Political and military leaders have access to a wide array of information to help improve their decision-making. Intelligence is tailored information focused on others’ intentions, capabilities, and activities. It is usually obtained at least partly by secret means and is kept secret to provide leaders with decision-advantage over adversaries and competitors. Raw intelligence is collected from a variety of sources, including human spies, communications intercepts, terrestrial and space-based sensors, and public sources such as social media. Finished intelligence is the evaluated product of analyzing all sources of raw intelligence to craft an assessment of threats, opportunities, and other elements of the decision-making space. Intelligence as a government activity includes sub-specialties such as military operational intelligence, law enforcement intelligence, counterintelligence (i.e., defense against others’ intelligence collection), and covert and clandestine operations. Because intelligence agencies operate with great secrecy and are often authorized to break foreign laws, intelligence collection and operations also create unique oversight and ethics issues. This course will provide a general introduction to intelligence in national security.

Students will learn about the organization of intelligence in the United States and other countries, including the missions, capabilities, and organization of intelligence agencies. They will gain an understanding of intelligence collection, including the principles and challenges of human espionage, communications intelligence, satellite observation, and international intelligence sharing. The course will also introduce specialized intelligence disciplines: military operations, law enforcement, counterintelligence, and covert operations. One week will be devoted to understanding government oversight and the ethics of intelligence.