

Fall 2026

Space Policy (INTA 8803)

Course Details

Meeting time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00 am to 12:15 pm
Principal Classroom: [George Tower / Scheller Tower](#) 360
Catalog details: Lecture, 3.000 credits
Canvas ID: [545100](#)

Course Instruction

Instructor: Thomas González Roberts
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Office: Habersham 305
Office hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:00 to 10:30 am, or by appointment

Course Description

As satellites orbit the Earth hundreds or thousands of kilometers above our heads, they quietly play a critical role in our daily lives, the global economy, and military power. To study space policy is to interrogate the decision-making processes for the civil, commercial, and military uses of outer space from the dawn of the space age to the modern day, spanning issues of international coordination, sustainability, and security in the domain. Through this course, students will learn about the diverse factors that have historically shaped space policy thinking, from the original rationales for spaceflight, to the birth of the commercial space industry, to the development of international systems that promote long-term stability in a rapidly densifying environment.

By engaging with the debates and decisions that have shaped global space activities, students will gain an appreciation for the role of space technologies in global society, the critical challenges facing this domain, and the intricate politics driving contemporary space policy in both the United States and around the world.

Course Objectives

By actively participating in this course, students will earn familiarity with:

- The outer space environment as a geopolitical domain;
- The fundamental treaties, laws, agreements, and policies that apply to space operations; and
- The roles of key actors in the development and administration of space governance principles.

Using this knowledge, students will be able to:

- Examine the physical, social, political, and economic factors that have shaped global space policy and their impact on current and future space activities;
- Critically evaluate historical space policy proposals and decisions; and
- Develop clear and persuasive arguments for policy options that address current and future challenges in the space domain.

Course Materials

All readings for this course will be made available at no additional cost to students. There is no need to purchase any textbooks. The readings will include a mix of open-access materials and library resources accessible through students' Georgia Tech Library credentials.

Required Readings

Required readings are those that must be completed before the Monday class meeting of the corresponding week. Content from required readings may appear on the midterm exam. All required readings are posted as links in the "Course Schedule" section of the Canvas homepage or uploaded as PDFs to the "Files" repository of the course's Canvas page.

Suggested Readings

Suggested readings are additional resources for students preparing their policy memos throughout the term; their content will not be tested on the midterm exam. Suggested readings appear on Canvas as links within the policy memo assignments. The following suggested readings offer background information related to the course as a whole and serve as richer introductions to the material for interested readers:

- James Alver and Michael Gleasor, "[A Space Policy Primer: Key Concepts, Issues, and Actors](#)," The Aerospace Corporation, November 2018;
- James Clay Moltz, [Crowded Orbits: Conflict and Cooperation in Space](#) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); and
- Christopher D. Johnson, ed., [Handbook for New Space Actors](#) (Broomfield, CO: Secure World Foundation, 2017).

Grading

Class participation and all required assignments are graded on equally weighted points, totaling 100 points for the semester. Extra credit opportunities to add additional points to students' total for the semester are described in the "Assignments" section.

Grade Distribution

Requirement	Dates	Points
Class Participation Weeks 1-8 participation (10 pts.) Weeks 9-16 participation (10 pts.)	Mondays and Wednesdays, August 24 through December 7 (see Course Calendar).	20
Policy Memos	Due most Wednesdays (see Course	20

Requirement	Dates	Points
Four policy memos (5 pts. each, 250-500 words)	Calendar), uploaded to Canvas by the start of class.	
Midterm Exam Short answers and identification (25 pts.)	In class on October 21; review session on October 19.	25
Final Assignment One proposal memo (5 pts., 250-500 words) One short talk (5 pts., five minutes) One paper (25 pts., 3,000-4,000 words)	Topic selection due via submitted proposal memo on November 4; briefings in class on November 30 and December 2; paper due on Canvas by December 8.	35

Total: 100

Grading Scale

For students electing to take this course for a grade, the thresholds for earning an *A*, *B*, *C*, or *D* letter grade are 90, 80, 70, and 60 points, respectively. Students who earn fewer than 60 points during the semester will fail this course.

For students electing to take this course without a grade, the threshold for earning an *S* assessment is 70 points. Students who earn fewer than 70 points will earn a *U* assessment.

Assignments

All assignments submitted during the course of the semester are due on Wednesdays at 11 am ET on the dates described in the “Course Calendar” section. The final paper is due at 5 pm ET on Tuesday, December 8. All assignments are to be submitted on Canvas.

Class Participation (2×10 pts.)

Active participation is essential to students’ success in this course. Students are expected to come to each class well-prepared, having thoroughly read and reflected on the assigned materials. Engaging thoughtfully and respectfully with classmates and the instructor during discussions will deepen students’ understanding of the course content and enhance their learning experience. Full credit for participation requires consistent attendance, preparation, and meaningful contributions to seminar discussions, including those led by guest lecturers and student speakers.

Class participation is graded twice during the term: at the halfway point and end of the course, reflecting student performance in the first and second halves of the semester, respectively.

Policy Memos (4×5 pts.)

When asked to make a decision, executive leaders rely on brief, digestible materials to inform their understanding of the problem at hand and process evidence-based arguments. To develop their practice producing these materials, students will use the required and suggested readings from the course to analyze the core issue presented in the provided prompt and present their opinion on the matter, supported by both evidence and explanation. In some cases, students will benefit from sharing

their interpretation of the prompt, including providing the key definitions and reasonable assumptions on which their analysis is based.

Throughout the course of the semester, students will submit four 250- to 500-word policy memos, each addressing a question introduced one week in advance. There are nine total opportunities to submit memos; however, **students are required to submit Policy Memo 1** in order to receive early feedback, as policy memos represent a new style of writing for most students. After completing this first required memo, students may choose any three of the remaining eight opportunities to fulfill the course requirement of four total submissions. Students are welcome to submit more than four policy memos, in which case the top four scores will contribute to their final grade.

Grading will be based on clarity, accuracy, and style. Submitted policy memos should always be contained on a single page, written in 11- or 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font, and use footnote citations in the “Notes” format from the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).

Midterm Exam (25 pts.)

Halfway through the semester, students will sit for a midterm exam designed to assess their understanding of the material from the first half of the semester, including topics from both required readings and class meetings (Lectures 1 through 12). The exam will include short-answer and identification-based questions. The exam is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21, during class. To prepare students for the exam, a midterm review session is scheduled for the preceding class meeting.

Final Assignment (5+5+25 pts.)

At the end of the semester, students will write a 3,000- to 4,000-word paper on a space policy topic of their choice. Students are encouraged to select a topic that addresses issues directly affecting today’s space policy decision-makers, such as the legal and political challenges of rendezvous and proximity operations, the role of commercial space actors in national security missions, or the opportunities and costs of international cooperation or coordination between the United States and foreign states.

Unlike the policy memos in this course, this final paper should be written for an audience informed on past and current issues in space policy. To guide their writing style, students may refer to the journal articles and policy reports featured in the course’s lists of required and suggested readings.

Submissions should include:

- A clear introduction to the policy research question (What are the technical and political challenges surrounding this topic? Who are the stakeholders?);
- A literature review (What background information does the reader need to know on this topic to understand the author’s argument? How is the selected research question contextualized in past scholarship?);
- Approach and methodology (How will the author try to answer the research question?);
- Data and analysis (What was learned by following the previously outlined approach and methodology?); and
- Discussion and conclusion (How do the previously presented results inform decision-making in space technology development and international affairs? What concrete recommendations does the author have for policymakers?)

To prepare students for success in the final paper, they will propose the topic of their paper in the style

of a policy memo to the instructor. This proposal memo, worth five points, should preview the research question, demonstrate a cursory knowledge of the subject, feature a plan for the student's approach for answering the question, and preview preliminary results, if available. The proposal memo is due on Canvas on Wednesday, November 4. Like the policy memos, proposal memos should be 250 to 500 words and no more than one page.

To develop their skills in briefing materials to decision-makers, students must prepare a five-minute presentation, worth five points, sharing their findings with the rest of the class. Final briefings should be entirely delivered with speech; no slides will be accommodated.

The final paper is due on Canvas at 5 pm ET on Tuesday, December 8. All components of this final assignment—both the proposal memo and the final paper—should be written in 11- or 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font and use footnote citations in the “Notes” format from the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).

Extra Credit (5 pts.)

Students can earn extra credit, increasing their total points for the course, in two ways: writing memos that summarize the proceedings of selected public events in the broader space policy research community and attending selected on-campus events at the intersection of space policy and technology. Students are encouraged to participate in all of the events eligible for extra credit, but can accumulate no more than five additional points to add to the total earned from the principal components of the course.

The space policy research community is exceptionally rich in opportunities for virtual engagement, including congressional hearings, panel discussions hosted by non-governmental research organizations, and keynote addresses by industry leaders, among many others. If students attend any event featured on [SpacePolicyOnline.com](#)'s weekly “What's Happening in Space Policy” newsletter and write and submit one memo in the style of the course's policy memos, they will earn one point of extra credit. These memos should introduce the topic of the event, explain why it is important to contemporary issues in space policy, and summarize the viewpoints of its featured speakers, if applicable. Events on this list typically feature commentary from experts in the field; students are particularly encouraged to include verbatim quotes from these speakers, appropriately cited using the Chicago Manual of Style.

Throughout the course, the instructor will highlight on-campus events with invited speakers that plan to share their experience and research findings from their careers in space policy. Students will earn one point of extra credit for each session they attend; no memo necessary.

Course Schedule

Most scheduled class meetings will feature an in-person lecture (🏠) by the instructor or an invited guest. Some meetings will be held virtually (💻); meeting links will be posted on Canvas, and enrolled students will receive reminders before each virtual session. Selected meetings will bring this graduate section together with Prof. Mariel Borowitz's undergraduate course, *INTA 2803: Introduction to Space Policy* (👉). The location and any other instructions for these joint sessions will be announced in advance on Canvas.

The Course Calendar shows the schedule of instruction, as well as instructor office hours (🕒), assignment due dates (📅), and important items from the Institute's academic calendar (🐝). The Class Meetings list provides the topic for each lecture. The version of this list on the course's Canvas page also includes required readings and links to each lecture's slide deck. To ensure office hours are being held as regularly scheduled, students should visit the [Where is Prof. Roberts? section](#) of the Engineering Space Policy Laboratory's website before dropping in.

Course Calendar

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fr.
Week 1	Aug. 24 🏠 Lecture 1	25 🕒 Office hours	26 🏠 Lecture 2 🕒 Office hours	27	28
Week 2	Aug. 31 🏠 Lecture 3	Sept. 1 🕒 Office hours	2 📅 Policy memo 1 due 🏠 Lecture 4 (w/ <u>Prof. Mariel Borowitz</u>) 🙌	3	4
Week 3	Sept. 7 🐝 Institute holiday	8	9 📅 Policy memo 2 due 🏠 Guest Lecture (w/ <u>Dr. Sandy Magnus</u>) 🙌	10	11
Week 4	Sept. 14 🏠 Lecture 5 🙌	15 🕒 Office hours	16 📅 Policy memo 3 due 🏠 Lecture 6 🙌 🕒 Office hours	17	18
Week 5	Sept. 21 🏠 Lecture 7 🐝 <u>Space week</u>	22 🕒 Office hours 🐝 <u>Space week</u>	23 📅 Policy memo 4 due 🏠 Guest Lecture (w/ <u>Dr. Jeanette Epps</u>) 🙌 🕒 Office hours 🐝 <u>Space week</u>	24 🐝 <u>Space week</u>	25 🐝 <u>Space week</u>
Week 6	Sept. 28 🏠 Lecture 8	29 🕒 Office hours	30 📅 Policy memo 5 due 🏠 Lecture 9 🕒 Office hours	Oct. 1	2
Week 7	Oct. 5 🐝 Student recess	6 🐝 Student recess	7 📅 Policy memo 6 due 🏠 Lecture 10 🙌 🕒 Office hours	8	9
Week 8	Oct. 12 🏠 Lecture 11 🙌	13 🕒 Office hours	14 🏠 Lecture 12 🙌 🕒 Office hours	15	16
Week 9	Oct. 19 🏠 Midterm review session	20 🕒 Office hours	21 🏠 In-class midterm exam	22	23
Week 10	Oct. 26 🏠 Lecture 13	27 🕒 Office hours	28 📅 Policy memo 7 due 🏠 Lecture 14 🕒 Office hours	29	30

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fr.
Week 11	Nov. 2 🏠 Guest lecture (hosted by <u>Prof. Mariel Borowitz</u>) 🧡	3	4 📝 Paper proposal due 💻 Lecture 15 🧡	5	6
Week 12	Nov. 9 🏠 Lecture 16	10 🕒 Office hours	11 📝 Policy memo 8 due 🏠 Lecture 17 🕒 Office hours	12	13
Week 13	Nov. 16 🏠 Space security tabletop exercise (hosted by <u>Prof. Mariel Borowitz</u>) 🧡	17 🕒 Office hours	18 📝 Policy memo 9 due 🏠 Space security tabletop exercise (hosted by <u>Prof. Mariel Borowitz</u>) 🧡 🕒 Office hours	19	20
Week 14	Nov. 23 💻 Lecture 18 🧡	24	25 🐝 Student recess	26 🐝 Institute holiday	27 🐝 Institute holiday
Week 15	Nov. 30 🏠 Final paper briefings	Dec. 1 🕒 Office hours	2 🏠 Final paper briefings 🕒 Office hours	3	4
Week 16	Dec. 7 🏠 Wrap-up discussion	8 📝 Final paper	9	10	11

Class Meetings

Most Mondays and Wednesdays will feature an in-person (🏠) or virtual (💻) lecture. All guest lectures are in person. Some class meetings will be held in conjunction with the undergraduate section of this course (🧡). Class will not meet (🚫) during student recess or institute holidays.

	Lecture	Date	Topic
Week 1	1 🏠	Mon., Aug. 24	Class Introductions
	2 🏠	Wed., Aug. 26	Outer Space Environment
Week 2	3 🏠	Mon., Aug. 31	Introduction to Outer Space Law
	4 🏠	Wed., Sept. 2	Human Spaceflight w/ <u>Prof. Mariel Borowitz</u> 🧡
Week 3	– 🚫	Mon. Sept. 7	<i>Institute holiday</i>
	– 🏠	Wed., Sept. 9	Guest Lecture: <u>Dr. Sandy Magnus</u> 🧡
Week 4	5 🏠	Mon., Sept. 14	The Global Space Launch Industry (Part I) 🧡
	6 🏠	Wed., Sept. 16	The Global Space Launch Industry (Part II) 🧡

	Lecture	Date	Topic
Week 5	7 🏠	Mon., Sept. 21	Key Institutions in Space Policy
	– 🏠	Wed., Sept. 23	Guest Lecture: Dr. Jeanette Epps 🤝
Week 6	8 🏠	Mon., Sept. 28	Regulating Space Activities (Part I)
	9 🏠	Wed., Sept. 30	Regulating Space Activities (Part II)
Week 7	– 🚫	Mon., Oct. 5	<i>Student recess; no class</i>
	10 🏠	Wed., Oct. 7	Military Space Activities (Part I) 🤝
Week 8	11 🏠	Mon., Oct. 12	Military Space Activities (Part II) 🤝
	12 🏠	Wed., Oct. 14	Military Space Activities (Part III) 🤝
Week 9	– 🏠	Mon., Oct. 19	<i>Midterm review session</i>
	– 🏠	Wed., Oct. 21	<i>In-class Midterm Exam</i>
Week 10	13 🏠	Mon., Oct. 26	Communications Satellites
	14 🏠	Wed., Oct. 28	Earth Observation Satellites
Week 11	– 🏠	Mon., Nov. 2	Guest Lecture hosted by Prof. Mariel Borowitz 🤝
	15 💻	Wed., Nov. 4	Space Coordination (Part I) 🤝
Week 12	16 🏠	Mon., Nov. 9	Space Coordination (Part II)
	17 🏠	Wed., Nov. 11	Position, Navigation, and Timing Satellites
Week 13	– 🏠	Mon., Nov. 16	Space Security TTX (Part I) w/ Prof. Mariel Borowitz 🤝
	– 🏠	Wed., Nov. 18	Space Security TTX (Part II) w/ Prof. Mariel Borowitz 🤝
Week 14	18 💻	Mon., Nov. 23	Space Sustainability 🤝
	– 🚫	Wed., Nov. 25	<i>Institute holiday; no class</i>
Week 15	– 🏠	Mon., Nov. 30	Student final paper presentations (Part I)
	– 🏠	Wed., Dec. 2	Student final paper presentations (Part II)
Week 16	– 🏠	Mon., Dec. 7	Wrap-up discussion

Course Guidelines

The following subsections describe the course's guidelines with respect to academic integrity (including the prohibition of generative artificial intelligence for submitted writing assignments), accommodations for students with disabilities, the student-faculty expectations agreement, the use of electronics during

class meetings, inclusion, class absences, grade appeals, and issues of mental health or wellness that may affect students' performance in the course.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a policy memo, the midterm exam, or the final assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity (OSI), which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. For more information on the Honor Code, visit the [OSI website](#).

Using generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to write any portion of a submitted assignment in this course is considered plagiarism. All assignments submitted in fulfillment of this course's requirements are subject to review for plagiarism using commercial plagiarism detection software.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with learning needs that require special accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or via [their website](#) as soon as possible to discuss their needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Students with special accommodations should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss their learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations

The Georgia Tech community believes that it is important to continually strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. These beliefs are described in detail in Georgia Tech's [Rules and Regulations 21](#). Ultimately, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. We remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech, agree to abide by these principles in our time here, and will encourage each other to uphold these responsibilities.

Electronics Policy

Students may use laptops or other similar electronic devices during classes for note-taking purposes. The instructor, however, reserves the right to forbid these items in class in cases when they become a distraction from class discussion. Only students with written permission from the Office of Disability Services may record class meetings. Even in those cases, students cannot infringe on the privacy of their peers and the instructor, and any such records should be deleted at the end of the term.

Inclusion

This class is designed to be an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone, regardless of their background, ideas, or life experiences. All participants should treat one another with the dignity and respect that every person deserves, recognizing and valuing differences in ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic background, origin, or any other aspect of identity. Because the instructor receives students' legal names through the Georgia Tech roster, students who prefer to be addressed by a different name or gender pronoun should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Late Submissions Policy

Students are encouraged to submit all assignments by their corresponding deadlines. Late assignments may be accepted at the instructor's discretion. **Accepted late assignments will receive a grade deduction of one point for each day between the deadline and the late submission.**

Absences

In-person attendance is expected and essential for classroom participation. However, there are valid reasons why students may be unable to attend class, such as illness, the death of a friend or family member, or disabilities. Students who anticipate being unable to attend class are asked to notify the instructor prior to the affected class meeting, when possible. Additionally, if a student is feeling unwell, they are advised to stay home and rest in the interest of the health and safety of the entire class.

Appeals

It is uncommon for students to contest a grade. However, if a student believes that the grade received does not accurately reflect the quality of their work, they may submit a one-page memo in the style of the course's policy memo explaining why the assignment merits re-evaluation. This memo should include as much detail as possible. Upon receiving the memo, the instructor will re-evaluate the work. Please note that the grade may remain the same, increase, or decrease following the re-assessment.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

Students in need of assistance are encouraged to contact the Center for Mental Health Care and Resources at (404) 894-2575 or visit [their website](#). Georgia Tech provides various resources for students seeking mental health services or crisis support. In the event of an immediate, life-threatening emergency on campus, students should call the Georgia Tech Campus Police at (404) 894-2500. For additional resources on managing stress, anxiety, relationships, sleep, and more, students are advised to review this [list of free online tools](#) compiled by the Center for Mental Health Care and Resources.