Course Overview: The course will examine the national security decision-making process since the Second World War through case studies of selected fateful decisions. "Fateful decisions" in our perspective are those choices that a president makes that order citizens to kill people for state purposes, either openly in war or covertly in clandestine operations, or both; or decisions that have the potential to do so. Harry Truman’s decision in the summer of 1950 to oppose the north Korean invasion of south Korea is an example of the former; John Kennedy’s decision to quarantine Cuba in October 1962 is an example of the latter—both, of course, public decisions. An example of a clandestine operation ordered by a president—one the details of which were kept secret for more than two decades—would be Eisenhower’s decision to order the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to overthrow Mohammad Mossadegh, the elected leader of Iran, in 1953.

Our seminar’s case studies will be constructed and briefed by the seminar participants composing two-, three-, or four-person teams, depending on the total number of students in the seminar. Each team will select, analyze, evaluate, organize and present a specific decision at least twice during the course—with expectation that there will be demonstrated progress in the quality of the analysis and evaluation provided in the second. Fifty per cent (50%) of each student’s grade in the course will be based on the student presentations plus the overall participation of that student in the seminar itself, i.e., the first two preparatory seminar sessions and, most importantly, the question and answer and critique portions of each seminar presentation event. In addition to the presentations and participation, there will be a final examination and a paper, the latter to be written on a post-WWII national security decision—a “fateful” decision by our definition—of each student’s choosing.

Hopefully, the seminar will take us from the signing of the 1947 National Security Act, and the creation of its principal organizations—the National Security Council (NSC), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the nascent Department of Defense (DOD)—to the first administration of George W. Bush (2001-2005) and the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath. In so doing, the growth of the national security state will be analyzed and evaluated, as will the struggle by decision-makers to maintain traditional political and
cultural values while securing the nation. Concomitant will be an effort to discern the beginnings and trace the development of the financial and economic policies that have transformed the United States from the world’s greatest creditor nation to its greatest debtor.

From time to time, we will also attempt to relate what we are discovering about our democratic republic to present-day circumstances, particularly to presidential decision-making. In fact, if there is interest, a seminar team may select a fateful decision for its second presentation that involves our sitting president. Such decisions for evaluation will be limited, however, to President Obama’s 1 December 2009 decision to commit approximately 30,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan; his apparent earlier decision to withdraw from Iraq; and his decision—if indeed one is forthcoming—to commit U.S. forces to Yemen. Seminar participants should realize that research in contemporary or near-contemporary events may be extremely challenging.

**Case Study Frame Work:** The frame work we will use to analyze and evaluate fateful national security decisions will be that offered by David Rothkopf in his *Running the World: the Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (see page 15 of the hardback version). Succinctly, that frame work consists of the following elements:

- Personalities/character (decision team sociology)
- International context
- Domestic political context
- Ideology (ies)/governing philosophy of the decision-making team
- Process/structure/institutions/organization

In our seminar we will add a sixth element, "resources" or, more in the present vernacular, "budget". While admitting that budget is a part of the domestic context, we will break it out as a distinct element for two reasons: first, it is so often in actual decision-making fudged over, grossly misconceived, or entirely neglected; and, second, it is such an important element of decision-making—increasingly so as America's resources are demanded for so many competing purposes. Even from the narrow sense in which we shall examine resources, we hope to glean an insight or two into how we got to where we are today, sitting atop an economic and financial house of cards that may now be collapsing.

**Presentations:** The case study presentation seminars will follow this time line:

- 11:30 to 12:50  Presentation of the Case by Student Team (1 hr, 20 mins)
- 12:50 to 01:00  Break (10 mins)
- 01:00 to 01:55  Question and Answer and Critique Period (55 mins)

The first seminar period (25 January) will include an introduction to the course and the case study process, assignment of the presentation teams, scheduling of the first round of presentations and the beginnings of our discussions on how precisely the 1947 National
Security Act, and its subsequent amendments, altered our republic. The second seminar period (1 February) will amplify and fine-tune the first. Team presentations will begin with the third seminar period (8 February) and consume every period thereafter up to and including the twelfth seminar period (19 April). The 13th seminar period (26 April) will be a summing-up and a final examination review. The final examination will be held between 3-12 May (ours is tentatively scheduled for 9 am to 12 noon on 12 May).

**The Decisions:** Student teams will select from the following list of fateful decisions:

(1) The Korean War: Truman's decision to oppose the north Korean invasion of south Korea and, later, his decision to expand the war after the north Korean army was routed following the Inchon landings. These can be presented as separate decisions or in combination.

(2) The 1953 Solarium Exercise: Eisenhower's decision on the policy of containment that formally set the stage for the Cold War.

(3) Iran and the 1953 overthrow of the Mossadegh Regime: Eisenhower’s decision to remove covertly the democratically-elected leader of Iran.

(4) The Bay of Pigs: Kennedy’s decision to proceed with the covert operation to effect regime change in Cuba and his decision to withdraw rather than launch a full-scale invasion of the island.

(5) The War with Vietnam: Johnson’s decision to escalate in 1965; Nixon’s decision to invade Cambodia in 1970; and Nixon’s decision to end the war in 1972-73 and the actual end in 1975. These can be presented as separate decisions or in any combination.

(6) The Overthrow of Allende in 1973: Nixon’s and Kissinger’s decisions with regard to the government in Chile and the covert operations that resulted from and surrounded these decisions.

(7) The Fall of the Shah in Iran in 1979: Carter’s decision-making before and after the fall; Carter’s decision to used armed force to rescue the U.S. hostages; and the eventual resolution of the crisis. These decisions should be presented as a whole.

(8) Lebanon: Reagan’s decision to introduce U.S. forces into Lebanon in 1982; the bombing of the Marine Corps barracks in 1983; the subsequent U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon. These decisions should be presented as a whole.

(9) The First Gulf War: George H.W. Bush’s decision to oppose the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990.

In addition to the decisions listed above, seminar participants may select other fateful decisions from the post-WWII time period. Such additional case studies could examine, for example, CIA operations in and around the Vietnam conflict; CIA operations in Africa; or more public decisions such as Ronald Reagan’s decision to strike Libya in 1986 in Operation ELDORADO CANYON, or his decision to invade Grenada in 1983 in operation URGENT FURY; or George H. W. Bush’s decision to invade Panama in 1989 in Operation JUST CAUSE. To present a case study on such a decision, Professor Wilkerson’s permission will be required. Requests should be made as early as possible in the course.

**Final Examination:** Our final examination will be a three-hour written exercise consisting of five or six questions, of which students will select three to answer. Examination responses will be accepted in typewritten or handwritten form—so long as the latter is legible. Any and all reading/review references used in the course—including student notes—may be consulted during the writing of the examination responses; however, the exam is not a "take-home". Exam responses will be written on the date and during the time specified.

**Papers:** Each student will write a twelve- to sixteen-page essay (double-spaced) that analyzes and evaluates a major, post-WWII national security decision—a fateful decision—using the framework for analysis outlined above. In short, the paper will constitute another student "presentation" but this presentation will be confined entirely to the written form. Like the oral presentations, these papers will be evaluated on the basis of the skill and persuasiveness with which the analysis and evaluation are rendered, as well as the soundness of the argument and research, given the available information and time. Papers should be typed. Paper topics must be approved by Professor Wilkerson by 15 February. Completed papers will be turned in to Professor Wilkerson by 22 March 2010.

**Readings:** We will read all or parts of the following books:


We will also read an occasional magazine or newspaper article or essay.

Each seminar participant is expected to read Rothkopf’s entire book as early in the course as possible, but certainly in the duration of the course. Inderfurth and Johnson’s book, so aptly named for our course, should be consulted on specific decisions and, particularly, for the character sketches of those advising or making these fateful decisions. Of course, reading the entire text is helpful. It is expected that, as a minimum, each student will do some basic reading on each decision that is to be presented ("basic" here meaning more
than a synopsis at Wikipedia). In this manner, the critique and question and answer period following each presentation will be far more meaningful. *Fateful Decisions* is a good first source for most such reading.

**GRADED ELEMENTS:**

The following are the graded elements of this course and the weights accorded each:

- Seminar Presentations/Participation: 50%
- Paper: 25%
- Final Examination: 25%

*PLEASE NOTE HOW HIGH A PERCENTAGE OF THE GRADE DERIVES FROM STUDENT PRESENTATIONS AND PARTICIPATION. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT STUDENTS “HIT THE GROUND RUNNING”, I.E., THAT THEY PARTICIPATE IN THE PREPARATORY SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS FROM THE VERY BEGINNING AND CONSISTENTLY AS THE COURSE PROGRESSES IN THE Q&A AND CRITIQUE PORTIONS OF THE STUDENT TEAM PRESENTATIONS. THERE IS A RATIONALE FOR THIS BOTH PEDAGOGICAL AND PRACTICAL. FROM AN EDUCATIONAL POINT OF VIEW, THE ABILITY TO THINK CRITICALLY IS BEST DEVELOPED BY PARTICIPATION IN VIGOROUS DISCUSSIONS WITH THOSE STEEPED IN THE TOPIC DISCUSSED (ANOTHER REASON THAT DOING THE READINGS AND PRESENTING THE CASE STUDIES WELL IS SO IMPORTANT). FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL BE ABLE TO ADVANCE HIS OR HER VIEWS IN A HIGHLY CHARGED AND VERY COMPETITIVE ARENA, WITH CLEAR LOGIC, PERSUASIVENESS, AND POWER. WE HOPE THIS COURSE WILL AID AND ABET BOTH PROCESSES.*

*See the Participation Guide at the end of this syllabus for more specific information.*

**Grading Methodology:**

The standard grading methodology will be used in this course. That is, the letter grades earned will be reflective of the following numerical scale:

- A: 93-100
- A-: 90-92
- B+: 88-89
- B: 83-87
- B-: 80-82
- C+: 78-79
- C: 73-77
- C-: 70-72
- D+: 68-69
- D: 63-67
- D-: 60-62
Office Hours:

Professor Wilkerson's office hours will be on Mondays from 9:00AM to start of the seminar at 11:30AM, then following the seminar from 2:00PM to 5:00PM. If possible, please coordinate in advance to ensure the professor's presence. Sundays are also an option if coordinated in advance. The professor's office is in Morton Hall, Room 36A.

Classroom Emergency Preparedness and Response:

Students should familiarize themselves with the environs of the classroom and be aware of emergency exits and procedures for evacuating Morton Hall in case of crisis or emergency conditions.

Brief Biography of Professor Wilkerson:

Lawrence Wilkerson is the Visiting Pamela C. Harriman Professor of Government and Public Policy at the College of William Mary, as well as Professorial Lecturer in the Honors Program at the George Washington University. His last positions in government were as Secretary of State Colin Powell's Chief of Staff (2002-05), Associate Director of the State Department's Policy Planning staff under the directorship of Ambassador Richard N. Haass, and member of that staff responsible for East Asia and the Pacific, political-military and legislative affairs (2001-02). Before serving at the State Department, Wilkerson served 31 years in the U.S. Army, including as Deputy Executive Officer to then-General Colin Powell when he commanded the U.S. Army Forces Command (1989), Special Assistant to General Powell when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989-93), and as Director and Deputy Director of the U.S. Marine Corps War College at Quantico, Virginia (1993-97). Wilkerson retired from active service in 1997 and then worked as an advisor to General Powell. Since leaving the State Department, Wilkerson has spoken to groups all over America—World Affairs Councils, university and war college audiences, and members of local and state governments and the U.S. Congress and their staffs. In addition, he has been published in the Los Angeles Times, the Baltimore Sun, the Miami Herald, the New York Daily News, The American Conservative, The Washingtonian, and other newspapers and magazines across the country, as well as appeared on television with Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher, Keith Olbermann, Rachel Maddow, Wolf Blitzer, the BBC's Hardtalk and Newsnight, and others. He has appeared in several recent documentaries also, including Alex Gibney's "Taxi to the Dark Side", Charles Ferguson's "No End in Sight", and Sherry Jones' "Torturing Democracy". He has also testified before several committees of the U.S. Congress, on issues ranging from Iraq to Cuba. He is chairman of the U.S.-Cuba Policy Initiative at the New America Foundation. Lawrence and his wife, Barbara, live in Falls Church, Virginia.
Participation Guide

Essentials of Participation Evaluation:

In general, here is what I consider excellent participation and attendance.

- **Level of involvement**: You make a strong effort to contribute often to seminar discussions. You lead or kick off discussion at times, but you do not consistently dominate the room. You know when to cut yourself off and to give others a chance to speak.
- **Substance of comments**: Your comments demonstrate knowledge of the readings and not simply your own personal experience or intuition. You bring the readings to class and point us to specific pages to back your points. Your remarks build momentum, are focused and relevant. You do not speak just to get your voice on record. Truly stellar participants may cite or point to relevant readings other than the required readings, using them to identify alternative points of view, additional insights, or to buttress the participant’s own arguments.
- **Common courtesy**: You arrive on time every day. You listen carefully to others when they are speaking. You respect the right of your classmates to express their opinions, even when you might disagree.
- **Attendance**: You attend class every day, unless you offer a reasonable explanation such as an illness, family emergency, or are participating in a University-sponsored event.

Note: The descriptions below are necessary conditions for attaining each grade. In other words, students must meet all standards for each category to earn that particular mark.

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<th>Grade range</th>
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| A- A (90-100) | *Without these people, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.*  
--Frequent contributor in seminar discussions each week. Active and engaged. Has great self-awareness and does not ramble or consistently dominate the room.  
--Comments grounded in the readings and demonstrate depth of understanding or attempts to grapple with them; ideas help to build momentum in discussions.  
--Participates aggressively and persuasively in presentations—from both a stylistic and a substantive point of view. Always achieves objectives.  
--Attends every seminar and is always courteous. |
| B- B B+ (80-89) | *Without these people, the quality of discussion would be diminished.*  
--Consistent commenter each week in seminar, but some runs of silence or inactivity occasionally detectable. Active and engaged but occasionally may lack good self-awareness.  
--Comments are helpful and draw upon readings, but less consistently so and occasionally may be more grounded in intuition or personal experience.  
--Participates aggressively and persuasively in presentations—from both a stylistic and a substantive point of view—though may not always achieve objectives in the presentation process.  
--Attends every seminar and is always courteous. |
| C- C C+ (70-79) | *Without these people, the quality of seminar discussion would be occasionally (but not frequently) diminished.*  
--Infrequent participant each week in seminar, but may engage sporadically. May have inconsistent self-awareness.  
--Comments may be but not necessarily grounded in the readings; more reliant on intuition or personal experience (e.g., perhaps a great readings comment one day, but then a run of days with less substantive or relevant ones).  
--Participates fairly well in presentations but is not normally the center of debate or the major influence on outcomes. Achieves some objectives..  
--One or two absences, but is always courteous. |
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| D- D D+ (60-69) | *Without these people, the quality of seminar discussion would be essentially unchanged.*  
--Extremely rare or essentially no participation each week in seminar. Attentive, but not involved. May have very little self-awareness.  
--Hard to tell to what extent this person is trying to engage the readings because comments are so infrequent, or nonexistent.  
--Lackadaisical participation in presentations; rarely persuasive at all; almost no influence on outcomes and objective achievement.  
--Two or more absences, but is always courteous. |
| F (<60) | *Without these people, the quality of discussion would be unchanged or perhaps even better.*  
--No engagement in seminar discussion. Demonstrates no self-awareness.  
--Impossible to tell to what extent the person has tried to engage the readings.  
--Any presentation would be a better educational experience without this person participating.  
--Excessive absences.  
--May even consistently fail to demonstrate courtesy. |