Description

Let me start with two things this course is not. First, it is not a classics course—no Thucydides, no Clausewitz, no Waltz, no Keohane, no Wendt. The old paradigms (realism, liberalism, constructivism, etc.) are not dead, but they are dying, and the remaining contribution they have to make is increasingly marginal. Second, this is not a comprehensive course, or even a representative survey—the literature on international security is vast, and we cannot even cover all the major branches of it.

The syllabus instead reflects a selection of the most prominent and, in my judgment, the most promising branches of research in this field. Most of the papers listed below are either seminal or have the potential to be. They are chosen to span the active modes of theorizing about international security, including economic, sociological, and psychological theories. They also should give you a sense of the different approaches to empirical investigation, including statistical analysis of large datasets, historical analysis and process tracing of one or a few cases, the grey “medium-n” approach in between, and the more recent use of survey and lab experiments. Finally, these papers represent several different ways of contributing to the field, including identifying a puzzle, unifying previous strands of theory, constructing a new dataset, testing competing theories, and improving methods of research.

Some of the tools employed in the readings, like game theory or certain statistical methods, may be unfamiliar to you. And in some cases it may also be unclear to you—as it may have been at the time to the author—what the lasting contributions of a seminal paper are. For these reasons, this will not be a pure discussion class: I will use part of each meeting to try to bring you up to speed on relevant methods and to present the most important conclusions of the papers.

Contacting Me: You can email me at any time, and I will try to respond within a day, though exceptions will happen. You can also email me to set up a time to come by my office and talk.
Students with Disabilities: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.

Academic Integrity: Don’t lie, cheat, or steal. Plagiarism is all three (think about it). Also, don’t abet the bad behavior of others. Get caught doing any of these and the penalty is an F in the course, at minimum. For more detail, see the Trojan Integrity Guide and the related guide to avoiding plagiarism.

Requirements

Preparation and Participation (25%): Careful, thorough reading of the assigned papers before class and participating thoughtfully in class are essential to the value of this course—that is why so few readings are assigned each week.

Presentation (25%): Each of you will get 30 minutes at the end of one class to teach us a paper of your choice. It can be any paper on international security (broadly interpreted) published in a top journal. We’ll schedule this a few weeks into the class.

Research Paper (50%): This should pose a realistic research question and present a preliminary answer. In line with most journals’ requirements, it must be no more than 35 pages, including everything except any appendices, double-spaced in 12pt font with one-inch margins, and formatted according to current convention. We’ll talk more about the details for this as the semester proceeds, but it will be due on May 2.

Methods References

This course is primarily intended to help you become proficient at reading the literature on international security. Gaining this proficiency does not require previous experience with applied mathematics, and you do not need to learn the details of the mathematical techniques employed. However, you do need to grasp the underlying concepts of these techniques: what problems they are intended to solve, when these problems arise, and how to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the technique’s application.

The lectures presented in class will help, but you may also need to consult a reference to reinforce the lectures or find further explanation. The books listed below cover the most widely-used techniques and are recommended for students like yourselves.

Schedule and Readings

Readings are to be completed by the beginning of class on the date listed. Some of the readings build in a sequence: it will be easier to understand them if you read them in the order listed.


SKIM:


January 20: Rationalist Theory of Conflict


January 27: Psychological Theories of Conflict


February 3: (Quasi-)Experimental Methods


February 10: Domestic Politics and Conflict I: Evidence


February 17: Domestic Politics and Conflict II: Theory


February 24: Economics and Conflict


March 3: Arming


March 10: Economic Sanctions


**SPRING BREAK**

March 24: Norms


March 31: Institutions


April 7: Diplomacy


April 14: PRESENT WORK IN PROGRESS ON PAPERS

April 21: Nuclear Weapons


April 28: Intervention