

Course Information

Course Number: INTA 723
Course Title: Covert Action
Section:
Time: Thursday, 6:30 – 9:10
Location:
Credit Hours: 3 hours

Instructor Details

Instructor: Dr. Michael Vickers
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Course Description

This three-hour graduate course is a historical review and survey of covert action operations conducted by the United States since the inception of the National Security Act of 1947. Emphasis will be placed on the utilization of covert action as a tool of US foreign policy, drawing on extensive case studies. There will be in-depth discussions of the use and misuse of covert action and how it impacts national security and foreign policy. All aspects of covert action will be covered, including the roles of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Upon conclusion of the course, students will have an in-depth understanding of US covert action activities. They will understand the parameters and limitations of such activities and the proper use of this foreign policy tool.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students will understand the history, formulation, and implementation of US covert action activities. They will have an in-depth understanding of covert action as a tool of US foreign policy.

Textbooks and/or Resource Materials

William J. Daugherty, *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency* (The University Press of Kentucky 2004)

Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (Harper Collins, 1996)

Michael G. Vickers, *By All Means Available: Memoirs of a Life in Intelligence, Special Operations, and Strategy* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2023)

Loch K. Johnson, *The Third Option: Covert Action and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2022)

Grading Policy

A book report: This assignment is to be based on a significant book from the intelligence and covert action literature. You should select a book and write a 5-7 page analysis. It should be DOUBLE SPACED AND PRINTED ON ONE SIDE ONLY. Please obtain approval for the book selected in advance. The review should be delivered to me in hard copy. It should be primarily subjective analysis, i.e., your personal reactions to the characters and their roles in the covert action. DO NOT provide a rehashing of what happens in the book, but instead YOUR analysis of the action and the individuals involved. What do you think of the action or operations described, the people involved, the impact on US foreign policy. The book review is worth 25% of the course grade.

An oral presentation: This presentation will be on a personality from the history of covert action post 1939. You may select a personality, or one can be selected by the Professor. The oral presentation will be twenty minutes with a format provided. Your analysis of the individual, impact, and lessons learned will be the basis of the presentation.

A group project: students will be formed into groups and provided with a scenario for a fictional covert action operation. Their proposal must include a draft Presidential Finding and an assessment of why this operation must be done covertly. It must include an operational plan that identifies the support required, if any, from other agencies and liaison partners, a proposed rough budget, the covert action's consistency with overt US policy, the risks involved, and a strategy to secure Congressional support for the program. It must also include measures of effectiveness.

A final examination: The final two hour exam will cover the lectures, videos, classroom discussions, and readings from the second half of the course. The final exam is worth 25% of the course grade. (A minimum of 60 on the final examination is required to pass the course).

Participation and attendance: All students are expected to attend each class and to participate actively in classroom discussions.

Grading

The breakdown for awarding of final course grades is therefore as follows:

Book Report	20%
Oral Presentation	20%
Group Scenario	25%
Class Participation	10%
Final exam	25%

The following scale will be used for calculating final grades for the course:

90%to 100%	A
80% to 89%	B
70% to 79%	C

60% to 69% D
0% to 59% F

Important Dates

Oral Presentations: October 30
Book Reviews due: October 30
Group Project: December 4
Final: December 11

Late Work Policy

Only by exception will late work be accepted at the discretion of the course instructor.

Course Schedule

Please note that this is a draft syllabus and is subject to change.

August 28 - Week 1 Covert Action Overview: Role, Forms, Risks

Readings: Daugherty, Chapter 1 ("The Role of Covert Action in Intelligence and Foreign Policy") and Chapter 5 ("The Discipline of Covert Action"); Johnson, Chapter 1 ("The Forms of Covert Action") and Chapter 2 ("A Ladder of Clandestine Escalation")

September 4 - Week 2 World War II: SOE and OSS

Andrew, Chapter 3 ("Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Path to Pearl Harbor") and Chapter 4 ("Roosevelt at War")

September 11 - Week 3 1) Truman Administration
2) Formation of the National Security Act of 1947
3) Italy 1948

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 5 ("Harry S. Truman"); Daugherty, Chapter 7 ("Harry S. Truman")

September 18 - Week 4 1) Eisenhower Administration
2) Iran 1953
3) Guatemala 1954

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 6 ("Dwight D. Eisenhower"); Daugherty, Chapter 8 (Dwight D. Eisenhower")

September 25 - Week 5 1) Kennedy Administration
2) Bay of Pigs 1961

3) Laos 1961-62

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 7 ("John F. Kennedy"); Daugherty, Chapter 9 ("John F. Kennedy")

October 2 - Week 6

- 1) Johnson Administration
- 2) Vietnam 1963-1968

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 8 ("Lyndon B. Johnson"); Daugherty, Chapter 9 ("Lyndon B. Johnson")

October 9 - Week 7

- 1) Nixon and Ford Administrations
- 2) Laos 1968-1972
- 3) Chile
- 4) Church Commission 1975

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 9 ("Richard M. Nixon"); Daugherty, Chapter 10 ("Richard M. Nixon")

October 16 - Week 8

- 1) Carter Administration
- 2) Iran hostage crisis
- 3) Early Afghanistan 1979-80

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 11 ("Jimmy Carter"); Daugherty, Chapter 6 (Approval and Review of Covert Action Programs in the Modern Era) and Chapter 11 ("Jimmy Carter"); Vickers, Chapter 5 ("The Great Commission")

October 23 - Week 9

- 1) Reagan Administration
- 2) Afghanistan
- 3) Central America
- 4) Angola
- 5) Poland

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 12 ("Ronald W. Reagan"); Daugherty, Chapter 12 ("Ronald W. Reagan"); Vickers, Chapters 6-9 ("Developing a War-Winning Strategy," Critical Decisions: March 1985 to January 1986," Driving the Soviets Out," and "We Won")

October 30 - Week 10 **Book reports and oral presentations**

November 6 - Week 11

- 1) GHW Bush/Clinton Administrations
- 2) Fall of the Soviet Union
- 3) Early CT efforts

Readings: Andrew, Chapter 13 (“George H.W. Bush”); Daugherty, Chapter 13 (“George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton”); Vickers, Chapter 11 (“9/11”)

- November 13 - Week 12**
- 1) George W. Bush and Obama Administrations
 - 2) Afghanistan and al-Qa’ida
 - 3) Iraq
 - 4) Iran, Syria, Mexico, Colombia

Readings: Vickers, Chapters 11-15 (“Eliminating the Afghan Sanctuary,” “Disrupt, Dismantle, Defeat,” “The War Beyond the Core,” “HVT 1” and “Neptune’s Spear”) and Vickers, Chapters 16-20 (“Af-Pak,” “The Eighteen-Month Surge,” “Afghan Local Police,” Drawdown and Transition,” “Iraq: Hidden Surge to ISIS,” “Counter Proliferation, Counter Narco-Insurgency,” “The Free Syrian Army – A Missed Opportunity”)

- November 20 - Week 13** **Group presentation on Covert Action scenario**

- December 4 - Week 14**
- 1) Trump/Biden Administrations and the Past and Future of Covert Action
 - 2) Afghanistan
 - 3) Iran
 - 4) Ukraine

Readings: Vickers, Chapter 20 (“Iran’s Malign Influence”) and Chapter 22 (“Russia’s Covert and Overt War in Ukraine”); Johnson, Chapter 9 (“The Best of America’s Covert Actions,” “The Worst of America’s Covert Action”) and Chapter 10 (“The Third Option Reconsidered”)

- December 11 - Week 15** **Final exam**

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student’s grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

“The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

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You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Texas A&M at College Station

Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

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Students wishing to discuss concerns related to mental and/or physical health in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [University Health Services](#) or download the [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) for 24/7 access to professional counseling in multiple languages. Walk-in services for urgent, non-emergency needs are available during normal business hours at University Health Services locations; call 979.458.4584 for details.

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors influencing a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#). Students needing a listening ear can call the Texas A&M Helpline (979.845.2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends for mental health peer support while classes are in session. The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or [988lifeline.org](#).

Texas A&M College Station

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Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to howdy.tamu.edu and clicking on the "Directory Hold Information" link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.