

POLI 490

Independent Reading and Research

INSTRUCTOR:	Prof. Rex Brynen office: #301, 3465 Peel phone: (514) 398-4400x00634 (office)	email: rex.brynen@mcgill.ca
CLASS HOURS:	Wednesdays, 17h30-19h00 (optional gaming session follows 19h00-20h30)	
OFFICE HOURS:	W 10h45-11h45, F 10h45-11h15, or by appointment	

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the design of conflict simulation, and explore the use of wargaming and other serious games for military planning, policy analysis, training, and education.

The course will consist of weekly meetings. All readings MUST be done in advance of each meeting. Each meeting will consist of one hour of lecture, and one hour of seminar-style discussion. In addition, (war)games will also be organized from time to time to demonstrate approaches, mechanisms, and techniques.

Text

The texts for this course are:

Philip Sabin, *Simulating War: Studying Conflict Through Simulation Games* (Continuum Books, 2012).

Peter Perla., *The Art of Wargaming: A Guide for Professionals and Hobbyists*, 2nd edition (History of Wargaming Project, 2012).

UK Ministry of Defence, *Defence Wargaming Handbook* (Development, Concepts, and Doctrine Centre, 2017). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-wargaming-handbook>

Shawn Burns, ed., *War Gamers' Handbook: A Guide for Professional War Gamers* (US Naval War College). <https://usnwc.edu/Research-and-Wargaming/Wargaming/Publications-and-Journals>

Readings for the course are drawn from the course text or will be placed online via myCourses (<http://www.mcgill.ca/mycourses>). They may also be available on reserve in the library. Because of this, there is no coursepack.

Course Requirements and Grading

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| • course participation | 10% |
| • discussion paper (1,250 words) | 15% |
| • game review or debrief (1,250 words) | 15% |
| • conflict simulation/game design (group) | 35% |
| • final examination (take-home) | 25% |

Course participation will be based on the quality and quantity of participation in the weekly seminars and gaming sessions.

A *discussion paper* should explore an issue raised in the course readings. This should not simply be a summary of a reading, but rather a thoughtful contribution to discussion of key issues, debates, or challenges in conflict simulation. You must distribute this (by email or myCourses) to all members of the group at least 24 hours before the relevant meeting, and be prepared to discuss the contents.

A *game review or debrief* should address a game played as part of the course, or another pre-approved game.

- A *game review*. The review should briefly summarize the subject of the game, discuss the key design elements, then assess the strengths and weaknesses of underlying model of conflict and cooperation. The point of the review is not to assess how enjoyable the game is, but rather evaluate the ways in which it models conflict dynamics, and its value as an educational or analytical tool.
- A *game debrief* should analyze the outcome of conflict simulation. It should not simply be a descriptive account of what happened. Rather, it should be a thoughtful assessment of the key dynamics and major insights from a political-military or crisis game, focusing on what strategic options were assessed, why decisions were made, critical junctures, and the key drivers of important outcomes.

If a student submits more than the required number of discussion papers or game reviews/debriefs, the best one will be counted for grading purposes.

In groups of 2 or 3, students will design a *conflict simulation*. The topic of this must be approved in advance by the instructor. The simulation will be assessed on the clarity of the game objectives, playability, modelling of political, military, and social processes, the quality of the rules and game components. More detailed guidelines and a grading rubric for this will be distributed in class.

The *final exam* will consist of two 1,000-word essay questions, selected from a choice of three. Writing the exam will not require additional research above and beyond the course readings and discussions. The exam will be distributed in class during the last meeting of the term, and will be due by email 2 weeks later.

Plagiarism: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

If parts of someone else's work are used directly (paraphrased or quoted) without acknowledgement, this constitutes plagiarism. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is or how to identify your sources, ask the course instructor or consult a style manual. Plagiarism is cheating, to the detriment of both the university and fellow students. Research papers that contain plagiarized material will receive a grade of 0/30, and the student

will be assigned an incomplete J (F) grade for the course overall. In addition, they will be reported to the Faculty with a recommendation for the strongest possible disciplinary action.

Supplemental exams: As outlined in the Faculty of Arts calendar, students receiving a final grade of D or F for the course may write a supplemental exam, which will replace their original final exam grade. If so, they may also submit supplemental discussion papers at this time, UNLESS the failing grade was the result of plagiarism.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

COURSE OUTLINE

(dates to be determined)

Week 1

Introduction to Conflict Simulation I

- Sabin, *Simulating Conflict*, Introduction, Chapter 1.

Week 2

History of Wargaming

- Perla, *The Art of Wargaming*, Chapters 1, 2, 3.
- Paul Strong, "Wargaming the Atlantic War: Captain Gilbert Roberts and the Wrens of the Western Approaches Tactical Unit," paper presented to the MORS wargaming special meeting, October 2017, accessed via PAXsims at <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/2017/12/20/wargaming-the-atlantic-war-captain-gilbert-roberts-and-the-wrens-of-the-western-approaches-tactical-unit/>

Week 3

Modelling Conflict I: Theory

- Sabin, *Simulating War*, 2, 3, 4
- Perla, *The Art of Wargaming*, Chapters 5, 6, 7.
- Rex Brynen, "Ten (Not Entirely Randomly-Generated) Reflections on the Social Science of Wargaming," Connections UK professional wargaming conference, September 2016.
 - video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2RLvSkhEk>
 - slides: <http://www.professionalwargaming.co.uk/SocialScienceGaming.pdf>

Week 4

Modelling Conflict II: Mechanics

- Sabin, *Simulating War*, chapters 5, 6

Week 5

Modelling Conflict III: More Mechanics

- *Simulating War*, chapters 7, 8

Week 6

Modeling Conflict IV: POL-MIL Games and Non-Kinetic Dimensions

- Rex Brynen, "Gaming the Non-Kinetic," in Pat Harrigan and Matthew Kirschenbaum, eds. *Zones of Control: Perspectives on Wargaming* (MIT Press 2016), chapter 41 (via myCourses).

- Jim Wallman, "Cultural Wargaming: Understanding Cross-Cultural Communications Using Wargames," in Harrigan and Kirschenbaum, eds., *Zones of Control*, chapter 46.

Week 7

Discussion of Student Projects

- No readings this week.

Week 8

Seminar and Matrix Games

- *MaGCK (Matrix Game Construction Kit) User Guide* (The Game Crafter, 2017).

Week 9

Negotiation Simulations

- Natasha Gill, *Inside the Box: Using Integrative Simulations to Teach Conflict, Negotiation and Mediation*. Zurich: Center for Security Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich, 2015), chapters 1-4. http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/Inside_the_Box-Gill.pdf

Week 10

Wargaming Best Practices

- UK Ministry of Defence, *Defence Wargaming Handbook* (Development, Concepts, and Doctrine Centre, 2017). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-wargaming-handbook>
- OR
- Shawn Burns, ed., *War Gamers' Handbook: A Guide for Professional War Gamers* (US Naval War College). <https://usnwc.edu/Research-and-Wargaming/Wargaming/Publications-and-Journals>

Week 11

Wargaming Worst Practices

- Christopher Weuve et al, *Wargame Pathologies* (CAN, 2004). <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA596774>
- Stephen Downes-Martin, "Your Boss, Players, and Sponsor: The Three Witches of Wargaming," *Naval War College Review* 67, 1 (Winter 2014). <https://usnwc2.usnwc.edu/getattachment/2bbc7803-0a99-44ca-8d38-cbf654c600c6/Your-Boss,-Players,-and-Sponsor--The-Three-Witches.aspx>

Week 12

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- No meeting this week.

Week 13

Matrix Game Design

- No readings this week.