

PS 396: Interstate Conflicts

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Office Hours: M/W 9-10 am Class Hours: T/H 11-11:50 am
Office: 316 Armory Class Room: 101 David Kinley Hall

Course Description

Why do some countries go to war while some states maintain a relatively peaceful relationship with other countries? This course explores conditions of interstate conflicts and peace using interstate conflict literature. This course begins with a scientific study of war with a brief history of peace science and the Correlates of War Project. After that, students will learn the systemic and individual approaches to studying wars. The second half of this course will focus on the causes of war and peace using a dyadic approach. This course aims to help students better understand the causes of interstate conflicts, and they can apply the knowledge in analyzing real-world phenomena. Finally, in the final assignment of this course, students are asked to write an analytic paper using the knowledge gained from this course.

Required Materials

- There are two required text books for this course.
- Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2011). *Causes of war*. John Wiley & Sons
- Betts, R. K. (2017). *Conflict after the cold war*. Routledge

Course Objectives

1. To understand the basics of the scientific study of war, including system level and dyadic approaches
2. To understand the conditions that increase the probability of conflicts
3. To understand the conditions that increase the probability of peace
4. To be able to apply critical analytical tools in understanding real-world phenomena
5. To improve students' written communication skills through analytic writing assignments

Course Requirements

- Exam I: 25%
- Exam II: 25%
- Analytic Writing Assignment I: 25%
- Analytic Writing Assignment II: 25%

Exams

There will be two in-class exams. The topics of the exams are non-cumulative.

Analytic Writing Assignment

There will be two short analytical writing assignments for this class. The purpose of this writing assignment is 1) to apply analytical tools and theories we learned from this class and also 2) to learn to improve analytical writing skills. The first writing assignment is a reflection paper on the movie the fog of war regarding the eleven lessons that appeared in the movie. The second writing assignment asks students to analyze the causes of an interstate war using a dyadic approach. Detailed prompts will be provided in week 2.

Course Policies

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be accepted, but the penalty for a late assignment is five points per day.

Copy Rights

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Email Policy

I regularly check my emails and will try my best to get back to you within 24 hours. However, if you do not receive any response from me after 24 hours, that means the email was not delivered to me. In that case, please send me another email.

Academic Integrity

Students should follow university rules for academic integrity. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please review the university rules for your reference.

(<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-402/>)

Students with Disabilities

If students with disabilities need accommodations for class, please let me know. I have attached the information regarding academic support and accommodations for your reference.

(<https://www.disability.illinois.edu/academic-supports-and-accommodations>)

Class Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Introduction/ Scientific Study of War

Readings

- Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2011). *Causes of war*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 1.
- Braumoeller, B. F. (2021). *Trends in Interstate Conflict*. *What Do We Know about War*, 272-89.

Part A: System Level Theory and Individual Level

Week 2: System Level Theory - Realism

Readings

- Thucydides. (2017). *The Melian Dialogue*. In *Conflict After the Cold War* (pp. 84-87). Routledge.
- Machiavelli, N. (2017). *Doing evil in order to do good*. In *Conflict After the Cold War* (pp. 84-87). Routledge.
- Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, Chapter 1

Week 3: System Level Theory - Balance of Power

Readings

- Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2011). *Causes of war*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 2, 24 - 43

Week 4: System Level Theory - Hegemony

Readings

- Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2011). *Causes of war*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 2, 44- 54
- Fettweis, Christopher.J.(2017). *Unipolarity, Hegemony, and the New Peace.*” *Security Studies*, 26(3), 423-451.

Week 5: Individual Level - Psychology and Decision making

Announcements

- There is a movie exercise this week: The Fog of War

Readings

- Jervis, R. (2017). *War and Misperception*. In *Conflict After the Cold War* (pp. 204-220). Routledge.

Week 6: Individual Level - Human Nature and biology

Announcements

- Analytic Writing Assignment I Due

Readings

- Hobbes, T. (2017). *The State of Nature and the State of War*. In *Conflict After the Cold War* (pp. 88-91). Routledge.
- Mead, M. (2017). *Warfare is only an invention—not a biological necessity*. In *Conflict After the Cold War* (pp. 254-258). Routledge.
- Freud, S. (2017). *Why war?*. In *Conflict After the Cold War* (pp. 185-192). Routledge.

Week 7: Exam I - System Level and Individual Level

Readings

- Exam week: No readings

Part B: Dangerous Dyads and Peaceful Dyads

Week 8: Territorial Conflicts and Contiguity

Readings

- Bremer, S. A. (1992). *Dangerous dyads: Conditions affecting the likelihood of interstate war, 1816-1965*. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 36(2), 309-341.
- Vasquez, J. A. (1995). *Why do neighbors fight? Proximity, interaction, or territoriality*. *Journal of peace research*, 32(3), 277-293.
- Senese, P. D., & Vasquez, J. A. (2003). *A unified explanation of territorial conflict: Testing the impact of sampling bias, 1919-1992*. *International Studies Quarterly*, 47(2), 275-298.

Week 9: Spring Break

Announcements

- No class

Week 10: Alliances

Readings

- Leeds, B. A. (2003). *Do alliances deter aggression? The influence of military alliances on the initiation of militarized interstate disputes.* *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(3), 427-439.
- Kenwick, M. R., Vasquez, J. A., & Powers, M. A. (2015). *Do alliances really deter?.* *The Journal of Politics*, 77(4), 943-954.

Week 11: Arms Race

Readings

- Senese, P. D., & Vasquez, J. A. (2005). *Assessing the steps to war.* *British Journal of Political Science*, 35(4), 607-633.
- Sample, S. G. (2002). *The outcomes of military buildups: Minor states vs. major powers.* *Journal of Peace Research*, 39(6), 669-691.

Week 12: Rivalry

Readings

- Goertz, G., & Diehl, P. F. (1993). *Enduring rivalries: Theoretical constructs and empirical patterns.* *International studies quarterly*, 37(2), 147-171.
- Owsiak, A. P., & Rider, T. J. (2013). *Clearing the hurdle: Border settlement and rivalry termination.* *The Journal of Politics*, 75(3), 757-772.

Week 13: Democratic Peace

Readings

- Kant, I. (2017). *Perpetual peace.* In *Conflict After the Cold War* (pp. 146-152). Routledge.
- Oneal, J. R., & Russett, B. (1999). *The Kantian peace: The pacific benefits of democracy, interdependence, and international organizations, 1885–1992.* *World politics*, 52(1), 1-37.

Week 14: Territorial Peace

Readings

- Owsiak, A. P. (2012). *Signing up for peace: International boundary agreements, democracy, and militarized interstate conflict.* *International Studies Quarterly*, 56(1), 51-66.
- Douglas M. Gibler and Jaroslav Tir, "Territorial Peace and Democratic Clustering." *Journal of Politics* 76, 1 (January 2014): 27-40.

Week 15: Economic Interdependence

Announcements

- Analytic Writing Assignment II Due

Readings

- Barbieri, K. (1996). *Economic interdependence: A path to peace or a source of interstate conflict?*. *Journal of Peace Research*, 33(1), 29-49.
- Hegre, H., Oneal, J. R., & Russett, B. (2010). *Trade does promote peace: New simultaneous estimates of the reciprocal effects of trade and conflict*. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(6), 763-774.

Week 16: Exam II - Dangerous Dyads and Peaceful Dyads

Readings

- Exam week: No readings