

International Conflict

Instructor: Tobias Heinrich (th5@rice.edu – www.theinrich.net)

Class: 9-9:50am in Room 101 in Keck Hall on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Office hours: Mondays, 1-2p and Tuesdays, 10-11a in the Brochstein Pavilion. You can also schedule alternative times with me through email.

OUTLINE

This course offers a *focussed* view on the relatively recent international conflict literature. It seeks to answer the question of why there is conflict between states and what the consequences are of conflict. The course is limited in its scope; hence there are plenty of (perhaps) important strands of the conflict literature that you will not be exposed to or that will just get rudimentary treatment. Instead, the course presents a largely unified view on international conflict, namely from the perspective of bargaining. By participating actively in all aspects of the course, you will learn the following:

- an in-depth understanding of the bargaining approach to conflict;
- think more like a social scientist.

The course has three parts, *Preliminaries*, *Bargaining Theory*, and *Topics of Conflict*. In the first part, the course will be outlined, topics for presentations will be chosen, and we will do a refresher/ introduction to the ideas of causality, game theory, and the philosophy of science. Further, two or three lectures will be devoted to some of historical and philosophical precursors to the modern thinking about conflict.

The second part focusses heavily on James Fearon’s “Rationalist Explanations for War” article from 1995 as well as its intellectual and theoretical aftermath. The third part of the course, which comprises the second half of the semester, is devoted to topics in international conflict, such as defense spending, military alliances, civil conflict, etc.

Almost all readings will be available through Fondren Library. That is, the articles can be found through Google Scholar (for example) and then be downloaded as PDF if you are on Rice campus. Some texts will be made available by me in advance. In addition, you should obtain access to the following two items. First, Jack S. Levy & William R. Thompson’s 2010 book called *Causes of War* (Wiley-Blackwell). Second, Dan Reiter’s book called *How Wars End*, Princeton University Press, 2009. Last, one (early) assignment will be based upon Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 masterpiece *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Please make sure that you have access to watch it, perhaps even a few times.



Date of this syllabus: October 15, 2012.

GRADES AND GRADING

Your grade will be comprised of several contributions, namely three essays of varying length, a research (design) paper, a presentation, and the written discussion of another student's paper. The following is an outline of each of these contributions.

You can think of Essays I and II as cumulative mid-terms whereas Essay III acts as the final for the course. These essays are mostly open-book; there will be some limitations for Essay I. Further, I am open to whether there should be time limits for writing the essays and if yes, what the time limits for the essays are.

- *Essay I: 5%*. For this short essay (roughly 1,000 words), you will have the chance and pleasure to analyze Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. In the form of an essay, you should study some of the characters' beliefs about the world and their underlying (implicit or explicit) theory/theories of conflict. The assignment is meant to get you started thinking about people's theories of conflict. The essay is given on August 29 and is due on September 5 (at the beginning of class).
- *Essay II: 15%*. This slightly longer essay (roughly 2,000 words) requires you to perform a similar analysis. This time, the source text is one of several essays written by a political scientist. Which of the essays you write about is your choice. Further, you should not only scrutinize the underlying theory of conflict, but also compare it to the bargaining approach that you will have learned by then. The essay is given on October 1 and is due on October 8 (at the beginning of class).
- *Essay III: 30%*. This longer essay (roughly 2,500 words) will act as the final exam for this course. You will be given one scholar's essay as the basis for your essay. You will apply bargaining to the subject matter raised in the scholar's essay. The essay is given on November 30 and is due at the latest on December 11.
- *Research paper: 35%*. This short research paper (2,500-4,000 words, excluding a bibliography) addresses a topic and question of your choosing. It is your task to identify an interesting question or puzzle and develop an argument using the bargaining perspective. A good paper contains a pitch for the relevancy of the topic and question, raises an intellectual puzzle, a short and concise review of pertinent previous work, a theoretical argument that offers a solution to the puzzle and presents insightful predictions about the world, and some (suggestive, preliminary) empirical evidence (either from other empirical work or from a brief case study). Your paper will mostly be evaluated on the quality of the puzzle and how well you use the theories we covered to offer a solution to the question. If you have never written a research paper that consists of these elements, talk to me.

Your papers will additionally form an integral part of the second half of the course as you will give a presentation. Further, another student will write a one-page critique of your paper. To this end, the paper needs to be handed in by the Friday before your presentation will take place.

Your research topic needs to be approved by the instructor. To this end, I encourage you to talk to me about ideas early in the semester. The approval process has a few steps. The idea of the paper first needs to be summarized on a postcard, written as if you were telling your grandma what you are up to (academically). By the halftime of the semester, a one-page

outline of your paper is due.¹

- “Postcard to Granny” is due on September 12.
 - A one-page outline is due on September 24. This outline also has to contain a suggestion for a paper that is not on the syllabus and that you think should be required reading for when you do your presentation.
 - The paper must be emailed to the instructor by Friday before the student’s presentation takes place. This is also the case if the Friday class is canceled which will be the case a few times this semester. I will forward the paper to the discussant. Note: The papers for those presenting between October 8 and 19 are due by October 19, and the critiques for these papers are due on October 22.
- *Presentation: 10%*. You are presenting your research paper in class. Presentations should last for no more than 10 minutes. A discussions will follow.
 - *Discussant: 5%*. Each student discusses in brief writing (roughly 400 words) the paper of one other student. This discussion of the paper is due at the beginning of the class session in which the corresponding presentation is taking place.

On occasion, there will be opportunities for voluntary short presentations that take place during class time. One such assignment might be to summarize a significant scholar’s research themes. I expect these voluntary extra credit opportunities to be worth five percentage points in general.² If multiple students volunteer, I will use statistical software to draw a person randomly.

I will use the following grading scale to map between percentages and letter grades. A+ 97%-100%, A 93-96, A- 90-92, B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82, C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72, D+ 67-69, D 60-66, and F 0-59. If you choose to turn in your work late, then you will lose 5 percentage-points every 12 hours. Late work should be emailed if the original assignment was due in class. The Rice Honor Code applies.

You are expected to be in class on time and be there every time as attending class is an integral part in learning the material. Further, missing class when your classmates carry out their presentations is simply rude. That said, no attendance will be taken so that there is no formal disadvantage from not showing up. I firmly believe that missing classes will adversely affect your learning and thereby your grade. Last, if you no-show for your own presentation or a voluntary short presentation, you will automatically receive a zero for it.

I strongly encourage students to use superior typesetting software (ie. LaTeX) instead of Microsoft Word, Apple Pages, and Sun’s OpenOffice. For presentation slides, I urge you to use LaTeX or Apple Keynote. If you want to see examples of superb presentations, watch the iPhone and iPad unveilings by Steve Jobs. We will see a lot of presentations by fellow students and by me this semester; let’s make them good.

This syllabus will be updated during the early part of the semester; in particular with the exact dates of presentations and the exact readings for the second half of the course.

¹For those who present right after halftime, this is obviously too late. I encourage you to talk with me particularly early in the semester.

²If you get x on your voluntary short presentation and average y over the regular grades, your grade will percentage will be $\frac{5}{105}x + \frac{100}{105}y$.

Students with documented disabilities who require special accommodations should meet with me and express their needs during the first few weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities must also contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center. The department of political science is happy to do whatever we can to assure each student full and rewarding participation in classes.

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I: PRELIMINARIES

August 20. Howdy and what are we doing?

- Frédéric Bastiat. 1848. “What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen.”
URL: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Bastiat/basEss1.html>

August 22. Social science and international relations. You will also be given “The Cheat Sheet.”

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 1985. “Toward a scientific understanding of international conflict: A personal view.” *International Studies Quarterly* 29(2):121-136.
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600500>

August 24. What’s war, what’s conflict? Also: Signing up for papers and presentations.

- Levy and Thompson. *Causes of Conflict*, pages 1–14.

August 27. Trends in war and conflict.

- Lotta Themnér & Peter Wallensteen. 2012. “Armed Conflicts, 1946–2011. *Journal of Peace Research* 49(4):565–575.
URL: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/49/4/565.abstract>
- Joshua S. Goldstein & Steven Pinker. “War Really Is Going Out of Style.” *New York Times*, December 17, 2011.
URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/18/opinion/sunday/war-really-is-going-out-of-style.html?_r=4?pagewanted=all.
- Peter Singer. “Is Violence History?” *New York Times*, October 6, 2011.
URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/09/books/review/the-better-angels-of-our-nature-by-st.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

PART II: BARGAINING THEORY

August 29. Primer/refresher on rationality, utility, and decision theory. Essay I is given.

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 2006. *Principles of International Politics*. CQ Press – pages 84–116.

August 31. No class. It's APSA.

September 3. No class. It's Labor Day.

September 5. Game theory. Essay I is due at the beginning of class.

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 2006. Principles of International Politics. CQ Press – pages 84–116. Look through it again.
- Avidash Dixit & Barry Nalebuff, “Game Theory.”
URL: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/GameTheory.html>

September 7. Bargaining.

- Abhinay Muthoo. 2000. “A non-technical introduction to bargaining theory.” *World Economics* 1(2):145–166.
URL: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/academic/muthoo/bargaining/simpbarg.pdf>

September 10. Fearon 1995: What's the issue?

- John J. Mearsheimer. 2001. The tragedy of great power politics. WW Norton & Company – pages 8–82.

September 12. Fearon 1995: The inefficiency puzzle

- James D. Fearon. 1995. “Rationalist explanations for war.” *International Organization* 49(3):379–414. Read carefully, please. Focus on the front part of the paper. What would Fearon say to Mearsheimer?

September 14. Fearon 1995: rationalist explanations. “Postcard to Granny” is due.

- James D. Fearon. 1995. “Rationalist explanations for war.” *International Organization* 49(3):379–414. Reread, please.

September 17. Incomplete information as Rationalist Cause for War.

- TBA, but probably no reading.

September 19. Commitment Problems as Rationalist Cause for War.

- TBA, but probably no reading.

September 21. Costly Peace as Rationalist Cause for War.

- Andrew J. Coe. 2011. “Costly Peace and War.” Unpublished.
URL: <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~acoe/Research.html>

September 24. How War Solves the Rationalist Causes for War, Part I.

- Dan Reiter. *How Wars End*, Chapters 1 and 2.

September 26. How War Solves the Rationalist Causes for War, Part II.

- Dan Reiter. *How Wars End*, Chapters 3 plus either 5, 6, 7, 9, or 10. Note: Not Chapter 8.

September 28 and October 1. Discussion Sessions. Roughly 5 or 6 students will meet with the instructor for a small discussion session. You may only participate in one of them. The goal of this smaller setting is to discuss the rationalist theories in a non-lecture environment.

October 3. Barnstorming through other theories of conflict. Essay II is given.

- Levy and Thompson. *Causes of Conflict*, Chapters 2 and 3.

October 5. Barnstorming through other theories of conflict.

- Levy and Thompson. *Causes of Conflict*, Chapters 4 and 5.

PART III: TOPICS OF CONFLICT

In this part of the course, we will look at what scholars have done (or tried or failed) using bargaining theories of conflict to understand other aspects of international conflict.

The names in parentheses after a presenter's name is the assigned discussant. Also, there are two "Buffer Sessions." These give room for presentations that had to be moved due sickness, weather conditions, or simply overrun from previous sessions. They may also be used to discuss further papers as interesting topics arise from students' presentations.

The papers are due by Friday *before* they are presented. The critiques are due on the day of the presentation. The papers for those presenting between October 8 and 19 are due by October 19, and the critiques for these papers are due on October 22.

Topic I: Domestic Politics → International Conflict

October 8. Essay II is due.

- Presentations by Min Ji (Courtne), Ellen (Scott), and Zachary W. (Annie).

October 10. How domestic institutions affect international conflict.

- James D. Fearon. 2011. "A Simple Political Economy of Relations among Democracies and Autocracies."

October 12. No class as it is Rice's Centennial Celebration.

October 15.

- Presentations by Annie (Pin-Fang) and Samantha (Justin).

Topic II: Domestic Politics ← International Conflict

October 17. How international conflict affects domestic politics.

- Daron Acemoglu & James A. Robinson. 2006. “Economic Backwardness in Political Perspective.” *American Political Science Review* 100(1):115–131.
URL: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=409787&next=true&jid=PSR&volumeId=100&issueId=01>

October 19.

- Presentations by Jackie (Jennifer), Samuel (Ellen), and John (Leonie).

October 22. Buffer session. Topics TBA.

October 24.

- Presentations by Justin (Amanda), Caroline (Jackie), and William (Kaylee).

October 26. No class as it is the Peace Science conference.

Topic III: Defense Spending and Arms Races

October 29. Arming and international conflict

- Robert Powell. 1999. *In the Shadow of Power*. Chapter 2.

October 31.

- Presentations by Christian (Nneoma), Michael (Min Ji), and Courtnie (Samuel).

Topic IV: Substitutability

November 2. Introducing substitutability.

- David H. Clark, Timothy Nordstrom, and William Reed. 2008. “Substitution is in the Variance.” *American Journal of Political Science* 52(4):763–773.
URL: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00341.x/abstract>

November 5. Substitutes for military force.

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & Alastair Smith. 2009. “A political economy of aid.” *International Organization* 63(2):309–340.
URL: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=5467164>

November 7.

- Presentations by Jennifer (Michael), Amanda (William), and Scott (Samantha).

November 9. Guest lecture by Naoko Matsumura: (Lack of) Leadership Turnover and International Conflict

- Scott Wolford. 2012. "Incumbents, successors, and crisis bargaining: Leadership turnover as a commitment problem." *Journal of Peace Research* 49(4):517–530.
URL: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/49/4/517.abstract>

Topic V: After Conflict

November 12. Keeping peace after conflict.

- Daina Chiba. 2012. "Procuring Peace after Prolonging War." Unpublished.
URL: <http://dynamaman.net/papers/pppw.pdf>

November 14. Tweaking post-war politics

- Presentations by Leonie (Christian).
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & George W. Downs. 2006. "Intervention and Democracy." *International Organization*. 60(3):627–649.
URL: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=453919>

Topic VI: Terrorism and Civil Wars

November 16.

- Ethan Bueno de Mesquita. "Quality of Terror." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3):515–530.
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3647729>

November 21. Terrorism.

- Presentations by Pin-Fang (Zachary W.), Nneoma (John), and Kaylee (Caroline).

November 23. No class as it's Thanksgiving.

November 26. Civil conflict.

- Levy and Thompson. *Causes of Conflict*, Chapter 7.

November 28. Discussion Sessions.

November 30. Essay III is given; it is due by December 11. Wrapping up.

- Levy and Thompson. *Causes of War*, Chapter 8.

REFERENCES

- Acemoglu, Daron & James A. Robinson. 2006. "Economic backwardness in political perspective." *American Political Science Review* 100(1):115–131.
- Bastiat, Frédéric. 1848. "What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen."
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- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 1985. "Toward a scientific understanding of international conflict: A personal view." *International Studies Quarterly* 29(2):121–136.
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600500>
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2006. *Principles of International Politics*. CQ Press.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce & Alastair Smith. 2009. "A political economy of aid." *International Organization* 63(02):309–340.
URL: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=onlineaid=5467164>
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce & George W. Downs. 2006. "Intervention and democracy." *International Organization* 60(3):627–649.
URL: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=onlineaid=453919>
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- Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company.
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URL: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/academic/muthoo/bargaining/simpbarg.pdf>
- Powell, Robert. 1999. *In the shadow of power: States and strategies in international politics*. Princeton University Press.
- Reiter, Dan. 2009. *How Wars End*. Princeton University Press.
- Themnér, Lotta & Peter Wallensteen. 2012. "Armed Conflicts, 1946–2011." *Journal of Peace Research* 49(4):565–575.
URL: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/49/4/565.abstract>
- Wolford, Scott. 2012. "Incumbents, successors, and crisis bargaining: Leadership turnover as a commitment problem." *Journal of Peace Research* 49(4):517–530.
URL: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/49/4/517.abstract>