PO 8051
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 (20%)

Participation and attendance are essential. 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.

Presentation (10%)

Students are required to make one presentation on one of the topics listed at the end of each week’s reading list. The allocation of topics will be based on stated
preferences (or random draw if more than one student expresses the same preference). The presentations should last no more than 5 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. Less is more, i.e., do not try to cram every detail into the presentation, Presenters are also expected to be able to respond to questions from the audience (incl. myself).

**Research Idea Papers (30%)**

Students are required to submit three response papers (max 500 words each) throughout the semester (each worth 10% of your final mark). A fourth one may optionally be submitted, in which case the best three marks will be counted. At least one of these papers must be submitted before the seminar of week 4. In these papers, students are required to:

1. Identify a research question
2. Describe how you would answer that question. Note that what you propose can be ambitious but should be feasible (ideally by you).

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 by 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 2,200 words, bibliography, abstract and title page matter excluded) will be due at the latest on Dec. 20, 23:59. It should outline a research design for a larger project (possibly a first step towards your dissertation). 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 via Blackboard (mymodule.tcd.ie).

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

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   B. The Duration of Peace

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Schedule

Week 1. Introductory Session: The End of War?

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:

- Bear Braumoeller. Is war disappearing? In *APSA Chicago 2013 Meeting*, 2013. 28 pages

Week 2. Is War in our Genes?

Required Readings:


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:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**Presentations:**

• South Sudan
• Kashmir

**Week 4. Bargaining and Conflict**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**Presentations:**

• North Korea’s nuclear programme
• Iran’s nuclear programme
Week 5. Forecasting Conflict

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Presentations:

- Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran
- Gaza
Week 6. Weapons of mass destruction

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Presentations:

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

Week 7. Reading Week: no seminar

Week 8. Terrorism

Required Readings:


Presentations:
• ISIS: origins
• ISIS: current geopolitical state
• ISIS: current funding and finances

**Week 9. Civil Wars I**

**Required Readings:**

• 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

**Suggested Readings:**

• Charles Tilly. *The politics of collective violence*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, Ch. 1 and 2, pp. 1–54

**Presentations:**

• The Boko Haram Insurgency
• The Kurds
• Ethnic relations in Iraq today
Week 10. Civil Wars II

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Presentations:

- The Columbian peace process
- The Somalian civil war

Week 11. Economic Interdependence and International Conflict

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


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

**Week 12. Conflict Outcomes**

**Required Readings:**

A. Combat Outcomes

B. The Duration of Peace

**Suggested Readings:**

• US Army Counter-insurgency handbook, chapter 2.  
• Branislav L Slantchev. How initiators end their wars: The duration of warfare  
  2004

Presentations:

• The Libyan Crisis
• The Yemeni crisis