

# CYBER CRISIS AND RESPONSE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**Global and International Learning Course**

**GINS 3100 Section B**

**Winter 2026**

**Carleton University**

**Kroeger College of Public Affairs**

**Bachelor of Global and International Studies**

**Seminar:**

Thursdays, 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

See Carleton Central for location

**Instructor:**

Tyler Welch

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Dunton Tower 2120

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION – An extended tabletop exercise**

In intelligence and national security, analysts and decision-makers conduct tabletop exercises (TTX). These are interactive discussion sessions are meant to prepare the participants to be able to respond well during geopolitical crisis. TTXs imagine the roles different states, agencies, offices, and individuals will play during a potential crisis and participants “play out” those roles. Through this exercise, they learn to anticipate next steps and they are able to catch mistakes, delays, and errors during the exercise, rather than during a true crisis.

The project in this course combines the idea of a tabletop exercise with the concepts of strategic forecasting and predictive intelligence assessment. The goal is to work as a group to create a written, extended version of a tabletop exercise during which you anticipate how various cyber threat actors and political leaders would behave and respond during a cyber-themed geopolitical crisis.

Our weekly meetings will include discussion on international cyber strategy, on the exercise of measuring cyber sophistication, cyberwarfare tactics, factors in the cyber threat environment, a review of the most powerful state cyber actors, and lessons on the principles of intelligence assessment and strategic forecasting.

We'll also include guest speakers who work on critical cyber incident response and/or strategic planning to get insights from real-work practitioners.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- **Analyze cyber-enabled geopolitical crises using intelligence assessment frameworks**
    - Apply principles of intelligence analysis to evaluate incomplete, ambiguous, and conflicting information.
    - Distinguish between intent, capability, opportunity, and constraint in cyber threat actor behavior.
  - **Evaluate the behavior and decision-making of cyber threat actors and political leaders**
    - Compare how state and non-state cyber actors are likely to escalate, de-escalate, or adapt during a crisis.
    - Assess how domestic politics, alliances, legal norms, and strategic culture influence leader decision-making.
  - **Apply strategic forecasting and predictive intelligence methods**
    - Develop plausible future scenarios based on structured analytic techniques and trend analysis.
    - Anticipate second- and third-order effects of cyber operations within broader geopolitical contexts.
  - **Design and conduct an extended cyber-focused tabletop exercise**
    - Collaboratively construct a written crisis simulation that integrates cyber operations, political responses, and strategic interaction.
    - Identify potential failure points, miscalculations, and unintended consequences revealed through the exercise.
  - **Communicate intelligence judgments and strategic assessments effectively**
    - Synthesize technical, political, and strategic information into coherent analytic narratives.
    - Present clear, well-supported written assessments suitable for policy and decision-making audiences
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## **WEEKLY Schedule**

Week 1 – January 8 – Welcome, Introductions, Outline Review

Week 2 – January 15 – The Global Cyber Threat Environment – Nation-State Actors

Week 3 – January 22 – The Global Cyber Threat Environment – Criminals, Hacktivists, and the Private Sector

Week 4 – January 29 – Project Breakdown: group assignments, case studies, expectations, advice etc.  
- Cyber Crisis Case Studies

Week 5 – February 5 – The Elements of a National Cyber Program

Week 6 – February 12 – Research Principles in Strategic Cyber Threat Assessment

Week 7 – February 19 – Winter Break, no classes

Week 8 – February 26 – Making Intelligence Judgements and Assessing Probability  
- Team meetings with me

Week 9 – March 5 – Writing Principles in Strategic Cyber Threat Assessment  
- Team meetings with me

Week 10 – March 12 – Briefing Principles in Strategic Cyber Threat Assessment

Week 11 – March 19 – Intelligence Briefings

Week 12 – March 26 – Intelligence Briefings

Week 13 – April 2 – Guest Speaker – Cyber crisis and incident response

## THE ASSIGNMENT – OVERVIEW

- **Participation (35%) – ongoing**

Attendance is expected and attendance will be taken. The participation grade will reflect the extent to which students contribute to class discussions in an informed and critical manner, not only attendance. This will also include the extent to which students contribute to group work sessions during class time, and consider the results of anonymous collaboration surveys taken by fellow group members.

- **Intelligence Briefing (30%) – Weeks 11 & 12**

A group presentation and slide show of your tabletop scenario and assessments. Evaluation will take into account things like: creativity, professionalism, analytical depth, research rigor, and writing and briefing lessons from weeks 9 and 10.

- **Written Assessment (35%) – due Week 13**

A written assessment on your tabletop scenario and findings. Evaluation will also take into account things like: creativity, professionalism, analytical depth, research rigor, and the writing lessons from weeks 9 and 10.

The presentation and written assessment will detail how your group assesses that various geopolitical actors would respond to a crisis. I will provide your group with a detailed case study prompt which identifies all the players, sets reasonable time-bound parameters, and includes a few key research questions to get you started.

Your written assessment and presentation will have to explain the situation, identify the factors that influence the events, and anticipate what is likely to happen. It's expected that the report and presentation will follow this loose model:

- **Forecasting:** How actors will likely respond, what are the likely results, and how could the situation unfold from there?
- **Explaining Influencing Factors:** What factors will play a role in how this plays out, and how significant of a role? Economic context, domestic concerns like regime changes or elections, likely alliances or partnerships, responses from international organizations, cyber tools and other diplomatic/economic/military tools of statecraft.
- **Background:** The motivations, strengths, and limitations of each actor, historical precedence for similar cases, relevant geopolitical or cultural context.

*Final Grade Approval:* Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. 4 No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

*Submitting Work:* Always keep a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments, or take-home tests submitted in your courses. You may be asked to submit drafts and rough notes, or to re-submit work for evaluation or for extension requests.

- *Submission of Term Work:* Email assignments to [TylerWelch4@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:TylerWelch4@cunet.carleton.ca) (note the “4”!). All assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. unless otherwise specified.
- *Late penalties:* Late assignments will receive a -5% deduction for the first day, -5%/day thereafter, weekends count as one day. Please see extension policy below.
- *Policy on Extensions:* Extensions are granted solely at the discretion of the Instructor. While medical notes, appeals from the Registrar and PMC, etc., may be considered, please note that extensions are not guaranteed.

## STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
  - any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
  - using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
  - using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
  - submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
  - failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.
- Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an

instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course or even suspension or expulsion from the University.

## USE OF AI TOOLS

- Students may use technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials.
- Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit. Students will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool.
- Students may choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the assignments in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work, and a list of all prompts used.
- Students must also include a short reflection describing how they made use of generative artificial intelligence tools for each assignment
- Any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI
- The instructor reserves the right to ask students to explain their process for creating their assignment.
- As a result, this course purposefully prioritizes evaluations that are based on demonstrating a depth of thinking, preparation, and the ability to communicate and engage with ideas.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). I maintain the copyright to all course materials; they may not be posted, uploaded, transferred, or sold without my express written consent in advance.

## COURSE COMMUNICATIONS

All email communication to students from BGInS will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or Brightspace. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton email and Brightspace accounts.

## STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

### Emergency Resources (on and off campus)

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

#### **Carleton Resources**

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

#### **Off Campus Resources**

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMODATIONS**

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website ([students.carleton.ca/course-outline](http://students.carleton.ca/course-outline))