



INTELLIGENCE & COVERT OPS

PSC 434, SPRING 2026

INSTRUCTOR: DR. JESS MORRISSETTE

MEETINGS: TU/TH 9:30-10:45, SMITH HALL 435

OFFICE HOURS: M 2-5, AND BY APPOINTMENT

OFFICE LOCATION: SMITH HALL 706

MORRISSETTE@MARSHALL.EDU | (304) 696-2760

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the institutions and processes of the U.S. Intelligence Community, with an emphasis on the vital role of intelligence in national security (3 credit hours).

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

My name is Dr. Jess Morrissette; I'm a Professor in the Department of Political Science, and this is my eighteenth year here at Marshall University. I earned my MA from Virginia Tech and my Ph.D. from the University of Georgia, where I wrote my dissertation about interstate conflict driven by water scarcity in the Middle East and North Africa. My areas of specialization are International Relations and Comparative Politics, and I have published on topics ranging from resource-based conflict to Russian foreign policy to the rise of extremist movements. In recent years, my research has focused increasingly on exploring the politics of popular culture and, more specifically, video games.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students should be able to...	How we will practice this outcome...	How we will assess this outcome...
<i>Identify and differentiate among key institutions in the U.S. Intelligence Community.</i>	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities	Quizzes, exams
<i>Apply the steps of the "intelligence cycle" to historical and contemporary events.</i>	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities	Quizzes, exams
<i>Diagnose failures of intelligence and generate alternative strategies.</i>	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities	Quizzes, exams
<i>Assess the evolving role of the U.S. Intelligence Community vis-à-vis national security.</i>	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities	Quizzes, exams
<i>Evaluate the moral and ethical implications of intelligence operations and covert actions.</i>	Lectures, discussions, in-class activities	Quizzes, exams

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

Your course grade is calculated based on the following assignments.

5%	Attendance and Participation	A =	90%-100%
30%	Quizzes	B =	80-89%
30%	Midterm Exam	C =	70-79%
35%	Final Exam	D =	60-69%
		F ≤	59%

Note that failure to complete any assignment will result in a failing grade for the semester, regardless of the missing assignment's point value.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- George, *Intelligence in the National Security Enterprise: An Introduction*.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is required, and students are expected to arrive having read the material and ready to discuss it. To track this, we will have 7 attendance “spot checks” this semester. Each spot check earns 1 point toward your attendance and participation grade. I understand that illnesses or emergencies sometimes prevent attendance, so I have built flexibility into the grading calculation:

- Full Credit: You only need to be present for 5 out of the 7 checks to earn full attendance points.
- Bonus: If you are present for 6 checks, you earn 1 bonus point!
- Double Bonus: If you are present for all 7 checks, you earn 2 bonus points!

Please note: Since full credit only requires 5 checks, make-ups are not offered for missed spot checks. Exceptions will be made only for documented university-sanctioned events (e.g., athletics).

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Classroom discussions will be conducted in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect. Differences of opinion and the challenging of viewpoints—including those of the instructor—are part of the learning experience, but they should occur in a way that opens dialogue without being disrespectful, hostile, or threatening toward others.

To ensure a productive learning environment for everyone, please refrain from disruptive behaviors during class time. This includes: holding side conversations while others are speaking, interrupting the instructor or classmates, using technology for non-class purposes (texting, social media, browsing, listening to music), or packing up your belongings before class is dismissed. If you must arrive late or leave early due to an emergency, please do so as quietly as possible to minimize distraction.

Unwelcome conduct directed toward another person based upon that person’s actual or perceived race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, political affiliation, disability, age, or veteran status will not be permitted. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in dismissal from class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students are expected to adhere to the University’s policies concerning academic honesty. Cheating or plagiarism on any exam, quiz, or assignment will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent under University policies. **The penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a failing grade for the course.**

GENERATIVE AI

Students are prohibited from using generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, etc.) in any way on any assignment in this course. The use of generative AI in this course will be considered a violation of both Marshall's Academic Dishonesty Policy and the Student Code of Conduct. As noted above, **the penalty for academic dishonesty is a failing grade for the course.**

MAKE-UP EXAMS AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

If you need to miss an exam, please notify me in advance (if possible) and provide a University-approved excuse to be eligible for a make-up exam. It is your responsibility to schedule the make-up exam with me in a timely manner (ideally within one week).

Late quizzes will receive an immediate 10% penalty, plus an additional 10% for every full week past the deadline (up to a 30% maximum penalty). Please note that **the final deadline for submitting any missing assignments is Friday, May 1.**

EMAIL POLICY

Please check your Marshall email account regularly. Articles, assignments, and other important announcements may be sent to your "@marshall.edu" email address during the course of the semester. If you prefer to use a different email service, please contact Computing Services for assistance with forwarding your Marshall email to your preferred address.

If you need to email me, my address is [morrissette@marshall.edu](mailto:morrisette@marshall.edu). Please **do not** send course messages via Blackboard; I likely will not see them in a timely manner.

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

All members of the Marshall University community are expected to always observe health and safety protocols. This includes general health and safety protocols as well as specific protocols that might emerge in response to community and campus health conditions.

CAMPUS CARRY POLICY

University Policy, UPGA-12 (Campus Carry Policy) derives its authority from West Virginia State law, including the Campus Self-defense Act (W. Va. Code § 18B-4-5b). It pertains to the exercise of Concealed Carry on Marshall University's campus, except in designated areas, by individuals with a valid permit to Conceal Carry.

Individuals who choose to Conceal Carry are responsible for knowing and understanding all applicable federal, state, and local laws and Marshall University Board of Governors Rules, University Policies, and Administrative Procedures. University Policy, UPGA-12 applies to areas of campus and buildings that are directly under the possession or control of Marshall University.

Concealed Handguns are not observable to others and must be holstered and concealed on the body of the permit holder or in a personal carrier, such as a backpack, purse, or other bag that remains under

the exclusive and uninterrupted control of the permit holder. This includes wearing the personal carrier with a strap, carrying or holding the personal carrier, or setting the personal carrier next to or within your immediate reach at all times. If your participation in class activities impedes your ability to maintain constant control of your Handgun, please make alternate arrangements prior to coming to class.

OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES

By enrolling in this course, you agree to the following University Policies. Please read the full text of each policy by going to <https://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs/policies/>.

- Academic Dishonesty Policy
- Academic Dismissal Policy
- Academic Forgiveness Policy
- Academic Probation and Suspension Policy
- Affirmative Action Policy
- Pre-Finals Week Policy
- D/F Repeat Rule
- Excused Absence Policy for Undergraduates
- Inclement Weather Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy- Title IX prohibits the harassment of students based on sex, which includes pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions. This includes that students will not be penalized for taking medically necessary leave related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions. Marshall's Title IX Office may be contacted at TitleIX@marshall.edu.
- Students with Disabilities (Policies and Procedures)
- University Computing Services Acceptable Use Policy

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Midterm and Final Exams:** We will have in-class midterm and final exams. I will provide more information about the format as the exam dates approach.
- **Quizzes:** Students will complete ten quizzes on Blackboard this semester based on our course readings. These are open-book and open-notes, but they are NOT collaborative; please ensure all work is your own. As noted above, late quizzes receive an immediate 10% penalty, plus an additional 10% for every full week past the deadline (up to a 30% maximum penalty).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week of January 13: What Is Intelligence?

- George, Chapters 1 and 2

Week of January 20: A History of Intelligence in the United States

- Lowenthal, "The Development of U.S. Intelligence" (Blackboard)
→ **Quiz 1 Due: Tuesday, January 20 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of January 27: The National Security Enterprise

- George, Chapter 3
→ **Quiz 2 Due: Tuesday, January 27 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of February 3: The US Intelligence Community

- George, Chapter 4
→ **Quiz 3 Due: Tuesday, February 3 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of February 10: The Intelligence Cycle

- George, Chapter 5
→ **Quiz 4 Due: Tuesday, February 10 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of February 17: Strategic Intelligence

- George, Chapter 6
→ **Quiz 5 Due: Tuesday, February 17 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of February 24: Identifying Emerging Threats

- *Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, 2025* (Blackboard)
→ **Quiz 6 Due: Tuesday, February 24 (9:30 a.m.)**

**MIDTERM EXAM
TUESDAY, MARCH 3
(Class cancelled on Thursday)**

Week of March 10: Intelligence Failures

- George, Chapter 7
→ **Quiz 7 Due: Tuesday, March 10 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of March 17: Spring Break!

Week of March 24: Intelligence and Policy

- George, Chapters 8 and 10
 ↪ **Quiz 8 Due: Tuesday, March 24 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of March 31: Counterintelligence

- Lowenthal, "Counterintelligence" (Blackboard)
 ↪ **Quiz 9 Due: Tuesday, March 31 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of April 7: Covert Action

- George, Chapter 9
 ↪ **Quiz 10 Due: Tuesday, April 7 (9:30 a.m.)**

Week of April 14: Covert Action

- Johnson, "Ethics and Covert Action" (Blackboard)

Week of April 21: The Hunt for Bin Laden

Week of April 28: Intelligence and Democracy

- George, Chapter 11

**FINAL EXAM
TUESDAY, MAY 5 (8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.)**