

PO9C7-20 Security in an Age of Anxiety

26/27

Department

Politics & International Studies

Level

Taught Postgraduate Level

Module leader

Christopher Browning

Credit value

20

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Since the end of the Cold War, the expansion of security agendas and the application of security logics to new issues has been widely discussed and analysed. Security is no longer just about the balance of power, narrowly defined conceptions of the national interest, or a focus on strategic issues of war and peace but is increasingly dominated by concerns about migration, climate change, health, development, cyber etc. Arguably, though, the widening and deepening of security only captures part of current trends. Alongside such processes, it has also become common to hear proclamations of a contemporary 'age of anxiety'. Popular culture, for instance, is replete with visions of dystopian futures about, inter alia, climate breakdown, technological catastrophe, global pandemics, democratic collapse, and authoritarian futures. Framed differently, insecurity has become an ontological condition characterised by (sometimes species level) anxieties about the future.

This module has three aims. First, to engage with and explore how security has become an increasingly contested and politicised concept. Thus, while the expansion of security is often welcomed, it is always important to consider how security is defined, who the winners and losers are, and therefore whether the expansion of security is necessarily positive. Second, it frames debates about the emergence of new issues on the security agenda in terms of the effects of

generalised anxiety on security. It is, in this respect, concerned with how we actually experience (in)security in our everyday lives. Third, the module will therefore familiarise students with a number of concepts and theories that have become increasingly important for thinking about the contemporary security terrain.

Module aims

- To provide students with an understanding of a range of issues that are frequently depicted as part of a new and broadening security agenda.
- To emphasise security as a politically contested concept and category and in doing so encourage students to critically assess the nature of security claims being made on a range of issues – in particular to consider how security and threat are being defined, which objects of security are being prioritised, which agents are deemed most appropriate for dealing with different security challenges and which policy options are being favoured.
- To familiarise students with a range of conceptual tools useful in thinking about the ontological experience of (in)security in the contemporary age of anxiety.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Security and the Perma-Crisis

Week 2: Order: Security and Crises of Global Order

Week 3: Governance and Trust: Populism, Polarisation, Truth

Week 4: Identity: Societal Security, Borders, and Migration

Week 5: Agency, Cosmology, and Existence: Eco-Anxiety, the Global Commons, and the Collective Action Problem

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: Freedom and Control: Towards a Generalised State of Exception?

Week 8: Commodification and Risk: The Corporate Capture of Security

Week 9: (Post)Humanity and Purpose: Security Utopias/Dystopias OR Algorithms, AI, and the Rise of the Robots

Week 10: Recognition and Moral Being: Mnemonical Security and Memory Wars

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Appreciate the politically contested nature of the concept of security and foreground the everyday experience of (in)security in the contemporary age of anxiety..
- Identify core debates about the changing nature of security in the contemporary age, the processes that underpin them, and their potential implications.
- Interrogate those claims with a particular emphasis on their political and ethical dimensions and with respect to how debates about security are inherently politicised.
- Engage with policy debates about pertinent approaches to tackling a range of diverse security issues.
- Effectively communicate and debate arguments about the contemporary broadened international security agenda.

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

[Specific reading list for the module](#)

Subject specific skills

By the end of the module students should be able to:

- Appreciate the politically contested nature of the concept of security.
- Identify core debates about the changing nature of security in the contemporary age, the processes that underpin them, and their potential implications.
- Interrogate those claims with a particular emphasis on their political and ethical dimensions and with respect to how debates about security are inherently politicised.
- Engage with policy debates about pertinent approaches to tackling a range of diverse security issues.
- Effectively communicate and debate arguments about the contemporary broadened international security agenda.

Transferable skills

Critical analysis

Presentation and communication

Argument and debate

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (9%)
Private study	182 hours (91%)
Total	200 hours

Private study description

TBC

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
5000 word Research Essay	100%		Yes (extension)
5000 word Essay			
Reassessment component is the same			

Feedback on assessment

feedback form via Tabula, optional verbal consultation

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PT MA in International Development
- Year 1 of TPOS-M1PA MA in International Politics and Europe
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9Q1 Postgraduate Politics, Big Data and Quantitative Methods
- Year 1 of TPOS-M1P3 Postgraduate Taught International Political Economy
- Year 1 of TPOS-M1P8 Postgraduate Taught International Politics and East Asia
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9P9 Postgraduate Taught International Relations
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PC Postgraduate Taught International Security
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PS Postgraduate Taught Political and Legal Theory
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PF Postgraduate Taught Public Policy
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PQ Postgraduate Taught United States Foreign Policy

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PE Double MA in Politics and International Studies (with NTU Singapore)
- Year 1 of TPOS-M9PP Double MA in Politics and International Studies (with Universität Konstanz, Germany)
- Year 1 of TIMA-L981 Postgraduate Social Science Research
- Year 1 of TPOS-M1PD Postgraduate Taught the Politics of Climate Change