Alternative Analytic Techniques for International Affairs
U85 5410
Spring 2018
Professor Susan Craig
Thursdays, 6-8:30 pm
Simon Hall 021
Course website: bb.wustl.edu

Course Description
This course instills analytic rigor and imagination into the consideration of our most pressing national security issues. Based on structured analytic techniques employed in the Intelligence Community, students in this course will hone critical thinking skills, consider overlooked ideas and develop unique perspectives. Students will be given the tools to recognize and overcome biases, mental shortcuts and unstated assumptions, and challenge conventional wisdom, through analysis of US foreign and counter-terrorism policy and current events in the Middle East, China and North Korea.

Rationale and Background
We are all prone to developing “ruts” in our thinking – connecting the same points frequently, and seeing similar patterns in new information. We unconsciously perceive information selectively through the lens of preconceptions, unwittingly search too narrowly for facts that confirm rather than discredit these preconceptions, and are unduly influenced by those with whom we surround ourselves. This is a natural and often effective way for our mind to work. But it prevents us from seeing new patterns, or alternate interpretations.

Structured analytic techniques for alternative analysis are meant to help us overcome these natural human tendencies – to help us develop new pathways in our brain, and keep our minds open to alternate interpretations of complex and rapidly changing situations. The field of alternative analysis is relatively new, borne out of the intelligence failures of 9/11 and the Iraq War. These techniques are increasingly used across the defense, intelligence and business communities as a way to prevent similar failures of imagination and groupthink.

But these tools have applicability beyond the Intelligence Community. The skill to “think outside the box” and see things from other perspectives will serve all students of international affairs well as they strive to understand and contribute to a complex, dynamic, interconnected and multicultural world.

Course Goals
At the end of this course, you will:
- Recognize and appreciate the biases, shortcuts and failings of the human mind, and how structured analytic techniques are helpful in overcoming them.
- Be able to apply structured analytic techniques to issues in international affairs.
- Have a broad understanding of some of the most complex national security issues.
- Be able to write a professional, succinct, strategic-level memo and deliver a professional brief.
- Most importantly, be a more critical and creative thinker.
**Required Texts**
Micah Zenko, *Red Team: How To Succeed by Thinking Like the Enemy*, 2015

**Course Requirements and Expectations**
Alternative analysis is best when done collaboratively – the more ideas, the better. As you will quickly learn, “expertise” is overrated. Therefore, *your contributions to this course are as important as mine*. We will brainstorm and challenge one another - in group work, online and through discussion. In order for this to work, *your preparation, attendance and participation are required*. You are expected to critically read all assigned readings, attend all course meetings, complete all assignments on time, keep up with current events in international affairs, and actively engage in both our virtual environment and in the classroom. We will utilize our Blackboard site regularly, and it will be a forum for sustained dialogue and more reflective engagement.

**Assignments**
The assignments in this course are intended to enhance your professional writing and presentation skills. You will have four memo assignments (including your final), written to a high-ranking U.S. government official. Given the import of your audience, your memos must be extremely concise, easy-to-read and strategic in nature. You must demonstrate both a mastery of the structured analytic technique you applied, and the complexity of the issue you are analyzing – in a few short pages. This requires multiple drafts and editing. An example memo will be provided prior to the first assignment.

There are four things on which I will be grading your memos:
1. Application of the alternative analytic technique
2. Knowledge of the topic (a demonstration of its nuance and complexity, consideration of implications for the US, region)
3. Memo format (BLUF, meaningful subtitles, implications)
4. Clear and concise writing

You will also have two in-class briefings and one group testimony, which will hone your professional presentation skills. These will be graded on an ability to succinctly summarize your topic and take-aways and anticipate and respond to questions that arise.

You will have the opportunity to earn 1000 points throughout the course. They are distributed as follows:

- 25 pts. 1-pager on Biases and Heuristics (posted on Bb)
- 100 pts. Memo 1 – Devil’s Advocacy on America’s Role in the World
- 50 pts. Middle East Country Briefing (25 pts.) and One-Pager (25 pts. - posted on Bb)
- 125 pts. Memo 2 – What If? in The Middle East
- 150 pts. Group Testimony and Presentation – Team A/Team B on Terrorism
- 150 pts. Memo 3 – Red Team on East Asia
- 200 pts. Final Project – Technique/Issue of your choice
- 50 pts. Final Project Brief
- 150 pts. Engagement
All written assignments will be submitted online through our Blackboard portal. Most assignments are due several days prior to our Thursday meetings. This will give me time to read them and identify themes for our class meeting, and will give you a few days to focus solely on the week’s readings. Several assignments – the writing sample and the Middle East one-pager – will be submitted on a Discussion Board, to give your peers the benefit of reading and responding to them. The deadlines are all delineated below. Since the deadlines do vary, please pay close attention to them. If for some reason you cannot meet a deadline, you must speak with me prior to the assignment’s due date. Unexcused late assignments will not be accepted.

**What is Engagement?**
Class engagement is not about the quantity of times you participate in class. It is about quality. Quality will be judged by your preparation for class, the extent to which your comments or questions advance the discussion, the contribution’s relevance, and your ability to communicate your ideas clearly and concisely. Engagement with course content does not need to be limited to comments in class. You will also have the opportunity to demonstrate your engagement online. You can earn extra engagement points for an exceptional online posting or contribution to our discussion.

If you must miss a class, please let me know prior to class, but understand that your engagement grade may be affected. Any unexcused absence will result in a 3 point deduction from your engagement grade. I understand that work and family obligations occur and will certainly work with you in resolving conflicts – you just need to communicate with me!

**Grading Scale**
The grading scale is as follows:

- 92.5-100 A
- 89.5-92 A-
- 86.5-89 B+
- 81.5-86 B
- 78.5-81 B-
- 76.5-78 C+
- 71.5-76 C
- 69.5-71 C-
- 66.5-69 D+
- 60-66 D
- 0-59 F

**Contact Information**
You can reach me via email at: scraig@wustl.edu
and by phone at: 314-594-7442

I encourage you to communicate with me early and often. This class is collaborative, challenging and fast-paced – so I need your feedback, and you need mine. Thinking differently will seem like second nature by the end of the course – but until then, you are likely to need reassurance that you’re on the right track. So please reach out to me when you need clarification, additional explanation, or have feedback that would help me improve the course. You can reach out to me in whatever forum you feel
most comfortable. We can communicate over email, over the phone, or in person. In addition to before
and after class, I am on campus on Tuesdays and Fridays and would be more than happy to arrange a
meeting during these times.

**Academic Integrity**
Do your own work. Plagiarizing, cheating, copying and fabricating or falsifying data will not be tolerated.
Washington University’s policy can be found here: http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html

An easy rule of thumb: if you take 5 or more words from any one source, put quotes around it and cite
it. This applies to all sources – electronic and print. If I suspect you have engaged in any sort of
academic dishonesty, I will report it to the Dean of University College, who may take punitive action
after conducting an investigation. Please let me know if you have questions about proper citation or
collaboration.

**Special Needs and Disabilities**
If you have special needs, please contact Cornerstone, the Center for Advanced Learning at 935-5970. I
will provide any accommodations for which you qualify as long as I receive documentation from
Cornerstone.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1: 1/18</td>
<td>Introductions and Course Overview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2: 1/25</td>
<td>Why We Need to Think Differently</td>
<td>Biases and Heuristics Writing Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: MONDAY, Jan 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3: 2/1</td>
<td>Introduction to Alternative Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4: 2/8</td>
<td>Devil’s Advocacy and America’s Role in the World</td>
<td>Memo 1: Devil’s Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: MONDAY, Feb 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5: 2/13-18</td>
<td>The Black Swan, What if? and High Impact/Low Probability – ONLINE</td>
<td>One-Pager: WEDNESDAY, Feb 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Briefing: THURSDAY, Feb 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6: 2/22</td>
<td>The Messy Middle East</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7: 3/1</td>
<td>Brainstorming Session – What if in the Middle East</td>
<td>Memo 2: What If</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: MONDAY, March 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8: 3/8</td>
<td>Team A/Team B and the Threat of Terrorism</td>
<td>Team A/B Group Testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: THURSDAY, March 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9: 3/15</td>
<td>Spring Break – no class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10: 3/22</td>
<td>Team A/Team B Presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11: 3/29</td>
<td>The Geography of Thought and How to Think “Red”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12: 4/5</td>
<td>Red Teaming: US vs. China’s View</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13: 4/12</td>
<td>Red Teaming Role Play: Topic TBD</td>
<td>Final Paper Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: MONDAY, April 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14: 4/19</td>
<td>Red Teaming: The View from North Korea</td>
<td>Memo 3: Red Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: MONDAY, April 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15: 4/23-28</td>
<td>Moneyball – ONLINE</td>
<td>Final Paper and Elevator Brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: THURSDAY, May 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 16: 5/3</td>
<td>Final Project Presentations and Course Wrap-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Schedule

January 18: Introductions and Course Overview
We will get to know one another as well as some of our own biases and mental shortcuts.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/26/opinion/26Kristof.html?_r=1

Shankar Vedantham, “Being Labeled an Expert May Contribute to Someone Being Closed Minded,”
http://www.npr.org/2015/12/01/457974684/being-labeled-an-expert-may-contribute-to-someone-being-closed-minded

For additional reading:
Alix Spiegel, “So You Think you’re Smarter than a CIA Agent,” National Public Radio, April 2, 2014
https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/04/02/297839429/-so-you-think-youre-smarter-than-a-cia-agent


January 25: Why We Need to Think Differently
We will discuss many of our mind’s shortcuts, and how they prompt us to misperceive, overlook information, and generally get things wrong.

Kluge, pgs. 1-94, 161-176

Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Judgment Under Uncertainty” Science, September 27, 1974


For additional reading:
Daniel Kahneman, Thinking Fast and Slow, 2011
Richard Nisbett, Mindware: Tools for Smart Thinking, 2015

Assignment: Due MONDAY, January 28. Write a 1-page single spaced paper on a personal experience with one of the heuristics or mental shortcuts described in the readings. Use the opportunity to demonstrate your writing skills and introduce yourself to your classmates. Post as a discussion thread in Blackboard.
February 1: Introduction to Alternative Analysis
After learning about our cognitive shortcomings, you’ll be introduced to the field that is attempting to mitigate them.

Micah Zenko, Red Team, pgs. Ix-106, 209-239

A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis, Central Intelligence Agency, March 2009


February 8: Devil’s Advocacy and America’s Role in the World
We will challenge the conventional wisdom that an activist US foreign policy intended to lead and uphold the post WWII international order is in our nation’s best interest.

“America’s Changing Role in the World: A Debate,” Washington University in St. Louis, November 6, 2017
https://wustl.app.box.com/s/aerpqawyijmue23ndl3jorss5u4lcsj


Christopher Preble, Emma Ashford and Travis Evans, eds. Our Foreign Policy Choices: Rethinking America’s Role, The CATO Institute, pgs. 1-10

Barry Posen, “Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy,” Foreign Affairs, Jan-Feb 2013
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2013-01-01/pull-back

Andrew Bacevich, “Saving America First,” Foreign Affairs, September/October 2017
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2017-08-15/saving-america-first


http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2017/USBudgetaryCostsFY2018
**Memo Assignment:** Due MONDAY, February 12. Write a 2-page single-spaced memo to the National Security Advisor, challenging the conventional wisdom that American primacy is the appropriate grand strategy. Propose an alternative strategy that recognizes limitations, prioritizes restraint and puts America First.

**February 13-18 ONLINE: The Black Swan, What If? and High-Impact/Low-Probability**

This week we will engage in a robust online discussion of Taleb’s concepts and how they are relevant to alternative analysis.

*The Black Swan*, pgs. xvii-2, 8-22, 26-37, 40-42, 50-84, 122-133, 138-163, 201-211

**Briefing Assignment:** Due THURSDAY, February 22. Select a Middle Eastern country and analyze the critical variables that would influence high-impact, low-probability events in the region. Prepare a 1-page summary for distribution via Blackboard – due WEDNESDAY, February 21. Your 5 minute presentation is due in class on Thursday, February 22.

**February 22: The Messy Middle East**

Each student will select a pivotal country in the Middle East to research (e.g. Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Lebanon, Iran). They will provide their peers a one-pager and brief them in class on the country’s critical variables that would be important in driving and determining potential high-impact, low probability events.

“Tethered by History,” *The Economist*, July 5, 2014

Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Gregory F. Trevorton, “The Calm Before the Storm,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2015


To assist in your research:


Middle East Media Research Institute, [http://www.memri.org/middle-east-media-research-institute.html](http://www.memri.org/middle-east-media-research-institute.html)

Al Jazeera: [http://www.aljazeera.com/topics/regions/middleeast.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/topics/regions/middleeast.html)

March 1: Brainstorming Session – What if? in the Middle East
Based on the research you have done collectively, we will select a hypothetical scenario to analyze in the Middle East and conduct a what if? and high-impact/low-probability assessment. We will brainstorm how the event could come about, and the short and long-term implications of it. We will then brainstorm a number of other plausible events that could transpire in the Arab world in the foreseeable future, which you will choose from for your second memo assignment. Several additional readings will be assigned based on the topic we select as a class.

Memo Assignment #2: Due MONDAY, March 6. Write a 2-page single spaced memo to the Secretary of State, using either what if? or high/low technique to examine one of the topics on the Middle East brainstormed in class. Explore the potential event, establish a plausible scenario for how it could come to pass, and examine the consequences for U.S. foreign policy and the region.

March 8: Team A/Team B and the Threat of Terrorism
We will develop equally compelling competing arguments about the threat posed by terrorism through the use of the Team A/Team B structured analytic technique.

Brian Michael Jenkins, *Middle East Turmoil and the Continuing Terrorist Threat — Still No Easy Solutions*, Testimony before House Armed Services Committee, February 14, 2017
https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT462.html


Sean Zeigler and Meagan Smith, “Terrorism Before and During the War on Terror: A Look at the Numbers,” War on the Rocks, December 12, 2017
https://warontherocks.com/2017/12/terrorism-war-terror-look-numbers/

“Terrorism in America after 9/11,” New America Foundation
https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/

Robin Wright, “How Does Terrorism End?” The New Yorker, September 10, 2017

Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro, “Homeward Bound? Don’t Hype the Threat of Returning Jihadists,” Foreign Affairs, September 30, 2014
http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2014/09/30-syria-foreign-fighters-byman-shapiro

https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/import/ASPI_CPOST_ISIS_Indictees.pdf?2Tbn8TshXmujb1ft8f7PIR7sukzyrhka

Colin P. Clarke, “How ISIS is Transforming,” Foreign Affairs, September 25, 2017
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-09-25/how-isis-transforming

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2017-12-08/bloody-split-within-isis?cid=nlc-fa_fatoday-20171208

For further research:
The Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland
https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/

March 15: No Class – Spring Break

**Group Assignment: Due Thursday, March 22.** You will be assigned to one of two teams that will testify as a panel before the Senate’s subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security. As a team, you will prepare and submit written testimony arguing that the terrorism threat is either grave or overstated. You will have 10 minutes to present oral testimony. At the end of both presentations, the “committee” will have the opportunity to ask questions of the expert panelists.

**March 22: Team A/Team B Presentations**
The teams will present their written and oral testimony to the Senate committee and respond, as a team, to the committee’s questions.
March 29: The Geography of Thought and How to Think “Red”
This book will show us the fundamentally different ways in which Easterners and Westerners view the world. These diverging perspectives impact how we communicate with and what we expect from one another. We will gain an appreciation for these differences and how they manifest themselves – the first step in Red Teaming.

Nisbett, The Geography of Thought (entire book)

For additional reading:
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/01/opinion/brooks-the-learning-virtues.html


April 5: Red Teaming: The China vs. US View
We will use the “4 ways of seeing” technique to build our appreciation for how the Chinese view themselves and the US, as well as how the US views itself and China.

https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-relations-china

Susan Craig, Chinese Perceptions of Traditional and Nontraditional Security Threats, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2007, Chapter 1, pgs. 1-23


Christopher Ford, China Views America: Aspiration, Opposition and the Telos of China’s Return, The Hudson Institute, Security and Foreign Affairs Briefing Paper, August 2012
http://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1062/chinaviewsamerica--ford0812.pdf

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2016-04-19/watching-american-democracy-china

http://en.pangoal.cn/research-topics-show.php?id=244&pid=22

https://www.hoover.org/research/chinese-views-trump-administrations-asia-policy

Xi Jinping, Speech before 19th Party Congress, October 18, 2017

Visit:
China’s Official Daily Newspaper, *Xinhua*
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/

For further reading:
Evan Osnos, “Making China Great Again,” *The New Yorker*, January 1, 2018
https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/08/making-china-great-again

**April 12: Red Team Role Play: Topic TBD**
We will spend this class emulating decision-makers in China and speaking in the first person as “we, China.” Perhaps we will consider China’s maritime strategy, it’s Belt and Road Initiative or its evolving thinking on North Korea. So much could change during our semester...why commit now?

**Final Paper Proposal: Due MONDAY, April 16.** Determine the topic and technique you want to use for your final paper. Submit a short write-up over email for feedback.

**April 19: Red Teaming: The View from Pyongyang**
We will gain insight into the North Korean’s ethno-nationalist worldview, and use this understanding to better understand North Korean decision-making.

Andre Lankov, “Kim Jong Un is a Survivor, Not a Madman,” *Foreign Policy*, April 26, 2017

Kongdan Oh, “Understanding North Korea,” Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, April 1, 2013
https://www.fpri.org/articles/2013/03/understanding-north-korea

https://nyti.ms/2jDJl47


Documentary: *North Korea: A Day in the Life*, Pieter Fleury, April 27, 2004 (watch all 3 parts) [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2h77e](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2h77e)


Visit:
Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK, [http://kcnawatch.co/](http://kcnawatch.co/)
38 North, [http://38north.org/](http://38north.org/)

For additional reading:

**Memo Assignment: Due MONDAY, April 23.** Write a 2-page single-spaced memo to the Secretary of Defense, in first person, from a Chinese or North Korean perspective, giving the Secretary unique cultural insights relevant to US defense policy.

**April 23 – April 28 ONLINE: Moneyball**
We will view and discuss the movie *Moneyball*, a great example of how thinking differently can be a game-changer.
Final Project: Due THURSDAY, May 3. Select an alternative analytic technique and a topic in international affairs that merits alternative analysis. Write no more than a 3-page, single-spaced memo to a senior decision-maker in international affairs that would benefit from your unique insights. Demonstrate a mastery of both the technique and the issue. Additionally, prepare a one-minute elevator brief, succinctly highlighting your findings, to present to your classmates.

May 3: Final Project Presentations and Course Wrap-Up
You will be expected to give a one-minute presentation on your final project – what technique you used, why it was beneficial, the issue you explored, and what your take-aways were.