theoretical framework of executive power to illustrate how personal ambition and institutional factors interact to condition executive behavior. (Polga-Hecimovich)