

**History 4821F**  
**Spy vs. Spy**  
**Fall 2026**

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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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

Teams tasked with intelligence analysis are increasingly comprised of both humans and artificial intelligences. **In this course you will be required to work with AI for both in-class activities and graded assignments.**

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### ***Expected Preparation***

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 counsellor may result in a failing grade.* Since you will be working closely with others using video conferencing 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***

For 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 AI 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%).

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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.

*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 Counseling as soon as possible.

### **Course Materials**

All course materials will be provided electronically on OWL Brightspace or freely accessible on the web.

### **Course Schedule and Readings**

A complete schedule will be posted when the term begins.

### **Additional Statements**

***Communication policies:*** During the course you will be able to reach me by email.

***Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI):*** In this course you will be required to use generative AI tools for in-class activities and 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](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.