

POLS 494 (30393 Undergrad, 30394 Grad)
University of Illinois at Chicago
Fall 2009

Dr. Brandon Valeriano
1115 BSB
W 1-3:25pm

The Steps to War: Conflict Processes in the International System

The goal of this course will be to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the literature in the area of conflict studies research, specifically the steps-to-war branch of scholarship. The focus will be mainly on the causes of interstate warfare as studied from the quantitative perspective. This is an advanced course that integrates graduate and undergraduate students.

Objectives of Course:

- To gain an understanding of the major social science findings on the causes of war
- To learn how to think scientifically about social phenomena
- To be able to read statistical articles and undertake analyses of political data
- To learn how to make inferences from evidence
- To learn how data is collected and to test hypotheses

Required Books:

- Paul Sense and John Vasquez, The Steps to War: An Empirical Puzzle, Princeton University Press, ISBN-10: 0691138923
- Diehl, P. and Goertz, G. War and Peace in International Rivalry. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (ISBN: 0472088483)
- Michael Colaresi, Karen Rasler, and William R. Thompson, Strategic Rivalries in World Politics: Position, Space and Conflict Escalation, Cambridge University Press, ISBN-10: 0521707617

Office Hours and Contact Info

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Requirements:

Research Paper 40%
Participation and Summary Assignments 40%
Book Review 20%

News

Each day we will start off with the discussion of the international news if events take place which are relevant to conflict studies. Students should be prepared to bring up and discuss these events. Any reputable national news source is acceptable. I prefer the New York Times, BBC, or Financial 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 others may have missed.

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.

In addition to normal participation, each student will be required to write a **three/four sentence summary** of each article/chapter assigned for that day. This assignment is due prior to the start of class. You will be asked to redo the summary if the assignment is not completed to a satisfactory degree. If the assignments and discussion is not of a satisfactory level the professor reserves the right to change the class requirements and assign tests and utilize further evaluation tools.

Research Paper

Your assignment for your major term paper is the analysis of the dynamics of the Causes of War or Conflict from either the statistical or qualitative perspective; it should be at least 25 pages in length. Undergraduate students should undertake a lengthy literature review and identify the state of knowledge in the field. A literature review covers the entire breath of scholarship on a certain issue. The goal is not to summarize existing findings, but to identify flaws and research gaps. What needs to be done or what has been done wrong? A review should consult at least 20 articles and books.

Graduate students and those students who wish to pursue a Ph.D. in the future should undertake an original analysis that examines a specific factor said to cause war, conflict, or rivalry. How can data or a case study illuminate a path to war? This means that you can analyze the impact of independent variables such as territory, alliances, arms races, rivalry, and norms on the dependent variable (war/rivalry/militarized disputes). You may also get creative and examine a factor you believe has gone unstudied in the field. **I would like a research statement and list sources for your project by October 7th.**

You will also have to complete one book review (6+ pages). The book covered should not be listed on the syllabus and should have been published since 2002. Please choose an academic book published by a major university press. The goal of this paper is to place the book in the literature, summarize its contributions to the field, and discuss its

shortcomings. You should not spend a lot of time summarizing the book, but in placing the findings in a wider context. **The professor needs to approve all books. Book reviews are due on September 23rd.**

Sources

I am not picky about citations as long as you cite relevant materials. Necessary information is the journal or book name, title of piece, pages, year, and publisher. The caveat is that citations should not be primarily internet sources. I would like you to use journals, newspapers (BBC is counts), and books not solely available on the internet (most things on the internet that are academic have appeared in print somewhere). So no Wikipedia!

The Readings

Every required reading is important. To grasp the details and arguments contained within it is recommended that one read most articles and books twice. Graduate courses are difficult and require a devotion to the subject material. The recommended readings are listed for those interested in a particular subject or those who will take the international relations preliminary exam at some time. To be successful in research, in teaching, and on the job market, one should be familiar with all readings listed - eventually. Successful students in this class will have read some of the recommend sources purely for self-enrichment or out of curiosity.

Assignments and Schedule:

Aug 26

Introductions and Syllabus

Scientific Method, Research Programs, and Progress

Sept 2

What is War?

Power Politics

Read: Senese and Vasquez: Chapters 1, 2

Sept 9

Issue Conflict

Read: Vasquez, John A. and Brandon Valeriano. 2008. "Territory as a Source of Conflict and a Road to Peace" in *Sage Handbook on Conflict Resolution* edited by Jacob Bercovitch, Victor Kremenyuk, and I. William Zartman, pgs. 193-209. (Handout and Online)

Sept 16, No Class

Read your books for next week!

Sept 23, Book Review Due

Territory Findings

Read: Senese and Vasquez: Chapters 3, 4

Sept 30

Alliances and Arms Races

Read:

- Sample – Arms Races (Handout and Online)
- Gibler – Alliances (Handout and Online)

Oct 7, No Class

Prepare Research Statement, due by email Oct 8th

Oct 14

Rivalry: Diehl and Goertz Method

Read: Diehl and Goertz Pages 1-162, Skim Rest of Book

Oct 21

Rivalry: Thompson Method

Read: Colaresi, Rasler, Thompson: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Oct 28

Causes of Rivalry and Hardliners

- Valeriano, Brandon. "The Steps to Rivalry: The Process of Rivalry Development" Handout and Online
- Valeriano, Brandon and Victor Marin. "Causal Pathways to Interstate War: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the Steps to War Theory" Handout or Online

Nov 4

Steps to War Findings I

Read: Senese and Vasquez: Chapters 5, 6, 7

Nov 11

Steps to War Findings II

Read: Colaresi, Rasler, Thompson: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9

Nov 18

Classification Systems

Read:

- Vasquez, John A. and Brandon Valeriano. 2010. "Classification of Interstate War" *Journal of Politics*, Forthcoming (Handout or Online)
- Valeriano, Brandon and John A. Vasquez. 2010. "Identifying and Classifying Complex Interstate Wars." *International Studies Quarterly*, Forthcoming (June) (Handout or Online)
- Valeriano and Vasquez, "Paths to Complex Wars" (Handout or Online)

Nov 25

Norms and Concerts

Read:

- Wallensteen, P. (1984). "Universalism vs. Particularism: On the Limits of Major Power Order." *Journal of Peace Research* 21(3): 243-57. (Handout and Online)
- Finnemore and Sikkink. (1998) International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. International Organization (Handout and Online)
- Rosecrance, Richard. (1992). "A New Concert of Powers" Spring, Foreign Affairs (Handout and Online)
- Valeriano and Leskiw. "Concerts of Action: IGOs and Peace" (Handout and Online)

Dec 2

The End of War?

Read:

- Senese and Vasquez: Chapter 8
- Mueller, John (2009). "War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment." *Political Science Quarterly*. 124(2): 297-321 (Handout and Online)

Dec 7-11, Finals

Papers Due Dec 8th