POLSC 382: Causes of War

Zachary Shirkey Class Room:

17xx HW Class Time:

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212-772-5503

Course Description

The course will familiarize students with many of the theories about the causes of war and war duration prevalent in the field of political science, especially rationalist and psychological causes. One theme that will run throughout the course is that causes of war and peace are intrinsically linked. Students should be advised that this is an upper-level course and that a familiarity with the basic concepts in international relations is assumed. Students should also note this is not a course on foreign policy or current events, but will rather focus on theoretical concepts which underlie the behavior of states and rebel groups regarding war and peace. Both interstate and civil wars will be examined.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to complete all the readings and to attend classes. The class format will be a mix of that of a seminar and lecture format. **Class discussion of the readings will be a major component of the method of instruction**. Students **must** complete the readings for each class **prior to class**.

The graded assignments are a research paper, two article summaries, a presentation of one of those summaries, and a final exam. The paper consists of three elements: a proposal, literature review, and completed version. **Late assignments will be docked at least a full letter grade (e.g., from a B to a C) and assignments that are more than a day late may be subject to additional penalties. No late assignments will be accepted after the final. No extra credit will be given.** College requirements mandate that Credit / No Credit forms must be signed before the final is handed out and that students have completed all graded assignments to receive credit. The overall grade will be broken down as follow:

Two Article Summaries 10% each (20% total)

Article Presentation 10%

Research Paper 40% total

* Paper proposal 5%
* Draft of Literature Review 10%
* Completed Paper 25%

Final Exam 30%

Learning Outcomes

There are several learning goals for this course. First, students will be expected to read scholarly texts and comprehend how the causes of war, peace, and duration relate to each other. Students should understand how the concepts covered build on each other and determine which causes of war and peace are most compelling given the internal logic of those theories and the available evidence. Students will also be expected to understand statistical evidence and theories developed using formal modeling, though they will not be expected to replicate these methods or fully understand the underlying mathematics. Students will also be able to critique of scholarly articles in writing and present these critiques orally.

Second, in a substantial research paper students will generate appropriate research hypothesis about the causes of recent conflicts based on the theoretical material covered. In exploring their hypothesis, students will be required to make a causal argument about the origins of a recent conflict, situate that argument in the scholarly literature, and locate sufficient evidence to test that hypothesis. Students will be expected to use only appropriate scholarly sources and to cite those sources correctly.

Incompletes and Credit/No Credit

To be eligible for a grade of incomplete, students must have reached an agreement to that effect with the professor prior to the final exam. No grade of incomplete will be awarded without documentation of a health issue, mental health issue, or some other legitimate obstacle to completing the course in a timely manner. Said health issues can affect either the student or a family member under the student’s care. All work must be completed within a year.

In accordance with Hunter College policy, to be eligible for Credit/No Credit students must have completed all assignments and take the final exam.

Missed Classes Because of Religious Observances

Students who miss class because of religious observances are entitled to reasonable accommodations to make up missed assignments and missed material. Students should contact the instructor prior to the missed class to inform the instructor about the absence, work out how missed assignments will be made up, and determine how missed material can be learned.

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

ADA Policy

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772- 4857 or (212) 650-3230.

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

“In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

* 1. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
  2. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>”

Course Materials:

There is one required books, plus articles available on Blackboard. It is:

Wagner, R. Harrison. 2007. *War and the State: The Theory of International Relations*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

It is referred to below **W** and can be purchased at Shakespeare and on Akademos. It is available electronically through the library (see Blackboard for a link). Readings indicated by a **B** are available only on Blackboard.

**Course Schedule**

**I. Failures of Traditional Explanations of War**

M Jan 28:

*Introduction*

Th Jan 31:

*Limitations of Traditional Explanations of the Causes of War (I)*

* **W**: Chapter 1: “The Theory of International Politics,” 2–52

M Feb 4: **Paper Assignment Handed Out**

*Limitations of Traditional Explanations of the Causes of War (II)*

* **W**: Chapter 2: “Reason of State,” 53–105.

**II. Bargaining and Rationalist Causes of War**

Th Feb 7:

*Bargaining, State Formation, and War (I)*

* **B**: Reiter, Dan. 2003. “Exploring the Bargaining Model of War,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1(1): 27–43.
* **B**: Prorok, Alyssa and Paul Huth. 2017. “The Conduct and Consequences of War,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias.*

M Feb 11:**Paper Proposal Due**

*Bargaining, State Formation, and War (II)*

* **W**: Chapter 3 & 4: “Violence, Organization, and War” and “Bargaining and War,” 105–70.

Th Feb 14:

*Rationalist Causes of War and Private Information (I)*

* **B**: Fearon, James D. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414.
* **B**: Debs, Alexandre. 2022. “Mutual Optimism and War, and the Strategic Tensions of the July Crisis,” *American Journal of Political Science* 66(2): 271–84.

Th Feb 21:

*Private Information (II)*

* **B**: Lindsay, David. 2019. “Mutual Optimism and Costly Conflict: The Case of Naval Battles in the Age of Sail,” *Journal of Politics* 81(4): 1181–96.
* **B**: Slantchev, Branislav. 2003. “The Principle of Convergence in Wartime Negotiations,” *American Political Science Review* 97(4): **621–30 only**.

M Feb 25:

*Criticisms of Private Information Approaches*

* **B**: Leventoglu, Bahar and Ahmer Tarar. 2008. “Does Private Information Lead to Delay or War in Crisis Bargaining?,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52(3): 533–53.
* **B**: Smith, Alastair and Allan C. Stam. 2004. “Bargaining and the Nature of War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6): 783–813.

Th Feb 28:

*Commitment Problems*

* **B**: Powell, Robert. 2006. “War as a Commitment Problem,” *International Organization* 60(1): **169–95 only**.
* **B**: Wolford, Scott, Dan Reiter, and Clifford J. Carrubba. 2011. “Information, Commitment, and War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55(4): 556–79.

M Mar 4:

*Domestic Politics and Rationalist Causes of War*

* **B**: Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. 2004. “Testing Novel Implications from the Selectorate Theory of War,” *World Politics* 56(3): 363–88.
* **B**: McManus, Roseanne W. 2014. “Fighting Words: The Effectiveness of Statements of Resolve in International Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 51(6): 726–40.

**II. War Duration and Peace**

Th Mar 7:

*War Duration (I)*

* **B**: Bennett, D. Scott and Allan C. Stam. 1996. “The Duration of Interstate Wars, 1816-1985,” *American Political Science Review* 90(2): 239–57.
* **B**: Stanley, Elizabeth A. and John P. Sawyer. 2009. “The Equifinality of War Termination: Multiple Paths to Ending War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(5): 651–76.

M Mar 11:

*War Duration (II)*

* **B**: Shirkey, Zachary C. 2016. “Uncertainty and War Duration,” *International Studies Review* 18(2): 244–67.
* **B**: Weisiger, Alex. 2016. “Learning from the Battlefield: Information, Domestic Politics, and Interstate War Duration,” *International Organization* 70(2): 347–75.

Th Mar 14: **Literature Review Due**

*Enforcing Agreements*

* **W**: Chapter 5: “Enforcing Agreements,” 173–96.
* **B**: Fortna, Virginia Page. 2003. “Scraps of Paper? Agreements and the Durability of Peace,” *International Organization* 57(2): 337–72.

M Mar 18:

*Peacekeeping*

* **B**: Fortna, Virginia Page. 2004. “Interstate Peacekeeping: Causal Mechanisms and Empirical Effects,” *World Politics* 56(4): 481–519.
* **B**: Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon. 2014. “Beyond Keeping Peace: United Nations Effectiveness in the Midst of Fighting,” *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 737–53.

Th Mar 21:

*Democratic Peace and Hierarchy*

* **B**: Oneal, John, Bruce Russett, and Michael Berbaum. 2003. “Causes of Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885–1992,” *International Studies Quarterly* 47(3): 371–93.
* **B**: McDonald, Patrick J. 2015. “Great Powers, Hierarchy, and Endogenous Regimes: Rethinking the Domestic Causes of Peace,” *International Organization* 69(3): 557–89.

**III. Civil Wars**

M Mar 25:

*Causes of Civil Wars*

* **B**: Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Gleditsch. 2011. “Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison,” *American Political Science Review* 105(3): 478–95.
* **B**: Carter, David B. Andrew C. Shaver, and Austin L. Wright. 2019. “Places to Hide: Terrain, Ethnicity, and Civil Conflict,” *Journal of Politics* 81(4): 1446–65.

Th Mar 28:

*Civil War Duration*

* **B**: Cunningham, David E. 2006. “Veto Players and Civil War Duration,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(4): 875–92.
* **B**: Menninga, Elizabeth J. and Alyssa K. Prorok. 2021. “Battles and Bargains: Escalation, Commitment, and Negotiations in Civil War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 65(2): 406–22.

**IV. Reputation and Deterrence**

M Apr 1:

*Reputation*

* **B**: Dafoe, Allan and Devin Caughey. 2016. “Honor and War: Southern US Presidents and the Effects of Concern for Reputation,” *World Politics* 68(2): 341–81.
* **B**: Weisiger, Alex and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2015. “Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics,” *International Organization* 69(2): 473–95.

Th Apr 4:

*Deterrence*

* **B**: Huth, Paul K. 1999. “Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 25–48.
* **B**: Werner, Suzanne. 2000. “Deterring Intervention,” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 720–32.

**V. Third Parties**

M Apr 8:

*Alliances*

* **B**: Fang, Songying, Jesse C. Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds. 2014. “To Concede or to Resist? The Restraining Effect of Military Alliances,” *International Organization* 68(4): **775–801 only.**
* **B**: Wolford, Scott. 2017. “The Problem of Shared Victory: War-Winning Coalitions and Postwar Peace,” *Journal of Politics* 79(2): 702–16.

Th Apr 11:

*Military Intervention (I)*

* **B**: Shirkey, Zachary C. 2018. “Military Intervention in Interstate and Civil Wars: A Unified Interpretation,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, W. R. Thompson (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 534–49.
* **B**: Hannigan, Colin. 2019. “Toward a Holistic Networks Approach to Strategic Third-Party Intervention: A Literature Review,” *International Area Studies Review* 22(3): 277–92.

M Apr 15:

*Military Intervention (II)*

* **B**: Crawford, Timothy W. 2014. “The Alliance Politics of Concerted Accommodation: Entente Bargaining and Italian and Ottoman Interventions in the First World War,” *Security Studies* 23(1): 113–47.
* **B**: Findley, Michael G. and Tze Kwang Teo. 2006. “Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach,” *Journal of Politics* 68(4): 828–37.

Th Apr 18:

*Military Intervention (III)*

* **B**: Salehyan, Idean. 2010. “The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54(3): 493–515.
* **B**: Duursma, Allard and Henning Tamm. 2021. “Mutual Interventions in Africa,” *International Studies Quarterly* 65(4): 1077–86.

**VI. Psychological Causes**

M Apr 29:

*Information Processing*

* **B**: Mitzen, Jennifer and Randall L. Schweller. 2011. “Knowing the Unknown Unknowns: Misplaced Certainty and the Onset of War,” *Security Studies* 20(1): 2–35.
* **B**: Streich, Philip and Jack S. Levy. 2016. “Information, Commitment, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12(4): 489–511.

Th May 2:

*Time Horizons and Decision Pathways*

* **B**: Krebs, Ronald R. and Aaron Rapport. 2012. “International Relations and the Psychology of Time Horizons,” *International Studies Quarterly* 56(3): 530–543.
* **B**: Johnson, Dominic D. P. and Dominic Tierney. 2011. “The Rubicon Theory of War: How the Path to Conflict Reaches the Point of No Return,” *International Security* 36(1): 7–40.

M May 6:

*Organizational Routines and Life Experiences*

* **B**: Levy, Jack S. 1986. “Organizational Routines and the Causes of War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 30(2): 193–222.
* **B**: Horowitz, Michael and Allan C. Stam. 2014. “How Prior Military Experience Influences the Future Militarized Behavior of Leaders,” *International Organization* 68(3): 527–60.

Th May 9:

*Honor and Homelands*

* **B**: Offer, Avner. 1995. “Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?,” *Politics & Society* 23(2): 213–41.
* **B**: Shelef, Nadav G. 2016. “Unequal Ground: Homelands and Conflict,” *International Organization* 70(1): 33–64.

M May 13: **Final Paper Due**

*Mixing Rationalist and Psychological Explanations*

* **B**: Holmes, Marcus and David Traven. 2015. “Acting Rationally Without Really Thinking: The Logic of Rational Intuitionism for International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Review* 17(3): 414–40.
* **B**: Rathbun, Brian C., Joshua D. Ketzer, and Mark Paradis. 2017. “*Homo Diplomaticus:* Mixed-Method Evidence of Variation in Strategic Rationality,” *International Organization* 71(S1): S33–S60.

**Final Exam during Exam Week**