PO 8008  
International Conflict  

Contact Information

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Description

This graduate course is about the causes and consequences of conflicts between and within nations, as well as theories of international security. Existing empirical results will also be emphasized and particular attention will be paid to the relevance of the concepts introduced to contemporary geopolitical issues and conflicts.

Requirements and grading

Each week we will discuss a particular topic using the readings as a basis. We will also debate current international security affairs as they unfold in the world, and as they relate to the theories and concepts in this class. Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation (18 %)

Participation and attendance are essential. This is a seminar and I will not lecture. Coming prepared means having read and understood each of the required readings. You should come to class ready to a. summarize each paper’s main findings; b. explain the method used in each paper; and c. have thought about possible improvements to the paper or feasible extensions.
Presentations (12%)

Students are required to make two presentations (6% each) on topics listed at the end of each week’s reading list. The allocation of topics will be based on stated preferences and, should more than one student express the same preference, by random draw. The presentations should last no more than 10 minutes and be based on a single slide (animated slides are fine, but do not overdo it), ideally a map. Grading will be based mainly on clarity of exposition and the quality of the content. Presenters are also expected to be able to respond to questions from the audience (incl. myself).

Response Papers (30%)

Students are required to submit five response papers (max 500 words each) throughout the semester (each worth 6% of your final mark). A sixth one may optionally be submitted, in which case the weakest score will be dropped. At least one of these papers must be submitted before the seminar of week 3. Students are required to choose one of the required or suggested readings for that week (readings marked with a star may not be used) and do two things:

- Identify a possible extension of a paper.
- Describe how you would carry out the extension. Note that what you propose should be feasible (ideally by you). If, for example, you find the author’s data weak, then you should identify better data, or at least propose a plausible way of collecting these data. If you think the method is wrong, explain why and suggest a better one. A specific course of action should be outlined. This process will help you later on in finding a dissertation topic.

*Do not write a summary of the paper. Not even if it is short.* The idea is for you to try out ideas for future research projects, the research paper for this seminar, or even your dissertation. I will try to grade papers submitted before Wed. noon before class the next day. Either way, you must submit the paper before the beginning of class. I may ask you to present your idea if relevant to the class.

Research Paper (40%)

The research paper (max 2,500 words, everything included) will be due at the latest on December 9, 23:59. It should outline a research design for a larger project (possibly a first step towards your dissertation) and is due at the end of the term. The paper needs to follow a clear structure:
1. What is your motivating question? Avoid questions that start with ‘How’.
2. How does your project relate to existing work?
3. What are your hypotheses?
4. What relevant data are available, or could feasibly be collected?
5. What method would you use to test your hypotheses? This may include any combination of comparative case studies, interviews, statistical analysis, computer simulation, mathematical modeling, etc.
6. How do you expect the results would support or falsify the hypotheses?

For both the response and researcher papers I am looking for creativity, with feasibility and theoretical or empirical fruitfulness as your only constraints. Concise and clear writing is also essential. Papers merely reviewing existing work or listing historical facts will not receive a passing grade.

**Turnitin**

Please submit all your written work, including response papers, through Turnitin: (turnitin.com).

- Class ID: 13632030
- Password: PO8008

**Plagiarism**

Please follow the standard of academic honesty set forth in the College Calendar (http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/calendar) and online: http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism. You should also complete the online tutorial on avoiding plagiarism http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/ready-steady-write.

**Readings**

There is no textbook for this class. Instead, three types of readings are required: (1) scholarly articles and (2) policy-oriented pieces are listed in this syllabus. Students must read all readings listed in the ‘required’ section for each class and be ready to discuss each of them in class. The required readings are either on Blackboard or on reserve in the library. Some weeks (3, 5 & 6) require a large amount of reading, so I advise you to plan ahead (on average 145 pages per week). Finally, students are also expected to have read (3) the news and relevant sources of information such as:

- Council on Foreign Relations (http://www.cfr.org/)
• Foreign Affairs (http://www.foreignaffairs.com/)
• Foreign Policy (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/)
• The Economist (http://www.economist.com/)
• The Washington Post (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/)
• The Financial Times (e.g., http://www.ft.com/intl/comment/columnists/gideonrachman)
Course Outline

Week 1. Introductory Session: The End of War? 6

Week 2. Is War in our Genes? 6
   A. War in Human Nature?
   B. The Evolution of Cooperation

Week 3. War and Society 7
   A. The Emergence of the State
   B. History of Warfare

Week 4. Bargaining and Conflict 8
   A. Incomplete Information
   B. Commitment Problems

Week 5. Forecasting Conflict 9

Week 6. Domestic Politics and War 10
   A. Commitment, Signaling and Audiences
   B. The Democratic Peace

Week 7. Reading Week: no seminar 10

Week 8. Terrorism 10

Week 9. Civil Wars I 11

Week 10. Civil Wars II 11

Week 11. Conflict Outcomes 12
   A. Combat Outcomes
   B. The Duration of Peace

Week 12. Economic Interdependence and Conflict 13
Schedule

**Week 1. Introductory Session: The End of War?**

Required Readings (125 pages):

- Walter R Mead. The Return of Geopolitics. *Foreign Affairs*. 17 Apr. 2014. 7 pages *
- John G Ikenberry. The Illusion of Geopolitics. *Foreign Affairs*. 17 Apr. 2014. 7 pages *
- Bear Braumoeller. Is war disappearing? In *APSA Chicago 2013 Meeting*, 2013. 28 pages

Suggested Readings:


**Week 2. Is War in our Genes?**

Required Readings (153 pages):

**A. War in Human Nature?**

**B. The Evolution of Cooperation**

Suggested Readings:
• Robert M Axelrod. *The evolution of cooperation*. Basic books, 2006. ch. 1&2, pp. 3-54

Presentations:

• The Sykes-Picot agreement and its ramifications.
• The Senkaku Islands
• The South China Sea

**Week 3. War and Society**

Required Readings (153 pages):

_A. The Emergence of the State_

_B. History of Warfare_

Suggested Readings:


Presentations:
• South Sudan
• Kashmir

**Week 4. Bargaining and Conflict**

**Required Readings (134 pages):**

*A. Incomplete Information*

*B. Commitment Problems*
  (Review from week 4.)

*C. The Iraq War*

**Suggested Readings:**

• Robert Powell. *In the shadow of power: States and strategies in international politics.* Princeton University Press, 1999. Ch. 3, pp. 82–114 (technical reading)

Presentations:

• North Korea’s nuclear programme
• Kashmir

**Week 5. Forecasting Conflict**

**Required Readings (146 pages):**


**Suggested Readings:**


**Presentations:**

• Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran
• Gaza
Week 6. Domestic Politics and War

Required Readings (143 pages):

A. Commitment, Signaling and Audiences
• Thomas C Schelling. *Arms and Influence*. Yale University Press, 2008. ch. 2 (pp. 35–91)

B. The Democratic Peace

Suggested Readings:


Presentations:

• The role of Jordan in the Middle East
• Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Week 7. Reading Week: no seminar

Week 8. Terrorism

Required Readings (102 pages):

Presentations:

• ISIS: origins
• ISIS: current state

Week 9. Civil Wars I

Required Readings (126 pages):

• Charles Tilly. *The politics of collective violence*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, Ch. 1 and 2, pp. 1–54
• Daniel N Posner. The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi. *American Political Science Review*, 98(04):529–545, 2004

Presentations:

• The Boko Haram Insurgency
• The Kurds
• Ethnic relations in Iraq today

Week 10. Civil Wars II

Required Readings (112 pages):

Suggested Readings:


Presentations:

• The Columbian peace process
• The Somalian civil war

Week 11. Conflict Outcomes

Required Readings (157 pages):

A. Combat Outcomes


B. The Duration of Peace


Suggested Readings:

Presentations:

• The Libyan Crisis
• The Yemeni crisis

Week 12. Economic Interdependence and International Conflict

Required Readings (128 pages):


Suggested Readings:

Presentations:

- The geopolitical impact of Russian Gas
- Ethnic violence in South Sudan
- The War in Donbass (Ukraine)