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American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

School of Security and Global Studies MILS699

Credit Hours: 3
Length of Course: 16 Weeks

Prerequisite: All MA Coursework

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Instructor Information

Instructor Name:
Biography:
Email:

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Course Description (Catalog)

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This is a 16-week course that must be taken after all other courses in your program are complete. The Master's Capstone Seminar option includes a thesis, or a major research project or paper. This option is desirable for those students who wish to focus on specific subject matter of an interdisciplinary nature or who would like to continue their education at a higher level.

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Course Scope

The Master's Capstone includes a thesis project that has a substantial research component, presents an original argument using proper academic writing conventions including carefully documented primary and/or secondary sources, and should be 50-100 pages.

The course is tailored specifically to each graduate program and must be the **last course** students take from APUS. Thus it can only be taken after the student has completed his/her coursework. It cannot be taken concurrently with coursework. Students must successfully create this requirement before the award of a degree. Students must apply for graduation in order to be able to register for the course.

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Program Objectives

In addition to the institutional and degree level learning outcomes objectives, the Master of Arts in Military Studies also seeks the following specific learning outcomes of its graduates. The Capstone Thesis Project encompasses each of these objectives. Graduates in this degree program will be able to:

1. Analyze the origins, development, capabilities, and vulnerabilities of both friendly and hostile military forces.
2. Assess the major trends, theories, laws of war, events, and people that have shaped military studies in both an historical and modern context.
3. Evaluate the variables and influences affecting military forces to include the following: leadership, doctrine; strategy, tactics, operations, joint operations and integrated systems, technology, cultures, and the multidimensional battle space.
4. Judge examples of successful and unsuccessful military and strategic leadership philosophies and decisions based on historical and current events.
5. Analyze critical issues and trends in national and international security that affect the strategic employment and sustainment of military forces and the relationship between military power and other elements of national power.
6. Develop effective research, analysis, methodological, and presentation skills relevant to Military Studies.
7. Synthesize relevant information in a publication-quality presentation on a topic pertinent to the field of Military Studies.

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Course Delivery Method

This course, delivered via distance learning, will enable students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system will be available to each student. Online assignments are due by Sunday at 11:55 pm ET and include all written assignments submitted for grading. Weekly Forum questions require an initial response to the Forum question by Thursday at 11:55 pm ET, with all other required responses due by Sunday at 11:55 pm ET. The assigned faculty will support the students throughout this sixteen-week course.

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Course Resources

Required Course Textbooks

All resources are delivered electronically and are available in the classroom, however, it is highly recommended that you obtain a hard copy of the following supplemental text:

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Additional Resources and Web Sites

Videos and web sites are available within the classroom and through the university electronic library.

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Evaluation Procedures

Students are expected to work with their instructor and must follow all guidance provided in the course including submitting all required components of the research process. Students should not expect to submit a final product at the end of the course without having completed each stage of the research process as outlined in the assignments below.

Please note: The language in the evaluation procedures section is a compilation from the APUS *End of Program Assessment Manual for Graduate Studies*. Some passages are *verbatim* from the Manual. For clarity, these passages have not been specifically identified as quoted passages

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but are integrated into the syllabus. The student should read this syllabus in conjunction with the *End of Program Assessment Manual*.

The course grade is based on the following assessments:

Discussion Forums – 10 percent

Discussion questions will be provided and posts should reflect an assimilation of the readings and respond to the assigned topic(s). Students are required to provide a substantive initial post by Thursday at 11:55 pm ET and respond to two or more classmates' initial posts by Sunday 11:55 pm ET. Students should also strive to engage fully in the spirit of the discussions by responding to classmates who reply to their initial post. Forum posts are graded on timeliness, relevance, knowledge of the weekly readings, and the quality of original ideas.

Proposed Research Question and Purpose Statement – 5 percent

Submitted through the Assignments link in classroom for instructor feedback. The components of this assignment include a research question and a purpose and design statement. It must list at least eight sources, at least six of which must be peer-reviewed, in proper bibliographic format. The specific research question should be of the depth and breadth required for a major project. Length: 3 pp.

Final Research Question and Purpose Statement – 5 percent

As above, revised to address instructor critique and peer-interaction in the discussion forums. The components of this assignment include a research question and a purpose and design statement. It must contain at least eight sources, at least six of which must be peer-reviewed. The specific research question should be of depth and breadth required for a major project. Length: 3 pp.

Thesis Proposal – 5 percent

A formal proposal shall be prepared in accordance with the standards of the academic discipline. The formal proposal must provide a clear and lucid description of a question or problem and a proposed method of answering the question or solving the problem. The instructor must approve the proposal before students move on to the next stage of the process.

The proposal should explain the question or problem to be investigated and convince the thesis instructor that the question or problem merits investigation. It should show that the student has begun to read and become familiar with the relevant and recent literature on the subject and it should contain a list of academically appropriate resources consulted during the preliminary stages of research.

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In general, the thesis proposal should include background information related to the research topic, purpose of the research, methodology, and analytic procedures to be used. Proposal drafting is considered a learning process and helps students avoid oversights and possible mistakes. The formal proposal should not exceed five pages (proposal title page not included). Length: 5 pp.

Literature Review—5 percent

This document contains an annotated summary of the major sources that will be used in the research paper, all of which must be peer-reviewed articles or scholarly texts. Students will identify the source, offer a short synopsis of its main argument, and offer a statement of relevance to the research project. Length: 10-15 pp.

Draft Capstone Thesis Project —10 percent

The draft should include all substantive sections of the paper in their entirety as a working manuscript. The draft is not meant to be an outline of what the student *will* write for the final capstone thesis but rather the thesis in its complete form apart from any appendices. It must contain Endnotes in Turabian style and include a full bibliography. Examples of successful capstone papers are available in the classroom to illustrate structures and formats that may vary depending on the research question and methodology of the specific project. Length: 50-100 pp. excluding appendices.

Final Capstone Thesis Project – 60 percent

Based on prior submission of all assignments in the course, the final capstone thesis project will reflect the substantive elements developed and approved throughout the capstone course, representing a partnership between the student and the instructor. Keep in mind that appropriate stylistic formatting and documentation are the student's responsibility. Student papers that do not follow the prescribed style rules will not be accepted. All declarations, appendices, metadata, and submission information as outlined in the *End of Program Graduate Assessment Manual* shall be part of the final capstone thesis. Length: 50-100 pp. excluding appendices.

ASSIGNMENT	Percentage
Forum Discussions	10 percent
Proposed Research Question	5 percent
Final Research Question and Thesis Statement	5 percent
Formal Proposal	5 percent

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Literature Review	5 percent
Draft Capstone Paper	10 percent
Final Capstone Paper	60 percent
TOTAL	100 percent

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8 – Week Course Outline

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference the University’s [grading scale](#).

<u>Weeks</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
1-2	Introduction: Developing the Capstone Thesis Project	<p>Required Reading:</p> <p>Lesson Notes Weeks 1 & 2</p> <p>Capstone <i>End of Program Manual</i>: read appropriate sections of entire manual as applied to your project. Pay particular attention to the segment on the Institutional Review Board and follow the links in the manual to read further info on the IRB.</p> <p>“IRB FAQs”</p> <p>“Types of Research Studies and Questions”</p> <p>“The Research Process”</p> <p>“How to Write a Hypothesis”</p> <p>“How to Write an MA Thesis”</p> <p>Supplemental Material:</p> <p>Turabian, <i>Manual for Writers</i>,</p>	<p>Week One Forum Introduction and Discussion due Sunday – Week One (ungraded, 250 word minimum for mandatory introduction)</p> <p>Proposed Research Question Due – by Sunday, Week One</p> <p>Final Research Question and Hypothesis Due – by Sunday, Week Two</p>

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		pp. 3-23, relevant sections of Part II depending on instructor preference for citation styles	
3-4	Refining the Research Topic and Question	<p>Required Readings:</p> <p>“The Elements of a Proposal”</p> <p>“Research Proposal”</p> <p>“Developing a Thesis Statement”</p> <p>Supplemental Reading:</p> <p>Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i>, Chps 3 & 4, relevant sections of Part II depending on instructor preference for citation styles</p>	<p>Week Three Forum Discussion (graded – 500 words initial post)</p> <p>Formal Research Proposal – due end Week Four</p>
5-6	Writing the Introductory Elements	<p>Required Reading:</p> <p>“Literature Review Example”</p> <p>“Scholarly Literature Review Example”</p> <p><i>Research Design</i>, Chapter 5, “The Introduction”</p> <p>Supplemental Reading:</p> <p>Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i>, relevant sections of Part II depending on instructor preference for citation styles</p>	<p>Week Five Forum Discussion (graded – 1000-1250 words for introduction, problem statement, and background)</p> <p>Literature Review – due end Week Six</p>

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7-8	Designing the Capstone Thesis: Methodology and Theoretical Frameworks	<p>“Theoretical Frameworks in National Security”</p> <p>“Theory Building and Hypothesis Testing”</p> <p>“Evaluating Theories”</p> <p>“Qualitative Data Collection Methods”</p> <p>Supplemental Reading: Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i>, Chp 5.</p>	Week Seven Forum Discussion (graded – purpose/rationale statement [500 words minimum] and methods/project description [750 – 1000 words])
9-10	Beginning the Research and Analysis	<p>“Conclusion Validity”</p> <p>“Research and Data Analysis”</p>	Week Nine Forum Discussion (graded – open to analysis in discipline]
11-12	Writing the Draft	<p>Supplement Reading:</p> <p>Turabian, <i>A Manual For Writers</i>, Chps 6 & 7, relevant sections of Part II depending on instructor preference for citation styles</p>	Draft Capstone Thesis Project – due end Week Twelve

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<p>13-14</p>	<p>Additional Elements and Finalizing the Draft</p>	<p>Required Reading:</p> <p>Capstone Manual, sections pertaining to proper formatting of final research paper and preparation for submission to library (declarations, metadata, appendices, tables and figures, etc.)</p> <p>“Checklist for Papers”</p> <p>Supplemental Reading:</p> <p>Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i>, Chps 9-11, relevant sections of Part II depending on instructor preference for citation styles</p>	<p>Final Capstone Thesis Project – due end Week Fourteen</p>
<p>15-16</p>	<p>Results</p>	<p>Required Reading:</p> <p>Capstone Manual, appropriate sections relevant to submission of final paper to library</p>	<p>Papers returned for any final revisions that may be required. Final copy submitted end of week 16.</p>

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Policies

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference all University policies. Quick links to frequently asked question about policies are listed below.

[Drop/Withdrawal Policy](#)
[Plagiarism Policy](#)

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[Extension Process and Policy](#)
[Disability Accommodations](#)

Citation and Reference Style

Attention Please: Students will follow the Turabian/Chicago Style as the sole citation and reference style used in written work submitted as part of coursework to the University.

See <http://www.apus.edu/Online-Library/tutorials/chicago.htm>.

Late Assignments

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, I understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment, please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution. Routine submission of late assignments is unacceptable and may result in points deducted from your final course grade.

Netiquette

Online universities promote the advancement of knowledge through positive and constructive debate – both inside and outside the classroom. Forums on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting – basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the rewards and excitement of learning which does not include descent to personal attacks or student attempts to stifle the Forum of others.

- **Technology Limitations:** While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The Sakai classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.
- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and especially satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add “emoticons” to help alert your readers: ;-), :), ☺

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Online Library

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The Online Library is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Online Library provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to librarian@apus.edu.

- **Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors' publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.

Request a Library Guide for your course (<http://apus.libguides.com/index.php>)

The AMU/APU Library Guides provide access to collections of trusted sites on the Open Web and licensed resources on the Deep Web. The following are specially tailored for academic research at APUS:

- Program Portals contain topical and methodological resources to help launch general research in the degree program. To locate, search by department name, or navigate by school.
- Course Lib-Guides narrow the focus to relevant resources for the corresponding course. To locate, search by class code (e.g., SOCI111), or class name.

If a guide you need is not available yet, please email the APUS Library: librarian@apus.edu.

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Turnitin.com

Faculty require assignments be submitted to Turnitin.com. Turnitin.com will analyze a paper and report instances of potential plagiarism for the student to edit before submitting it for a grade. The instructor will post information in the classroom on student procedures.