Political Science (POL S) 407
International Conflict
Spring 2025
MW 10am-11:20am, Miller Hall 301

Instructor:
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      Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-2pm, Gowen 37

Teaching Assistants:

Name	Email	Office Hours

Course Overview:

Why do countries go to war? It is inevitable because of the structure of the international system, or are some countries and some leaders more likely to initiate conflicts? What tactics can help countries win these wars, and which tactics are counterproductive? This course will focus on conflicts between two states as well as conflicts in which states fight armed actors based outside of their borders. There will be two midterms, each consisting of a series of IDs and long-answer questions, and a final research paper which considers which theory we've read about best explains the outbreak or ending of a conflict of your choice. It is recommended that you take POL S 203 Introduction to International Relations prior to enrolling in this class.

Readings:

All readings are to be read before the day they are assigned. They are all available on Canvas. While many of the readings are quantitative in nature, a previous background in statistics is not required for the course. I expect you to consider the argument made, the kinds of data used, and the conclusions of each piece.

Assignments:

Assignment	Percentage	How it will be assessed	Date
Class Participation	20	Participation in weekly quiz sections	Throughout the semester
Midterm 1	20	IDs + long answers	May 5th
Final Paper Proposal	10	Case selection + 2 theories you are testing + initial list of 10 sources	May 19th
Midterm 2	20	IDs + long answers	June 4th
Final Paper	30	10-12 pages	June 11th

Policies:

PowerPoints will not be posted online. Unless otherwise stated, lectures and quiz sections will not be recorded. Personal recordings will not be allowed except as relevant for DRS accommodations. Lectures and quiz sections will take place in person.

Missed examinations due to university events may be accommodated with two weeks' notice. Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at Religious Accommodations Policy. Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form. Only after written confirmation from the professor or TA should the student consider a make-up granted.

If you would like to appeal a grade, please wait 24 hours from the time you receive the grade. After reviewing your answers and the comments, provide a typed statement to the TA explaining why you believe the grade you received should be altered (why exactly more points should be given for a particular answer). This typed statement must be about the substance of the work, not the effort you put into it or the class. Bring the work and your written concerns to the TA's office hours within one week of receiving the graded assignment for a discussion; submission of your statement beyond one week will not be considered. The TA will reread the work, reevaluate it if appropriate, and return it to the student within 2 days. The TA has the right to leave the grade as is, raise the grade, or lower the grade. If you are still dissatisfied, the above procedures will be repeated directly with the professor within 2 days of the receipt of the decision from the first regrade. The professor has the right to leave the grade as is, raise the grade, or lower the grade. If you would like to appeal the above regrades, then a similar procedure must be followed. You must provide a typed statement to the Associate Chair of the Political Science department explaining why you believe the grade (and regrades) you received you should be altered. Bring your work and your written statement to the Associate Chair within 10 days of receiving the regrade decision from the course professor. The Associate Chair will confer with relevant department faculty, reevaluate the assignment, and return it to the student within 1 week. The departmental grade appeal decision from the Associate Chair is final.

I expect you to comply with the University of Washington's policies regarding student misconduct, which can be found here: https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/student-code-of-conduct/.

The assignments in this class have been designed to challenge you to develop creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Using AI technology will limit your capacity to develop these skills and to meet the learning goals of this course. All work submitted for this course must be your own. Any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, when working on assignments is forbidden. Use of generative AI will be considered academic misconduct and subject to investigation.

See the grade scale for this course on Canvas and below at the end of this document.

Resources and Support:

1) My goal is to create a learning environment that supports a diverse range of perspectives, experiences, and identities.
   - The topics that we're covering in this class are often difficult, not just intellectually but also emotionally. While I expect there will be rigorous discussion and even disagreement during our class discussions, I ask that you engage in each class meeting with care and empathy for the other members in the classroom. I will not tolerate insults; gender or racial slurs; or any other form of bullying, intimidation, or hate speech. I expect all members of this class to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of this class.
   - Please inform me early in the term if you require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. Accommodations must be established and documented with [Disability Resources for Students (DRS)](#).

2) Resources, Questions, and Communication:
   - You do not need to sign up for office hours and are welcome to drop by to talk about assignments, readings, or other course content; careers; etc.
   - If you have an administrative or logistical question, please consult the syllabus first, and then email your TA if you remain uncertain. If you still do not have an adequate answer, please email the professor. Please allow 24 hours for email replies during the week, and 72 hours on the weekends.
   - Students are encouraged to take full advantage of the [POL S/JSIS/LSJ/GWSS Writing Center](#) and the [Odegaard Writing and Research Center.](#)
   - [UW Seattle Health Services](#) is available to assist students dealing with a range of health-related issues and concerns. Health care on campus is provided through the [Hall Center](#) and the [Counseling Center](#).
   - For tips on how to read academic articles, I recommend resources from [Amelia Hoover Green](#) and [Leanne C Powner](#).

Schedule

Section 1: Intro

1. March 31st; Introduction: What is interstate conflict and how do we measure it?
   - Pettersson, Therese. 2024. "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook v 24.1." UCDP. https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/ucdpprio/ucdp-prio-acd-241.pdf.
   - Davies, Shawn, Garoun Engström, Therése Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2024. "Organized Violence 1989–2023, and the Prevalence of Organized Crime Groups." *Journal of Peace Research* 61(4): 673-693.
   - ACLED. 2024. "Codebook." Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. https://acleddata.com/acleddatanew/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2024/10/ACLED-Codebook-2024-7-Oct.-2024.pdf.
   - ACLED. 2025. "Ukraine Conflict Monitor." https://acleddata.com/ukraine-conflict-monitor/#update.

Section 2: Causes of War

2. April 2nd; The System: Balance of Power & Power Transitions
    - Waltz, Kenneth N. 1988. "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 615–28.
    - Allison, Graham. 2015. "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic.*
    - Kang, David C. 2003. "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks." *International Security* 27(4): 57–85.

3. April 7th; The System: Security Dilemma & Deterrence
    - Herz, John H. 1950. "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* 1950 2(2): 157-180.
    - Schelling, Thomas C. 1966. *Arms and Influence.* Yale University Press. → Ch. 2
    - Jervis, Robert. 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics.* Princeton University Press. → Ch. 3

4. April 9th; The System: Bargaining Theory of War
    - Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414.
    - Goddard, Stacie E. 2006. "Uncommon Ground: Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy." *International Organization* 60(1): 35–68.
    - Lake, David A. 2010. "Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War." *International Security* 35(3): 7–52.

5. April 14th; The State & the Nation: Nationalism & Territory
    - Tir, Jaroslav. 2010. "Territorial Diversion: Diversionary Theory of War and Territorial Conflict." *The Journal of Politics* 72(2): 413–25.
    - Herrmann, Richard K. 2017. "How Attachments to the Nation Shape Beliefs About the World: A Theory of Motivated Reasoning." *International Organization* 71(S1): S61–84.
    - Hensel, Paul R., Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, Thomas E. Sowers, and Clayton L. Thyne. 2008. "Bones of Contention: Comparing Territorial, Maritime, and River Issues." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52(1): 117–43.

6. April 16th; The State & the Nation: Institutions
    - Evera, Stephen Van. 1984. "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War." *International Security* 9(1): 58-107.
    - Howell, William G., and Jon C. Pevehouse. 2005. "Presidents, Congress, and the Use of Force." *International Organization* 59(1): 209–32.
    - National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. 2004. "The 9/11 Commission Report." National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. → Chapters 11 & 13

7. April 21st; The State & the Nation: Regime Type
   - Oneal, John R., and Bruce M. Russett. 1997. "The Classical Liberals Were Right: Democracy, Interdependence, and Conflict, 1950-1985." *International Studies Quarterly* 41(2): 267–93.
   - Rosato, Sebastian. 2003. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory." *American Political Science Review* 97(04): 585–602.
   - Weeks, Jessica L. 2012. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict." *The American Political Science Review* 106(2): 326–47.

8. April 23rd; The State & the Nation: Interdependence
   - Colgan, Jeff D. 2013. "Fueling the Fire: Pathways from Oil to War." *International Security* 38(2): 147–80.
   - Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2003. "Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3): 427–39.
   - Sagan, Scott D. 1986. "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability." *International Security* 11(2): 151-175.

9. April 28th; Leaders: Perceptions of Others
   - Saunders, Elizabeth N. 2009. "Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy." *International Security* 34(2): 119–61.
   - Renshon, Jonathan, Keren Yarhi-Milo, and Joshua D. Kertzer. 2023. "Democratic Reputations in Crises and War." *The Journal of Politics* 85(1): 1–18.
   - Harris, Shane, Karen DeYoung, Isabelle Khurshudyan, Ashley Parker, and Liz Sly. 2022. "Road to War: US Struggled to Convince Allies, and Zelensky, of Risk of Invasion." *Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/.

10. April 30th; Leaders: Differences Among Them
    - Yarhi-Milo, Keren. 2018. *Who Fights for Reputation? The Psychology of Leaders in International Conflict.* Princeton University Press. → Introduction
    - Koch, Michael T., and Sarah A. Fulton. 2011. "In the Defense of Women: Gender, Office Holding, and National Security Policy in Established Democracies." *The Journal of Politics* 73(1): 1–16.
    - Horowitz, Michael C., and Allan C. Stam. 2014. "How Prior Military Experience Influences the Future Militarized Behavior of Leaders." *International Organization* 68(3): 527–59.

11. May 5th; Midterm 1, covering classes through April 30th

Section 3: Once War Has Begun

12. May 7th; Strategy

- Brands, Hal and Peter Feaver. 2021. "Getting Grand Strategy Right." In *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy.* Oxford University Press.
- Betts, Richard K. 2021. "Is Grand Strategy an Illusion? Or, the Grandiosity of Grand Strategy" In *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy.* Oxford University Press.
- The [Biden] White House. 2022. "National Security Strategy." The White House. https://www.dote.osd.mil/Portals/97/pub/articles/2022%20National%20Security%20Strategy%2020221012.pdf?ver=FGtjjh6vAvqCi7iRow97rg%3d%3d.
- Rovner, Joshua. 2025. "Start Making Sense: Strategy and Grand Strategy in the Trump Administration." *War on the Rocks.* https://warontherocks.com/2025/01/start-making-sense-strategy-and-grand-strategy-in-the-trump-administration/.

13. May 12th; Civilians & Violence
- Kocher, Mathew Adam, Thomas B. Pepinsky, and Stathis Kalyvas. 2011. "Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 201–18.
- Lyall, Jason, Graeme Blair, and Kosuke Imai. 2013. "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review* 107(4): 679–705.
- Valentino, Benjamin, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay. 2004. "'Draining the Sea:' Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare." *International Organization* 58(2): 375–407.

14. May 14th; Civilians, War, & Stuff Besides Violence
- Sexton, Renard, and Christoph Zürcher. 2023. "Aid, Attitudes, and Insurgency: Evidence from Development Projects in Northern Afghanistan." *American Journal of Political Science* 117(4):1308-1326.
- Martinez, Luis R., Jonas Jessen, and Guo Xu. 2023. "A Glimpse of Freedom: Allied Occupation and Political Resistance in East Germany." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 15(1): 68–106.
- Dinas, Elias, Vasiliki Fouka, and Alain Schläpfer. 2021. "Family History and Attitudes toward Out-Groups: Evidence from the European Refugee Crisis." *The Journal of Politics* 83(2): 647–61.

15. May 19th; Ethics **(note: final paper proposal due)**
- Walzer, Michael. 2015. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. New York: Basic Books. → Ch. 3, Ch. 8-9
- McMahan, Jeff. 2004. "The Ethics of Killing in War." *Ethics* 114 (4): 693–733.
- Dill, Janina, and Livia I Schubiger. 2021. "Attitudes toward the Use of Force: Instrumental Imperatives, Moral Principles, and International Law." *American Journal of Political Science* 65(3): 612–33.

16. May 21st; Military Victory
- Biddle, Stephen. 2004. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle.* → Chapters 2-3

- Lyall, Jason. 2020. *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War*. Princeton University Press. → Chapter 1
- Beckley, Michael. 2018. "The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters." *International Security* 43(2)" 7-44.

17. May 26th; No class, Memorial Day

18. May 28th; Negotiations and Agreements
- Ghosn, Faten. 2010. "Getting to the Table and Getting to Yes: An Analysis of International Negotiations." *International Studies Quarterly* 54(4): 1055–72.
- Fortna, Virginia Page. 2003. "Scraps of Paper? Agreements and the Durability of Peace." *International Organization* 57(02): 337-372.
- Huth, Paul K., Sarah E. Croco, and Benjamin J. Appel. 2011. "Does International Law Promote the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes? Evidence from the Study of Territorial Conflicts since 1945." *American Political Science Review* 105(2): 415–36.

19. June 2nd; Modern Technology
- Mitts, Tamar, Gregoire Phillips, and Barbara F. Walter. 2022. "Studying the Impact of ISIS Propaganda Campaigns." *The Journal of Politics* 84(2): 1220–25.
- Silverman, Daniel, Karl Kaltenthaler, and Munqith Dagher. 2021. "Seeing Is Disbelieving: The Depths and Limits of Factual Misinformation in War." *International Studies Quarterly* 65(3): 798–810.
- Abraham, Yuval. "'Lavender:' The AI machine directing Israel's bombing spree in Gaza." *+972 Magazine*. https://www.972mag.com/lavender-ai-israeli-army-gaza/.
- Gartzke, Erik. 2013. "The Myth of Cyberwar: Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth." *International Security* 38(2): 41–73.

20. June 4th; Midterm 2, covering classes on May 7th through June 2nd

Research paper due June 11th at 10am

Appendix A: Grade Scale

Grade	Percent	Letter
4.0	95-100	A
3.9	93-94	A
3.8	91-92	A-
3.7	90	A-
3.6	89	A-
3.5	88	A-
3.4	87	B+
3.3	86	B+
3.2	85	B+
3.1	84	B
3.0	83	B
2.9	82	B
2.8	81	B-
2.7	80	B-
2.6	79	B-
2.5	78	B-
2.4	77	C+
2.3	76	C+
2.2	75	C+
2.1	74	C
2.0	73	C
1.9	72	C
1.8	71	C-
1.7	70	C-
1.6	69	C-
1.5	68	C-
1.4	67	D+
1.3	66	D+
1.2	65	D+
1.1	64	D
1.0	63	D
.9	62	D
.8	61	D-
.7	60	D-
0.0	<60	E

Appendix B: Instructions for Final Paper Proposal

Your paper proposal should consist of the following three things:

1. Case selection: You should specify, first, which interstate war you are focusing on and, second, whether you are seeking to explain the outbreak or the ending of the conflict. Please phrase your case in the form of a question. For example, you may ask, "What caused the Six Day War?" Please speak to your TA if you would like to focus on an internationalized intrastate conflict instead of an interstate one.
2. Theories: Please list *two* theories from the class which could help answer your question
3. References: Provide an initial list of 10 sources which you will be using to determine which theory best explains the outbreak or ending of the conflict you are focusing on; these should be peer-reviewed sources, though they need not be from Political Science journals.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of possible interstate wars. War of 1812; Franco-Spanish (1823); First Russo-Turkish (1828); Mexican-American (1846); First Schleswig-Holstein (1848); Platine (1851); Crimean (1853); Ecuadorian-Columbia (1863) Second Schleswig-Holstein (1864); Franco-Prussian (1870); Sino-French War (1885); First Sino-Japanese (1894-95); Greco-Turkish (1897); Spanish-American (1898); Russo-Japanese (1904-05), Italo-Turkish (1911-12); Second Greco-Turkish (1919); Second Sino-Japanese (1937); Russo-Finnish (1939); Soviet-Japanese border conflict (1938-1939); Korean (1950-53), Sino-Indian (1962), Konfrontasi (1963-66), Indo-Pakistani (1965); Vietnam (1965); Six Day (1967); Sino-Soviet border conflict (1969); Indo-Pakistani (1971); Yom Kippur (1973), Turco-Cypriot (1974); Sino-Vietnamese (1979); Iran-Iraq (1980), Falklands/Malvinas (1982); Chad-Libya (1987), Iraq-Kuwait (1990), Armenia-Azerbaijan (1992, 2020, and/or 2023), Eritrea-Ethiopia (1998); Kargil War (1999); Russian-Georgia (2008); Russo-Ukrainian (2014-present); China–India skirmishes (2020-21); Russo-Ukrainian escalation (2022-present).

Appendix C: Requirements for a Strong Final Paper

1. 10-12 pages not including bibliography; Times New Roman 12-point font double spaced with 1-inch margins
2. *At least* 15 sources
3. Structure
   a. Introduction (one paragraph)
   b. Brief description of the case (one paragraph)
   c. Applying the theories to the case
   d. Conclusion (one paragraph)
4. What does it mean to apply theories to a case?
   a. What are the theories' causal arguments about the causes of war or peace?
   b. What would we expect to see if each theory was correct in your case? What evidence supports and challenges each theory?
   c. Given part b, which theory provides a stronger explanation?
5. Your conclusion should go beyond what you've already said