

History 4821F

Spy vs. Spy

Fall 2025

Instructor: **Professor William J. Turkel**

Email: **wturkel@uwo.ca**

Office: **Department of History, Lawson Hall 2267**

Office Hours: **Online by appointment**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

An introduction to close reading and the techniques of structured intelligence analysis. Working individually and in groups, students will analyze a series of historical case studies from the 20th and 21st centuries. Topics include espionage, cyber war, terrorism, organized crime, homeland security, counterintelligence, and decision support.

This course teaches the utility of evidence-based, qualitative analysis in settings where decisions must be made collaboratively under uncertain or adversarial conditions.

Prerequisite(s):

Registration in third year or above, any module.

Course Syllabus

In the second half of the 20th century, a series of highly public failures forced intelligence agencies to evaluate methods that until that time had mostly relied on the unconscious, intuitive judgements of individual analysts and subject-matter experts. Over the same period, psychologists, computer scientists and later behavioural economists showed that human cognition is susceptible to a wide variety of biases. In other words, when thinking quickly we take shortcuts that make our reasoning error-prone, and it is often hard for us to recognize those errors. Structured analytic techniques are designed to slow down our thinking and make it public, so that others may critique and build on it.

In this course, the historian's traditional method of close reading is combined with the structured analytic techniques that now form the core methodology of intelligence analysis. Working individually and in teams, students will learn to analyze case studies that are complex and ambiguous, and often full of unknowns. This is excellent training not only for a career in history, but in law, politics, business, the social sciences, the military, law enforcement and a variety of other fields.

Expected Preparation

This is a draft outline. 2025-26 version. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

You will be given a short collection of readings and exercises to do before each scheduled meeting. It is crucial that you take this requirement seriously, read the materials carefully and do the exercises. Since teamwork is an essential component of this class (and your grade), students who are not prepared for class will not only be letting themselves down, but some of their classmates, too.

Participation and Professionalism

You are required to participate in each scheduled meeting. *Failure to participate in more than two meetings without prior approval or a note from your academic advisor may result in a failing grade.* Since you will be working closely with others using teleconferencing and shared online documents as well as in person, it is important to be respectful, to share your own ideas and to listen carefully to the ideas of others.

Teamwork and Peer Evaluation

Each assignment you will be randomly assigned to a team of about 7 people. Grades for the team portion of the assignment will be shared by all members of the team. At the end of each assignment, you will submit a very brief peer evaluation for the members of your team. I will use these assessments, in conjunction with my own, to determine your individual contribution to team assignments.

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course students will

- Be aware of a range of biases and heuristics that interfere with sound reasoning
- Be familiar with some techniques for effectively conducting teamwork online and in person, using software environments and artificial intelligence tools
- Be familiar with a wide variety of techniques to externalize and critique thought processes and to qualitatively deal with unknown data
- Have some knowledge of significant recent episodes in the history of security intelligence and foreign intelligence

Methods of Evaluation

There will be four assignments, worth 25% each, spread uniformly throughout the term. Each assignment has an individual portion (10%), a team portion (10%), and a portion that combines my assessment of in-class work with peer assessments of the student's contribution to team performance (5%).

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Each assignment has a suggested due date and, a week later, a zero date. If you hand in your assignment before the zero date, you will receive full credit for your work. After the zero date, it will be worth nothing. Due dates and zero dates are listed in the Course Schedule below.

Students must submit all course assignments to pass the course.

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, you must provide valid medical or other supporting documentation to Academic Advising as soon as possible.

Course Materials

There is one required text for this course.

Beebe, Sarah Miller & Randolph H. Pherson. *Cases in Intelligence Analysis: Structured Analytic Techniques in Action*, 2nd ed. Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2015.

It is available as an (expensive) paperback. You may also be able to find used copies since it was published in 2014. The least expensive option is to get a 90-day eBook (\$41 USD) at the beginning of term. You can do that at the following link:

<https://collegepublishing.sagepub.com/products/cases-in-intelligence-analysis-2-242321>

You will also be required to use software provided by the university:

- You will need access to Microsoft Office tools (especially Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Copilot). These are available through your Office 365 account
https://wts.uwo.ca/office_365/index.html
- Graded assignments will also require teamwork that will be conducted through MS Teams
https://wts.uwo.ca/microsoft_teams/index.html
- You may also find it convenient to install Zoom for team meetings and office hours appointments
<https://wts.uwo.ca/zoom/index.html>

All other course materials will be provided electronically on OWL Brightspace.

Course Schedule and Readings

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

- Sep 04. BRIEFING 00. WELCOME
- Sep 11. BRIEFING 01. POISONING
- Sep 18. BRIEFING 02. SPY. ASSIGNMENT 01. ANTHRAX due
- Sep 25. BRIEFING 03. OUTBREAK. ASSIGNMENT 01 zero date
- Oct 02. BRIEFING 04. SNIPER
- Oct 09. BRIEFING 05. HOMELAND. ASSIGNMENT 02. LUNA due
- Oct 16. BRIEFING 06. BOMBER. ASSIGNMENT 02 zero date
- Oct 23. BRIEFING 07. POLITICS
- Oct 30. BRIEFING 08. TERRORISTS. ASSIGNMENT 03. MUMBAI due
- Nov 06. FALL READING WEEK
- Nov 13. BRIEFING 09. TALIBAN. ASSIGNMENT 03 zero date
- Nov 20. BRIEFING 10. UKRAINE
- Nov 27. BRIEFING 11. PROPAGANDA. ASSIGNMENT 04. BELGRADE due
- Dec 04. BRIEFING 12. AI. ASSIGNMENT 04 zero date

Additional Statements

Communication policies: During the course you will be able to reach me by email and/or MS Teams.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI): In this course you will be required to use generative AI tools for some assignments and document your use of them. More information will be provided in class.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.