

- What is this?** You will write a 5–7 page policy memo on an international security challenge of your choice in which you explain the importance of addressing this challenge, provide context from the academic and policy literature, and provide concrete advice to a policymaker on how to meet this challenge.
- Why do it?** This assignment gives you the chance to conduct original research on international security policy and to apply the theories we are learning in class to real-world issues. After completing the assignment, you should have a better understanding of your issue, the complexity of policymaking in the international security arena, and how to write an effective policy memo.
- What is it worth?** This assignment is worth 30% of your course grade.
- When is it due?** The policy memo is due before class on Monday, November 8.

For the policy memo, you will:

1. *Choose a policy challenge in international security.* Pick a topic that concerns the interaction of more than one country, and that affects the security of people, groups, or countries. You may write about an international security challenge we address in class, but be warned: your memo should go well beyond the class discussion and the assigned readings for that topic.

I have a very broad definition of “security,” but a somewhat more limited definition of “international.” Please be sure that your topic involves multiple countries in some way. Please do not write your memo on issues of immigration or border security—these too often become domestic policy memos rather than international security memos. If you are not sure whether your topic is appropriate, feel free to run it by me via email.

2. *Explain the policy challenge and why it is important.* Provide at least some background on the policy issue to help the reader follow your argument. Make the case that this issue is important enough to warrant some action, even with all the other international security problems out there.
3. *Put the challenge in the context of the relevant academic and policy literature.* Discuss the current state of the field with regard to your issue. Describe important theories or empirical findings from the academic literature, as well as any ongoing policy debate around the issue.

For academic research, you might consult Google Scholar (beware of unpublished work), JSTOR, or the major academic journals that published the readings assigned

for this course. Note that academic theory is unlikely to address the details of your specific policy issue, and that's fine. You don't need to find a theory of Russian underwater nuclear drones; instead you should discuss how more general theories of conflict, deterrence, and new military technologies apply to this case. To research the policy debate, consult policy journals (*Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*, for example) and reports from major think tanks (Brookings, Council on Foreign Relations, IISS) or government agencies.

Talk to the staff at the library if you need help identifying appropriate sources or getting started with your research. Your memo should address the current debate regarding *both* theory (from the academic literature) and practice (from the policy literature).

4. *Provide concrete advice to a senior policymaker on how to meet this challenge.* Address your memo to a specific senior policymaker in a government (US or other) or international organization. Provide 2-3 policy options for meeting the challenge your memo describes, and make the case for your *one* preferred option. Only propose options that are feasible or reasonable (i.e. don't suggest nuking Russia or doubling the US defense budget). Be careful that your policy options don't read like a wish list—these should be specific actions that the recipient of the memo could actually implement.

You must do more than just describe the literature or summarize the arguments of others! I am looking for your own critical analysis of the policy issue. Use the arguments and theories of other scholars only as a starting point. Make sure that you clearly take a position on the best response to this policy issue. On the other hand, you must do more than just provide your opinion! Use facts and findings in the literature to support your analysis and conclusions.

Spend some time thinking about how best to organize your paper. Write clearly and concisely. Proofread. You cannot do well on this assignment if I am confused about your analysis or policy recommendation. We will discuss some basics of writing policy memos in class, and I have posted some example memos on Blackboard.

Your policy memo should be 5-7 pages of double-spaced text (not including the bibliography), using a standard 12-point font. Please number your pages. You can use whatever citation style you prefer, but you must cite your sources correctly. Ask for help if you're not sure how or whether to cite material. For guidance on appropriate sourcing, see the following resources:

<http://guides.swem.wm.edu/writingandciting>
<http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism>

Submit the memo via Blackboard (as a PDF file, if possible) before class on November 8.

Need help?

- Check your class notes from 10-6-21
- Watch the lecture video from last year, “Policy Memo Basics,” posted on Blackboard under Lecture Videos.
- Review the example memos posted to Blackboard under Memos.
- Read some of the additional readings from the syllabus that are relevant to your topic.
- Consult with a research librarian (<http://libraries.wm.edu/appointments>).
- Make an appointment at the Writing Resources Center (www.wm.edu/wrc).
- Ask me questions via email or email me to set up a time for a Zoom meeting.