

PSCI 221: Causes of War
Vanderbilt University
Spring 2015

Course Information

Time TR 2:35–3:50 p.m.

Place Commons 320

Instructor Professor Brenton Kenkel

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Office Hours Thursdays, 12:30–2:30 p.m., Commons 324

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Course Website <http://bkenkel.com/psci221>

Description

War is awful. In the 20th century alone, war killed at least 136 million people.¹ What is the point of all this destruction? It may seem naïve to ask, “Can’t we all just get along?” So we will ask a slightly different question: “Why can’t we make a deal?” Even if states don’t like each other, wouldn’t they be better off negotiating than fighting?

In this course, we will treat war as the consequence of bargaining failure. War happens when states cannot reach negotiated settlements. From this perspective, “What causes war?” constitutes two questions:

1. What brings states to the negotiating table?
2. Why do their negotiations fail?

We will try to answer these questions as social scientists would. We will develop logically coherent theories of war, and we will use empirical evidence to evaluate those theories. What we find may not be palatable to those who want to study war in order to end it. We will see that there is no single definitive cause of war—and that many of the causes would be hard to eradicate.

Grading

Your grade in PSCI 221 will be based on:

- **Critical Response Papers (30%).** You will write three critical response papers, no more than four pages each,² throughout the

¹ Milton Leitenberg, “Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century” (Occasional Paper 29, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, Cornell University, 2006).

² Page lengths quoted assume a double-spaced document with 12-point text and 1-inch margins.

semester. In each paper, you will choose a course reading of particular interest to you and make a critical argument about its central claims. For more details, see the handout on critical response papers.

- **Class Presentation (10%).** You will give a 15-minute presentation in class about one of the supplemental readings. The schedule of presentations will be set in the second week of class. For more details, see the handout on presentations.
- **Midterm Exam (30%).** An in-class midterm consisting of short essay questions will be held on February 17. *If you cannot be present in class on February 17, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make alternative arrangements.*
- **Final Exam (30%).** The final exam will be held at the time designated by the university, April 30 at 9:00 a.m.

Both exams will be open-book and open-notes, but electronic devices will not be allowed. Accordingly, you may want to buy hard copies of the required books instead of e-books.

Academic Integrity

As in all courses at Vanderbilt, your work in PSCI 221 is governed by the Honor Code. I encourage you to discuss course material and assignments with your peers, but the written work you turn in must be solely your own.

I have no tolerance for plagiarism. If you turn in plagiarized work, you will receive a failing grade for the course and be reported to the Honor Council. Plagiarism is not just verbatim copying and pasting—representing someone else’s ideas as your own without citing the source is also a form of plagiarism. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse or a defense. For more information about what is and is not plagiarism, refer to [the Student Handbook section on the Honor System](#), particularly the section “The Honor Code Applied to Preparation of Papers.” Always remember: *when in doubt, cite.*

Special Accommodations

If you need course accommodations due to a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me or with the [Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department](#) (2-4705) as soon

as possible. Please also consult with me if you need to make audio or video recordings of lectures as part of a reasonable accommodation approved by EAD.

Books

All students must have a copy of the following books:

- Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. HarperCollins, 2013.
- Michael Howard, *War in European History*. Oxford University Press, 1976.

In addition, each student must have at least one of the following books (see the reading schedule for details):

- David Kaiser, *Politics and War: European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler*. Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. Vintage Books, 1987.
- William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000*. University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Schedule

The schedule of readings is tentative and is subject to change. I will inform you at least a week in advance of any changes to the required readings.

Links to all journal articles are available in the syllabus on the course website, <http://bkenkel.com/psci221/syllabus.html>. Scans of book chapters will be made available through OAK.

I. Preliminaries

JANUARY 6–8: WHAT IS WAR? (AND WHAT IS A CAUSE?)

- Carl von Clausewitz, “What Is War?”, book 1, chap. 1 in *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1989).
- James D. Fearon, “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science,” *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 169–195.
- *Optional but highly recommended*: John Keegan, “War in Human History,” chap. 1 in *A History of Warfare* (Vintage, 1993).

JANUARY 13–15: THE BARGAINING PROBLEM

We will assign supplemental readings and determine the presentation schedule on January 15.

- Geoffrey Blainey, “The Abacus of Power,” chap. 8 in *The Causes of War* (Free Press, 1988).
- James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379–414.

II. What Brings States to the Bargaining Table?

Over the next four weeks, all students will read the following book in its entirety:

- Michael Howard, *War in European History*.

In addition, each student must read *one* of the three following books:

- David Kaiser, *Politics and War*.
- Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*.
- William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*.

Of these, Kennedy requires the least background in European history, Kaiser the most. Kaiser focuses on domestic politics, Kennedy on finance, and McNeill on military technology. I recommend reading all three if you have the time. If not, any one of them (in combination with Howard) will give you the historical background you need.

JANUARY 20–22: COMMERCE

- Michael Howard, *War in European History*, chap. 1–3.
- Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, “World Trade 1650–1780: The Age of Mercantilism,” chap. 5 in *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton University Press, 2007).
- Supplemental:
 - Joanne Gowa and Edward D. Mansfield, “Power Politics and International Trade,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 2 (1993): 408–420.
 - Erik Gartzke, “The Capitalist Peace,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166–191.

- J. Tyson Chatagnier and Kerim Can Kavakli, “From Economic Competition to Military Combat: Export Similarity and International Conflict,” (working paper, Bruno Kessler Foundation, 2014).

JANUARY 27–29: TERRITORY

- Michael Howard, *War in European History*, chap. 4.
- Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” chap. 5 in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- David Kaiser, “The Age of Louis XIV,” chap. 2 in *Politics and War* (Harvard University Press, 1990).
- *Supplemental*:
 - Barbara F. Walter, “Explaining the Intractability of Territorial Conflict,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 4 (2003): 137–153.
 - Beth A. Simmons, “Rules over Real Estate: Trade, Territorial Conflict, and International Borders as Institution,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 6 (2005): 823–848.
 - Jordan Branch, “Mapping the Sovereign State: Technology, Authority, and Systemic Change,” *International Organization* 65, no. 1 (2011): 1–36.
 - David B. Carter and H.E. Goemans, “The Making of the Territorial Order: New Borders and the Emergence of Interstate Conflict,” *International Organization* 65, no. 2 (2011): 275–309.

FEBRUARY 3–5: IDEOLOGY

- Michael Howard, *War in European History*, chap. 5.
- Paul W. Schroeder, “War and Revolution, 1787–1792,” chap. 2 in *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Clarendon Press, 1994).
- *Supplemental*:
 - Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs: Part 1,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983): 205–235; and “Part 2,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (1983): 323–353.
 - R.R. Palmer, “Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War,” chap. 4 in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1986).

- David A. Lake, “Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War,” *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (1992): 24–37.
- Mlada Bukovansky, “The Altered State and the State of Nature: The French Revolution and International Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (1999): 197–216.

FEBRUARY 10–12: IDENTITY

Your first critical response paper must be turned in by Tuesday, February 10.

- Michael Howard, *War in European History*, chap. 6–7. By now you also should have finished reading Kaiser, Kennedy, or McNeill.
- Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49.
- Errol A. Henderson and Richard Tucker, “Clear and Present Strangers: The Clash of Civilizations and International Conflict,” *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2001): 317–338.
- Supplemental:
 - Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 27–47.
 - V.P. Gagnon, Jr., “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994/95): 130–166.
 - Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, “Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 5–40.
 - Laura Sjoberg and Jessica Peet, “A(nother) Dark Side of the Protection Racket: Targeting Women in Wars,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13, no. 2 (2011): 163–182.

FEBRUARY 17: MIDTERM

III. Why Does Bargaining Fail?

FEBRUARY 19: BARGAINING THEORY

- Robert Powell, “Bargaining Theory and International Conflict,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002): 1–30.

FEBRUARY 24–26: UNCERTAINTY

- Reread Fearon’s “Rationalist Explanations for War.”

- Jack S. Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems," *World Politics* 36, no. 1 (1983): 76–99.
- *Supplemental:*
 - George H. Quester, "Crises and the Unexpected," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 701–719.
 - Erik Gartzke, "War Is in the Error Term," *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (1999): 567–587.
 - Michelle R. Garfinkel and Stergios Skaperdas, "Conflict without Misperceptions or Incomplete Information: How the Future Matters," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 6 (2000): 793–807.
 - Bahar Leventoglu and Ahmer Tarar, "Does Private Information Lead to Delay or War in Crisis Bargaining?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2008): 533–553.

MARCH 10–12: COMMITMENT PROBLEMS

- Robert Powell, "War as a Commitment Problem," *International Organization* 60, no. 1 (2006): 169–203.
- *Supplemental:*
 - Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (1997): 335–364.
 - David A. Lake, "Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010/11): 7–52.
 - Michael G. Findley and Joseph K. Young, "Terrorism, Democracy, and Credible Commitments," *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2011): 357–378.

MARCH 17–19: MOBILIZATION

Your second critical response paper must be turned in by Tuesday, March 17.

- James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (1997): 68–90.
- Branislav L. Slantchev, "Military Coercion in Interstate Crises," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 4 (2005): 533–547.
- *Supplemental:*

- Thomas C. Schelling, “Surprise Attack and Disarmament,” chap. 10 in *The Strategy of Conflict* (Harvard University Press, 1960).
- Geoffrey L. Herrera, “Inventing the Railroad and Rifle Revolution: Information, Military Innovation, and the Rise of Germany,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 2 (2004): 243–271.
- Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, “Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War,” *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (2014): 1–31.

MARCH 24–26: DOMESTIC POLITICS

- Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427–460.
- James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577–592.
- *Supplemental*:
 - Kenneth A. Schultz, “Domestic Opposition and Signaling in International Crises,” *American Political Science Review* 92, no. 4 (1998): 829–844.
 - Giacomo Chiozza and H.E. Goemans, “International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still *Ex Post* Inefficient?” *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 3 (2004): 604–619.
 - Matthew O. Jackson and Massimo Morelli, “Political Bias and War,” *American Economic Review* 97, no. 4 (2007): 1353–1373.
 - Jessica L. Weeks, “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve,” *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (2008): 35–64.

IV. Case Study: World War I

MARCH 31: BACKGROUND

- Christopher Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, chap. 1–3.
- *Supplemental*:
 - Paul M. Kennedy, “The First World War and the International Power System,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 7–40.
 - Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58–107.

APRIL 2–7: POLITICAL DIVISIONS

- Christopher Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, chap. 4–6.
- *Supplemental*:
 - Gordon A. Craig, “The Army and Foreign Policy, 1871–1914,” chap. 7 in *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1955).
 - Imanuel Geiss, “The Outbreak of the First World War and German War Aims,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 3 (1966): 75–91.
 - Jack Snyder, “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 108–146.
 - David Stevenson, “Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (1997): 125–161.

APRIL 9–14: THE JULY CRISIS

Your third critical response paper must be turned in by Tuesday, April 14.

- Christopher Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, chap. 7–12.
- *Supplemental*:
 - Michael Howard, “Men Against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 41–57.
 - Marc Trachtenberg, “The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914,” *International Security* 15, no. 3 (1990/91): 120–150.
 - Hew Strachan, “First World War,” chap. 9 in *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (Routledge, 1983).

V. Conclusion

APRIL 16: THE END OF WAR?

- Watch Steven Pinker’s TED talk, “The Surprising Decline in Violence.”

APRIL 30: FINAL EXAM

The final exam will be held on Thursday, April 30, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.