

POLS 284 (27936)
Spring 2009
University of Illinois at Chicago

Dr. Brandon Valeriano
BSB 367
T/R 11-12:15pm

International Conflict and Security

This course provides an introduction to and overview of the concepts and approaches used to analyze the causes of war, conflict, and peace in the international system. Emphasis will be placed on both systematic investigations of concepts/data and in-depth case studies to tell the story of conflict processes in the modern world.

The goal is to understand the typical path to war or peace. Why do some states choose force while others do not? What do we know about conflict from both empirical-data based investigations and traditional case based studies? We will also be covering recent relevant security issues and debates through contemporary book selections. We will not be covering internal or civil wars since these are wars of a different “type” and require a different theoretical background.

Required Books

- John Vasquez, What Do We Know About War?, Rowman and Littlefield, ISBN: 0847699277
- Greg Cashman and Leonard Robinson, An Introduction to the Causes of War. Rowman and Littlefield, ISBN: 0742555100

Required Depending on Choice or Assignment

- John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, Norton, ISBN 039332396X
- Hudson, Valerie and Andrea DenBoer, Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population, MIT Press, ISBN 0262582643
- Klare, Michael, Resource Wars. Metropolitan Books, ISBN 0805055762
- George Packer, Assassin's Gate: America In Iraq, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ISBN 0374530556

Course Requirements

Mid-term (25%) and Final (30%)

Book Report and Analysis Paper (20%) Due April 28th

Participation (Includes attendance and book report discussions, 20%)

Data based article report (5%)

Office Hours and Contact Info

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The Course

This course is geared towards understanding the causes and consequences of conflict. The main goal will be to understand how peace can be built and war can be avoided. The major overall theme of the course is the rejection of power politics as a political instrument.

The course will be split into three sections: the typical historical path to war, systematic interpretations of conflict, and discussion of contemporary security issues.

The historical path to war portion of the course will provide a historical background that will discuss the typical progress to war. The focus here will be on the actors and actions taken to that lead up to war. We will cover the major world wars along with the Iraq War, Six Day War, African Wars, and Iran and Iraq. The story of war is the key to peace; we must understand the process of war and peace before we can attempt to delineate the correlates of the disease.

The systematic interpretations section will discuss and analyze quantitative explorations of security issues. What is the most likely path to war? Is religion a typical cause of war, or an outlier case that is not reflective of the course of human history? The goal is generalize why wars start; regardless of particular cases that may stand out for “famous” wars.

The final section of the course will analyze contemporary security issues like the recent war in Iraq, resource conflict, gender-population issues and great power conflict. The class will be divided up into four sections and each will be responsible for one of the recommended reading selections.

Goals:

- To gain an understanding of the major social science findings regarding the causes of war and peace
- To learn how to think scientifically about social phenomena
- To be able to read statistical articles
- To learn how to make inferences from evidence
- To understand contemporary security debates regarding America’s place in the world.

News

Each day we will start off with the discussion of the news if events take place that is relevant to international politics. Students should be prepared to bring up and discuss these events. Any reputable national news source is acceptable. I prefer the New York Times. Finding news events that are relevant will take time and skill. Some of reports are buried in the news coverage of the day and it is your responsibility to find the relevant ones that other students may have missed.

Course Requirements

The path to war section and the systematic interpretations part of the course will each be covered in exam form. Each exam will consist of three parts: short answer, identifications, and an essay. The essay will cover the major issue we discuss in class during the semester. You will be expected to write a coherent, well thought out essay regarding aspects of each class day. Identifications will require you to discuss issues, topics, or people of importance to the course. Short answers will be page long answers about an issue or topic.

For the contemporary security issues section, a book report and analysis will be required (**Due April 28th for all students**). You must choose one of the recommended books and be prepared to discuss the book when your section is the focus. You will be required to write a 5+ page paper (length unlimited) that reviews central themes of the book, discusses what is either right or wrong with the book, and how evidence or other course themes can be applied to the book. Remember that while you will not be tested on the content of each book, you are expected to participate during the security issues section of the course regardless of your assignment.

Your first assignment will be to write a one page summary (single spaced) of a 'data-based' article (**Jan 20th**). You must consult a respected International Relations journal. Choose from International Studies Quarterly, Journal of Conflict Resolution, International Interactions, International Organization, or the Journal of Peace Research. Your report should summarize the article and then discuss what the findings mean for conflict studies. The article should be based on statistical research. This reading might be difficult but it is important you become accustomed to the writing and research style.

Participation

Participation is simply showing up and contributing to class. Either asking questions, bringing up news articles, following up on lecture points, or private conversations with the professor (if you are more comfortable with that) all count towards your participation grade. I do not take attendance and feel that missing class will be reflected on your final grade because you will miss important material.

Security Issues Book Summaries

John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics:

Regarded as a new 'classic' in International Relations theory, Mearsheimer asserts that Great Powers strive and lust for power as opposed to security alone. Great powers seek hegemony and are doomed to failure since security is unachievable. He also looks at future threats and how they might "balance" against American power.

Valerie Hudson and Andrea DenBoer, Bare Branches

This book takes a societal based perspective and asks the question what happens when there are too many men in society? Will resource scarcity lead to conflict or will another outcome prevail? This leads one to ask what other states can do to deal with potential conflict that might arise with China as they rise to become a great power.

Michael Klare, Resource Wars

Klare suggests that most current and future conflict will be resource based. We will evaluate his theoretical and empirical claims using this book as a starting point. Should we focus our attention on resource conflict or are there other types of conflicts that are more likely to lead to outright war? The theory that finite resources and escalating demand as a trigger to war can now be evaluated and judged when compared to other theories of international conflict.

George Packer, Assassin's Gate

Packer's popular book tells the story of the road to war in Iraq and the current situation on the ground. The confluence of power politics tactics and personal grievances are evident causes of war in Iraq. We must now ask, what can and should be done about the situation? What unintended consequences arose from the conflict situation? What did the United States do right and what did it do wrong during the Iraq War?

Course Outline

Introduction

1. What is War/Conflict/Peace?
2. Power Politics (Realism)
3. Issue Based Perspective
4. The Steps to War
5. Rivalry

Paths to War

1. Diplomacy in Practice
2. Peace, Norms, and the Concert of Europe
3. World War I
4. World War II: Europe and Pacific
5. Six Day War
6. Iraq versus Iran
7. Iraq War (2003)
8. African Wars

Systematic Investigations

1. What is the scientific study of war?
2. Causality
3. Territory
4. Alliances
5. Arms Races
6. Steps to Rivalry
7. Kantian Tripod (Democratic Peace, Trade, and IGOs)

Security Issues

1. Great Power Politics
2. Population, Society, and Gender interacts with War
3. Resource Conflict
4. The Road to and from Iraq

Disclaimers

Writing Deficiency Policy - Students who exhibit writing deficiencies will be required to seek help from the Writing Center and provide documentation that they have done so. You may seek help from the Writing Center if you think it would help you even if I do not refer you.

Course Schedule

- Jan 13: Hand out syllabus, Valeriano giving Lecture in California
- Jan 15 Introductions/International Relations and Conflict
- Jan 20 **Article Report Due**
What is War and Conflict?
What is Peace?
Read: What Do We Know About War (WDK) preface and introduction
Singer in (WDK)
- Jan 22 Sources of Conflict: Power Politics
Read: Why Nations Go to War (WNGW) Chapter 10
Sources of Conflict: Issue based Perspective
Read: Vasquez (WDK pg. 335-340)
- Jan 27 The Steps to War Theory
Read: Vasquez (WDK, Chapter 17 all)
- Jan 29 The Study of Rivalry
Read: Goertz and Diehl (WDK)
Wayman (WDK)
Vasquez (WDK 350-354)
- Feb 3 Diplomacy in Practice
Foreign Policy Decision Making
Peace, Norms and the Concert of Europe
Read: Raymond (WDK)
- Feb 5 World War I
Read Cashman and Robinson Ch 2
- Feb 10 World War I (Cont.)
- Feb 12 Causes of WWII in Europe
- Feb 17 No Class, Conference
- Feb 19 Causes of WWII in Asia
Read C+R Ch. 3
- Feb 24 Six Day War
Read C+R Ch. 4

- Feb 26 African Wars
Read Valeriano Paper Online
- March 3 Iran and Iraq
C+R Ch. 6
- March 5 Iraq War (2003)
C+R Ch. 7
- March 19 Iraq War (Cont.)
- March 12 What is the Scientific Study of War?
Bull versus Singer
The Scientific Method
- March 17 Midterm
- March 19 No Class, Conference
- March 24 Spring Break
- March 26 Spring Break
- March 31 Causality and Falsification
Classification Systems
Read: Vasquez and Valeriano (online)
- April 2 Who Fights Whom?
Read: Bremer in What Do We Know About War (WDK)
- April 7 Sources of Conflict: Territoriality and Territorial Issues
Read: Huth (WDK)
Read: Hensel (WDK)
- April 9 Alliances
Read: Gibler and Maoz (WDK)
Vasquez (WDK pg. 340-344)
- April 14 Arms Races and Military Buildups
Read: Sample (WDK)
Vasquez (WDK pg. 344-346)
- April 16 Steps to Rivalry
Read: Valeriano Dissertation Ch. 1, 3, and 11 (Online)
Vasquez (WDK pg. 350-354)

April 21 Kantian Tripod
Read: Ray (WDK)

April 23 Tragedy of Great Power Politics

April 28 Bare Branches
Papers Due

April 30 Assassin's at the Gate

May 1 Resource Wars

Finals