

GOV 355N (38485)
World War I in Real Time
University of Texas, Fall 2022
TTh 8-930a, PAR 201
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Faculty Information

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Course Description

We follow the timeline of World War I in “real time,” following events in the war as they unfolded for those who experienced it. Using the tools of game theory, we engage modern theories and evidence about the origins and conduct of war to address why “the seminal tragedy of modern times” occurred when it did—and what we can learn from it today.

Prerequisites

Upper-division standing and 6 semester hours of lower-division coursework in GOV.

Learning Objectives

The Great War is one of those rare historical events that lives up to its name, and not just because of its (at the time) unprecedented scale, scope, and severity. We live with many of its legacies today, some directly in the current map of the Middle East and the military-economic ascendance of the United States, others indirectly in the global order created after the end of the Second World War that sprang from the First. The war is notable not only for its consequences but also for its stunning complexity, leading one historian to call the crisis that led to its outbreak “the most complex [event] of modern times, perhaps of any time so far.” While its consequences demand that we explain the war, that same scale and complexity—to say nothing of its systematized brutality—often stands in the way.

In this course, we’ll grapple with the First World War by bringing to bear the tools of modern political science—game theory in particular—to address topics like:

- the outbreak and subsequent expansion of war
- the politics of international law and neutrality
- the origins of trench warfare and strategies of attrition

- the challenges of cooperation in military coalitions
- the politics of alliances and coalition warfare
- the processes of war termination and peace-making

We'll confront these and related questions as much as possible in “real time,” taking seriously the agency and beliefs that the characters in our story had at the time. We'll avoid the use of hindsight when what we need is, as much as possible, the lenses through which politicians, civilians, generals, and soldiers saw the world and each other. To do that, we'll use game theory, a tool for building and analyzing models of strategic interaction, with a particular focus on its associated concept of equilibrium, one of the most powerful explanatory tools we've ever developed in the social sciences. Unlike some game theory courses, we'll focus as much here on building models as doing the math required to solve them. (But don't worry: we'll do plenty of math, too.) You'll learn:

- How to think about an important historical case.
- How to use game theory to analyze and explain politics.
- How to consume and apply cutting-edge research on international conflict.

This is ultimately an applied game theory course with a heavy dose of international relations theory, dressed up as a narrative of the First World War. Our goal is to analyze, to explain, and to identify new puzzles—to train you, in other words, to *think* like a political scientist. You'll walk away from this course better able to apply the concepts and theories of modern political science and international relations. And to do that, we leverage an event of inherent interest to develop an understanding of politics and political science more generally.

How Will You Learn?

Learning Success

We all learn differently, and everyone struggles sometimes. Rest assured that you're *never* the only one having difficulty! If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together, we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT, and I'm happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

Teaching Modality

Our class will meet in person, and given the nature of the material—which requires that I demonstrate math on the board and work through complex models directly in class—I don't record the lectures, either. This all may change, of course, if we're forced to move online due to rising COVID-19 case counts, a monkeypox outbreak, or some other public health emergency. As noted in the participation section, this is mostly a lecture course, though it builds in lots of Q&A time as you'd see in a flipped classroom.

Communication

The course Canvas site can be found at <https://utexas.instructure.com/>. Please email me or the TA through Canvas. You're responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you'll check for course communications, because that's the email address that Canvas uses. Make sure that's all synced up as soon as possible. The TA and I answer Canvas emails during business hours (9a-5p M-F), but we can't guarantee that we will receive or answer emails outside those hours.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our diversity is our strength. It's my intent that students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed, and that student diversity can be comfortably expressed and viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit to all students. Please come to me at any time with any concerns, whether via Canvas email or during office hours.

Disability and Access (D&A)

UT is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you're a student with a disability, or if you think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability & Access (D&A). Please refer to the D&A website for more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Course Requirements and Grading

Required Materials

There's one required text, written by some jerk:

- Wofford, Scott. 2019. *The Politics of the First World War: A Course in Game Theory and International Security* Cambridge University Press.

Physical copies are available, but the Co-op has also made an electronic version available at a lower price through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) Program:

The textbook is available through the usual outlets (The Co-op, Amazon, etc.) for physical copies, but it's also available through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program, a new initiative between UT Austin, The University Co-op and textbook publishers to significantly reduce the cost of digital course materials for students. You are automatically opted into the program but can easily opt out (and back in) via Canvas through the 12th class day. If you remain opted in

at the end of the 5th class day, you will receive a bill through your “What I Owe” page and have until the end of the 20th class day to pay and retain access. If you do not pay by the 20th class day, you will lose access to the materials and your charge will be removed.

If you’re going to go digital, the LTA is a better option than, say Kindle or Apple Books, and not just because of the lower price: the LTA version is a PDF of the actual pages, which ensures consistent image and math display quality, as well as actual page numbers.

Grading

The following components make up the course grade:

- **29% midterm exam, 13 October.**
- **29% final exam, date TBA.**
- **42% assignments.** Including six game theory problem sets and one analytical paper, each worth 6% of the total grade.

I assign letter grades on a distribution—that is, a curve—rather than against an absolute numerical scale. Therefore, grading scales where a certain score produces a certain letter grade don’t apply here. I also use the +/- system.

Classroom Expectations

- *Class attendance.* I have no attendance policy, but missing class sessions will make it more difficult to perform well in the course, because (a) the readings are demanding on their own and often need to be clarified in class and (b) lectures will very often contain information not found in the readings.
- *Class participation.* Class is mostly lecture-based, but I encourage students to ask clarification questions as needed. I also frequently open up the floor for explicit Q&A time after the main lecture—something like “flipping the classroom”—but this is strictly about clarifying material. This isn’t a discussion course, and you’re not required to perform discussion to get a good grade.
- *Behavior expectations.* I expect an environment of mutual respect. For specifics, see Section 11-400 of the Institutional Rules in the General Information Catalog.

Late and Missed Work

Missed exams can be excused and made up after the fact in cases of illness and personal emergency, but *only with proper documentation from Student Emergency Services*. Further, I do not give exams ahead of their scheduled dates. Exams missed due to a university-sponsored event or religious holiday may be excused, provided that the student informs me of the absence *at least two weeks in advance*. Vacation (e.g. leaving early for fall or semester break) and social engagements will not be excused. Check the exam schedule before making

travel plans, because, again, I do *not* give makeup exams in advance. In the absence of a formal college waiver, assignments will be penalized by one full letter grade for each day late—e.g., B to C, etc.

Grade Challenges

Should you wish to challenge a grade you received on a specific question on an exam, you must do so, in writing, within a week of receiving the grade. Otherwise, no challenges will be considered. After you challenge a grade, we will re-grade the entire exam or assignment, and the new grade will supplant the original one, whether higher or lower.

Course Outline and Schedule

Most weeks are built around a single chapter, each of which contains: (a) a historical narrative and puzzle, (b) a game-theoretic model and analysis designed to resolve that puzzle, and (c) a discussion of where the chapters historical and theoretical content fit into the broader sweep of political science research. Tuesday sessions focus on working through game-theoretic concepts, with a heavy Q&A component like what you’ve might experienced in a “flipped” classroom. Thursday sessions will be more lecture-based, either expanding on political science topics from the chapter or, in some cases, digging deeper into the game-theoretic analysis or going over problem sets given as homework.

Session 1 (23 August). *The Puzzle of the Great War*

Reading. The syllabus, available as a PDF on [Canvas](#).

Session 2 (25 August). *War and the International System*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 1.

Session 3 (30 August). *The Theory of War I: Commitment Problems*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 2.

Session 4 (1 September). *Commitment Problems and War*

Assignment 1. Nash Review

Session 5 (6 September). *Armed Continent: The Anglo-German Naval Race*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 3.

Session 6 (8 September). *Armaments, Arming, and War*

Session 7 (13 September). *The Prewar Crises*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 4.

Session 8 (15 September). *Leaping Into the Dark*

Assignment 2. Chapter 4 Exercises

Session 9 (20 September). *The Theory of War II: Information Problems*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 5.

Session 10 (22 September). *Information Problems and War*

Assignment 3. Chapter 5 Exercises

Session 11 (27 September). *A Scrap of Paper: Belgium, France, and British Entry*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 6.

Session 12 (29 September). *Reassurance and International Politics*

Session 13 (4 October). *Coalitions at War*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 7.

Session 14 (6 October). *Coalitions and International Politics*

Assignment 4. War Plans and Strategy

Session 15 (11 October). *Armchair Generalship*

Session 16 (13 October). *Midterm Exam*

Given on Canvas.

Session 17 (18 October). *The Best-Laid Plans: Attrition's Static Horror*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 8.

Session 18 (20 October). *Military Strategy and International Politics*

Assignment 5. Chapter 8 Exercises

Session 19 (25 October). *Choosing Sides: Building Military Coalitions*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 9.

Session 20 (27 October). *Coordinating Caution: Naval War in the North Sea*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 10.

Session 21 (1 November). *The Theory of War III: Commitment and War Termination*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 11.

Session 22 (3 November). *Interdependence and War*

Assignment 6. Chapter 11 Exercises

Session 23 (8 November). *The Theory of War IV: Information and War Termination*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 12.

Session 24 (10 November). *Fighting, Learning, Bargaining*

Assignment 7. Chapter 12 Exercises

Session 25 (15 November). *Too Proud to Fight? U-Boats and American Neutrality*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 13.

Session 26 (17 November). *National Leaders and International Politics*

Session 27 (29 November). *The End of the Beginning: Victory, Defeat, and Peace*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 14.

Session 28 (1 December). *History and the Present*

Reading. Wolford, Chapter 15.

Policies and Disclosures

Academic Integrity Expectations

Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website](#). For this course, it's acceptable (even a good idea!) to work on problem sets together, but I expect no collaboration on the analytical paper and the exams. Those must be individual efforts.

Confidentiality of Class Recordings

Class recordings, if a move to an online format requires us to make them, are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

Getting Help With Technology

Students needing help with technology in this course should contact the [ITS Service Desk](#).

Content Warning

Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing: war is, after all, a bloody and dehumanizing horror. I'll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content, and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. UT maintains the [UT Outpost](#), which is a free on-campus food pantry and career closet. Furthermore, if you are comfortable notifying me, please do so, as I may have additional resources I can share.

Sharing of Course Materials Prohibited

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. The University is well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#) in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure of the course.

Religious Holy Days

By [UT Austin policy](#), you must notify me of your pending absence as far in advance as possible of the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Names and Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender identity & expression, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "chosen name" with the Registrar, which you can do [here](#). I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit [this site](#). More resources available on the Gender and Sexuality Center's website, <http://www.utgsc.org/>.

Land Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what now is called North America. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo/Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche,

Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

Additional University Resources

Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC)

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Know you are not alone. If you or anyone you know is experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, academic concerns, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, or any other concern impacting your wellbeing—you are strongly encouraged to connect with CMHC. The Counseling and Mental Health Center provides a wide variety of mental health services to all UT students including crisis services, counseling services with immediate support and well-being resources. Additionally, CARE Counselors are located within the academic schools and colleges. These counselors get to know the concerns that are unique to their college's students. For more information on CMHC, visit <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/> or call 512-471-3515.

University Health Services

Your physical health and wellness are a priority. University Health Services is an on-campus high-quality medical facility providing care to all UT students. Services offered by UHS include general medicine, urgent care, a 24/7 nurse advice line, gynecology, sports medicine, physical therapy, lab and radiology services, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and much more. For additional information, visit <https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/> or call 512-471-4955.

Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

Student Emergency Services

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to crisis or an emergency situation, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/> or by calling 512-471-5017.

Important Safety Information

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs, or professors, contact BCCAL (the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line) [here](#) or by calling 512-232-5050. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, however the university may be required to release some information to appropriate parties.

Classroom Safety and COVID-19

- For any illness, students should stay home if they are sick or contagious, not only to stop the spread, but also to promote their personal wellness.
- The university will continue to provide rapid antigen self-test kits at [distribution sites](#) throughout campus. Students can receive up to four tests at a time.
- The university will provide [symptomatic COVID-19 testing](#) on campus for all students, faculty and staff.
- UHS maintains up-to-date resources on COVID, which can be found here:
 - [COVID-19 Information and Resources](#)
 - [COVID-19 Exposure Action Chart](#)

Carrying of Handguns on Campus

Texas' Open Carry law expressly prohibits a licensed to carry (LTC) holder from carrying a handgun openly on the campus of an institution of higher education such as UT Austin. Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to [review the university policy regarding campus carry](#).
- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.
- Per my right, I prohibit carrying of handguns in my personal office. Note that this information will also be conveyed to all students verbally during the first week of class. This written notice is intended to reinforce the verbal notification, and is not a “legally effective” means of notification in its own right.

Title IX Disclosure

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 (formerly known as Senate Bill 212) requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations, or third party reports) must be report it. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, please remember that I will be required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Education Code, Section 51.252, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Education Code, Section 51.252. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support all impacted by a Title IX incident.

Campus Safety

The following are recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the [Office of Campus Safety and Security](#), 512-471-5767:

- Students should sign up for Campus Emergency Text Alerts at the page linked above.
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus must evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, UT Police, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- For more information, please visit [emergency preparedness](#).