

GOV 360G (37340) & REE 335 (42430) Causes of War

University of Texas, Fall 2024
TTh 8-930a, PAR 201

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Faculty Information

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Course Description

This course uses the tools of political science, the modern theory of war in particular, to develop an understanding of the outbreak, expansion, and termination of war, as well as the durability of postwar peace.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, though students are likely to perform better with some basic courses in political science as background.

Learning Objectives

War is a bloody, wasteful, and destructive means of resolving disputes, yet it remains a fixture of politics. Why? Why are some disagreements resolved without fighting, while others seem to require the application of violence? Over the course of the semester, we'll answer this question with the modern theory of war, which views the onset, conduct, and termination of war as parts of a costly bargaining process. For all its waste and horror, war *is* politics.¹ Our task is to get into the heads of the leaders who make the decisions that send their groups, be they countries or rebel groups within them, to war. By viewing war in the same way as those who start it, we can develop a useful set of insights about its origins that are free of the moralizing, superstition, and/or ideology at the heart of many popular, facile explanations. We'll also see how a theory of war is necessary for understanding international peace and cooperation, alliances and alignments, and—crucially—the stability of the peace that follows war. By the end of the semester, students will be able to

¹Want an example? Suppose two groups of people disagree over which of two factions should rule a country. They can resolve the dispute by voting, which is pretty painless, or civil war, which is bloody and destructive. Both methods lead to the same outcome: one of the two factions in charge. But one method is quite obviously more wasteful than the other.

- use the theory of war to better understand international and domestic politics
- evaluate explanations for their logical consistency and explanatory value
- hold their own arguments same high standards

In short, students will learn to *think* like social scientists.

We begin the course by introducing our working definition of war, followed by two major components of the modern theory of war—obstacles to credible communication and credible commitment—that shed light on why wars start, how long they last, whether they draw in other participants, and how they end. We then trace patterns of war and peace spanning the globe across the last three centuries, from the Paraguayan War that wracked South America in the 19th century to the World Wars of the 20th century to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine—a war that’s still dragging on as this course begins.²

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, but I don’t record the lectures. This all may change, of course, if we’re forced to move online due to rising COVID-19 case counts or some other public health emergency. As noted in the participation section, this is primarily 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), and we can’t guarantee that we’ll receive or answer emails outside those hours.

²This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

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://disability.utexas.edu/>. 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 are no required textbooks for this course, but there are required readings, most of which can be accessed digitally through [UT Libraries](#). (Anything else will be available on Canvas or directly linked in this PDF.) You may ask why I don't just put all readings up on Canvas, and that's a reasonable question. But (a) it's valuable for you to know how to run down sources, and (b) the Library needs accurate usage statistics for what journals and books are being assigned and used, so the staff can know what kind of materials to procure.

Grading

The following components make up the course grade:

- **15% quizzes & short essays.** Some on Canvas and some in class, so be sure to bring paper and something to write with every session. When I give in-class quizzes, I do it at the beginning. I don't re-give quizzes if you're late or if you miss class; those are simply points you forfeit.
- **20% first exam, 24 September.** In person, written. 10 short answer questions, each of which should be answered in no more than three sentences.
- **30% second exam, 29 October.** In person, written. 10 short answer questions, each of which should be answered in no more than three sentences.
- **35% final exam, TBA.** In person, written. 10 short answer questions, each of which should be answered in no more than three sentences. (Date & time will be announced [here](#) by the first class day.)

This weighting scheme, where exams have increasing weight over time, rewards improvement and penalizes coasting. I use the following rules to determine letter grades at the end of the course:

Numerical score	Letter grade
≥ 93	A
$90 - 92.\bar{9}$	A-
$87 - 89.\bar{9}$	B+
$83 - 86.\bar{9}$	B
$80 - 82.\bar{9}$	B-
$77 - 79.\bar{9}$	C+
$73 - 76.\bar{9}$	C
$70 - 72.\bar{9}$	C-
$67 - 69.\bar{9}$	D+
$63 - 66.\bar{9}$	D
$60 - 62.\bar{9}$	D-
$\leq 59.\bar{9}$	F

And note that these ranges are fixed. I don't round up.³

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, but this is mostly 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.

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

³So don't ask.

considered. After you challenge a grade, I'll re-grade the entire exam or assignment, and the new grade will supplant the original one, whether it's higher or lower.

Course Outline and Schedule

All instructions, assignments, and essential information will be on [Canvas](#), so be sure to check it regularly. Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I'll announce any such changes in class and communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It's your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I'll do my best to ensure that you're notified of changes as soon as possible.

The Modern Theory of War

Session 1 (27 August). *War and why we study it*

- **Required.** The syllabus.

Session 2 (29 August). *Commitment problems and war*

- Wolford, Scott. 2019. *The Politics of the First World War: A Course in Game Theory and International Security* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 3 (3 September). *Information problems and war*

- Wolford, Scott. 2019. *The Politics of the First World War: A Course in Game Theory and International Security* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5, pp. 100-120. [[Canvas](#)]

The Long 19th Century

Session 4 (5 September). *The outbreak of the Paraguayan War*

- Abente, Diego. 1987. "The War of the Triple Alliance: Three Explanatory Models." *Latin American Research Review* 22(2):47-69.

Session 5 (10 September). *The termination of the Paraguayan War*

- No reading.

Session 6 (12 September). *The outbreak of the First World War*

- Wolford, Scott. 2019. *The Politics of the First World War: A Course in Game Theory and International Security* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4, but not the exercises. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 7 (17 September). *The expansion of the First World War*

- Wolford, Scott. 2019. *The Politics of the First World War: A Course in Game Theory and International Security* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 13. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 8 (19 September). *The termination of the First World War*

- Wofford, Scott. 2019. *The Politics of the First World War: A Course in Game Theory and International Security* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 14. [Canvas]

Session 9 (24 September). *First Exam*

- In-class, but I'll provide blue books. Bring a pen or pencil.

The Second World War

Session 10 (26 September). *The Interwar years*

- Paine, S.C.M. 2012. *The Wars for Asia 1911-1949* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

Session 11 (1 October). *The outbreak of the Pacific War*

- Paine, S.C.M. 2012. *The Wars for Asia 1911-1949* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6.

Session 12 (3 October). *The expansion of the Pacific War*

- Paine, S.C.M. 2012. *The Wars for Asia 1911-1949* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 7.

Session 13 (8 October). *The termination of the Pacific War*

- Paine, S.C.M. 2012. *The Wars for Asia 1911-1949* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 7.⁴

The Bipolar Era

Session 14 (10 October). *The Postwar order*

- No reading

Session 15 (15 October). *The outbreak of the Korean War*

- Stueck, William. 2004. *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.

Session 16 (17 October). *The (limited) expansion of the Korean War*

- Wofford, Scott. 2019. *The Politics of the First World War: A Course in Game Theory and International Security* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 10. [Canvas]

⁴Yes, it's the same as last week's reading.

Session 17 (22 October). *The Taiwan Strait Crises*

- Zhao, Xuegong. 2023. "The Limits of Confrontation: Nuclear Weapons, the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, and China-U.S. Relations." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 25.2:112-149.

Session 18 (24 October). *The Suez War*

- Fry, Michael. 1989. *The Suez Crisis, 1956* Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy.

Session 19 (29 October). *Second exam*

- In-class, but I'll provide blue books. Bring a pen or pencil.

Session 20 (31 October). *The Ogaden War*

- Tareke, Gebru. 2000. "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*. 33.3:635-667.

Session 21 (5 November). *The Sino-Vietnamese War*

- Hung, Nguyen Manh. 1979. "The Sino-Vietnamese Conflict: Power Play among Communist Neighbors." *Asian Survey* 19.11:1037-1052.

After Bipolarity

Session 22 (7 November). *After the Cold War*

- No reading.

Session 23 (12 November). *The Persian Gulf War*

- Gause, F. Gregory. 2002. "Iraq's Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990." *Middle East Journal* 56(1): 47-70.

Session 24 (14 November). *The Badme War*

- Woldemariam, Michael, and Alden Young. 2018. "After the Split: Partition, Successor States, and the Dynamics of War in the Horn of Africa." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41.5:684-720.

Session 25 (19 November). *The Kargil War*

- Amin, Tahir. 2000. "Kargil Crisis in Kashmir." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 13.2:320-327.

- Bell, Mark S., and Julia Macdonald. 2019. “How Dangerous Was Kargil? Nuclear Crises in Comparative Perspective.” *The Washington Quarterly* 42.2:135-148.

Session 26 (21 November). *The Russo-Georgian War*

- Popjanevski, Johanna. 2009. “From Sukhumi to Tskhinvali: The Path to War in Georgia.” Chapter 8 in *The Guns of August 2008: Russia’s War in Georgia* Cornell and Starr, Eds. Taylor & Francis.

Session 27 (3 December). *The outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War*

- Wolford, Scott. 2024. “The Bargaining Framework and Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 41.5:485-493.
- Smith, Bradley C. 2024. “Commitment Problems and Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 41.5:494-513.

Session 28 (5 December). *What’s next in the Russo-Ukrainian War*

- Reading TBA.

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: https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/ais/chosen_name/. 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. 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, go [here](#).

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://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/cmhc/> 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://undergradcollege.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.

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](#).