

PLSC 124/673: International Conflict

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Course Description

This syllabus is an overview of international conflict for advanced undergraduate students and early graduate students. Topics include the causes of war, understanding alliances, colonialism, state formation, and the political economy of conflict. Why do states pay the costs of war when they could resolve their differences by negotiation? When do states choose war over sanctions? What types of economic relations make conflict less likely?

This course is divided into two parts: 1) the theory of war initiation and 2) how the characteristics of conflicts differ by cause. In each part we will study relevant interests, interactions, and institutions: how the choices of states, groups, and individuals **interact** to affect each other's **interests** within an **institutional** framework that favors some outcomes. This framework will help guide our study throughout the course.

This course is primarily about bringing theory to empirics. It is not designed to develop policy relevant recommendations – except to the extent that understanding why conflict occurs and how it develops informs policy choices.

While there are no formal prerequisites for this class, the material is intended for graduate students and advanced undergraduate students. I will presuppose some knowledge from an introductory international relations class as well as basic microeconomics and macroeconomics. If you are inexperienced with these topics you may need to do some extra work in the first few weeks to ensure that you have the right background for later classes.

Assessments

The grade will be determined by the following:

- Response Papers (2 pages each) (35%)

- Final paper (~15 pages / ~10 pages for undergraduates) (40%)
- Participation (25%)

The final paper will ask you to integrate knowledge from throughout the course. Participation grades will include attendance. More details will be provided about deadlines.

Response Papers: A response paper is a critical assessment of the weekly materials. You can discuss the argument, definitions, measurement, research design, external/internal validity, limitations, or anything else that seems important. Do not merely summarize the readings.

You should end every response paper with two questions/comments to be discussed in class. I may choose some of these questions to use as discussion questions in class. Accordingly, these response papers are due by 5:00 the day before class.

While I expect you to read all the required readings in the syllabus for the class, you do not need to write a response paper each and every week. **Specifically, undergraduate students are required to submit 6 response papers while graduate students are required to submit 9 response papers.** Response papers should be three double spaced pages. There are three possible grades: +, ++, and +++. Students can choose which weeks to write response papers according to their preference and interests subject to one requirement: **All students must write 4 response papers by the end of Week 6.**

Evaluation Criteria

In general, I expect student work to exhibit a high level of quality. In this class, quality means thoughtfulness. Students should make their arguments in the midterm and final papers with attention to alternative explanations. They must provide evidence for every claim made in the paper (including citations). The papers should clearly explain how the theory we cover in class is applied.

I understand that different types of students have different objectives in this class. For that reason, undergraduate students should focus on conveying their understanding of the material in their papers. Undergraduates will also make an argument in the paper, but the emphasis is on demonstrating their command of the material. In addition to demonstrating their understanding, graduate students must also synthesize the information into a novel argument. These papers are to be used as a way to jumpstart research. Thus, the novelty and sophistication of the argument will also be assessed.

Course Policies

Plagiarism

In academic environments honesty counts for quite a lot. It is dishonest to pass off someone else's work as your own. It is not dishonest to build on the work of others – as long as you give appropriate credit to their contribution. This is the primary reason why citing your sources matters so much to so many instructors, including me. Citing your sources also helps readers better understand how you arrived at your conclusions and where to look for more information. As a practical matter, you are responsible for complying with the school's standards of academic integrity. Please do not plagiarize.

It is a serious offense that both I and the school will not take lightly. If you have any questions or doubts about these policies please let me know.

You are required to cite your sources. I am quite indifferent about the format of your citations. All I care about is that you provide enough information for me to find the source if I decide to look for it. Tools such as Zotero, Mendeley, and Google Scholar produce citations automatically that can be easily inserted into your paper.

ChatGPT and Other Large Language Models

Tools such as ChatGPT, Bing AI, and Google Bard (collectively called Large Language Models or LLMs) represent both challenges and opportunities in the classroom. These tools have a lot of potential to improve your scholarship. But some students may feel tempted to simply plagiarize their output without adding any value of their own. In this class, I encourage some uses of LLMs while prohibiting others. **As a general rule, I encourage you to use these tools in any way that makes you think deeper and I discourage any use that replaces your own thoughts with the output of a model.** For example, I encourage you to use an LLM as a brainstorming partner, a writing assistant, or even as a research assistant. However, I prohibit any thoughtless copying and pasting of large language model output into your assignments without reflection or original input.

Examples of allowed usage:

- Asking ChatGPT to be the “devil’s advocate” to your paper’s thesis to determine possible flaws or criticisms that may need to be addressed before you begin writing.
- Showing ChatGPT a paragraph you wrote and asking for editing help.
- Letting ChatGPT suggest some possible starting sentences when you feel stuck.

Examples of prohibited usage:

- Putting the assignment description into ChatGPT and submitting the output as your own work.
- Putting a single thesis statement into ChatGPT and telling it to write the rest of the paper for you.
- Any copying and pasting from any large language model into an assignment without adding your own substantial value.

When in doubt, ask yourself whether your use of an LLM is helping you think more deeply or less. If the answer is less, then that use is not allowed. If you are still in doubt, ask me.

I am interested to see how students will use LLMs in their work. **If you do use an LLM in your work, you are required to submit a transcript of your conversation as part of your assignment.** This transcript will be used to ensure your use of the LLM is within the course policy. ChatGPT makes it easy to export the transcript of your conversation – please include this text in a separate file alongside your assignment. If you use another LLM you can submit screenshots or text. I want to be able to see the entire transcript of the conversation, not just snippets.

I have personally used these tools extensively in my work. If you do give into the temptation to plagiarize an LLM in your assignments it will likely be detected. Even if undetected, it is unlikely that a purely AI generated essay would receive a good grade in this class. At the present time, these models are not able to effectively produce original coherent arguments from scratch that stand up to scrutiny.

Diversity and Inclusion

It is important that our class is a welcoming environment for every student. Diversity enhances and elevates academic discussion. Thus, it is critically important that we foster a tolerant, inclusive, and respectful environment in the classroom. If there are aspects of the class that pose a barrier to your success, please let me know. I am committed to ensuring that each and every student has the support and resources they need to learn. We can work together to address any difficulties.

Office Hours

Please come to office hours! Getting to know my students helps my pedagogy. I can sometimes tailor class examples to your interests and knowing your background sometimes helps me anticipate common points of confusion. I want you to get the most out of class, and I can deliver a better experience if I know more about what interests you!

Some students feel awkward about coming to office hours, so I want to dispel any doubts. Everyone is welcome at office hours. You are encouraged to bring specific questions about material, general questions, or just a vague sense of confusion. I am happy to talk about how to understand current events or anything else through the lens of the class material. If you do not wish to ask your questions in the presence of other students just send me an email and we can schedule an individual appointment.

Some students mistakenly think that there is no reason to come to office hours if they feel they understand the material. On the contrary, students who feel the material is “easy” are especially encouraged to come. At office hours I can provide additional resources and instruction that go beyond the class material. There is always more to learn and I would be delighted to push your understanding further according to your interests.

Course Schedule

- Welcome and Introduction
- Part I: Theory
 - Bargaining Theory of War
 - Applying Theories of War
 - Alliances and the Balance of Power
 - Democratic Peace
 - Commercial Peace
- Part II: Applications
 - Economic Coercion
 - Colonialism and Conflict
 - Civil Conflict
 - Gender and Conflict
 - War and State Formation
 - Nuclear Weapons and Nonproliferation

Week 1: Welcome and Introduction

Key Questions Why do we fight? When did globalization begin? How does modern globalization differ from historical globalization?

- Fazal, Tanisha M. and Paul Poast (2019). “War is Not Over”. In: *Foreign Affairs* 98.6, pp. 73-83.
- Braumoeller, Bear F. (2023). *Only the Dead: The Persistence of War in, the Modern Age*. Oxford University Press.
- Roser, Max, Joe Hasell, Bastian Herre, et al. (2016). “War and Peace”. In: *Our World in Data*. <https://ourworldindata.org/war-and-peace>.

Week 2: Bargaining Theory of War

Key Questions Why do countries pay the costs of war when they could resolve their differences by negotiation?

Required:

- Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.5.fifth.html>. The Internet Classics Archive. Chap. Book V, Chapter 17.
 - Especially the Melian Dialogue (Link: <http://academics.wellesley.edu/ClassicalStudies/CLCV102/Thucydides--MelianDialogue.html>)
- Fearon, James D (1995). “Rationalist explanations for war”. In: *International organization* 49.3, pp. 379-414.
- Powell, Robert (2002). “Bargaining theory and international conflict”. In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 5.1, pp. 1-30.
- Kertzer, Joshua D and Brian C Rathbun (2015). “Fair is fair: Social, preferences and reciprocity in international politics”. In: *World, Politics* 67.4, pp. 613-655.

Recommended:

- Fey, Mark and Kristopher W Ramsay (2011). “Uncertainty and incentives, in crisis bargaining: Game-free analysis of international conflict”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 55.1, pp. 149-169.
- Debs, Alexandre (2022). “Mutual optimism and war, and the strategic, tensions of the July Crisis”. In: *American journal of political, science* 66.2, pp. 271-284.
- Powell, Robert (1993). “Guns, butter, and anarchy”. In: *American, Political Science Review* 87.1, pp. 115-132.

Week 3: Applying Theories of War

Key Questions How do the causes of war relate to the conflict’s characteristics?

Required:

- Powell, Robert (2006). “War as a commitment problem”. In: *International organization* 60.1, pp. 169-203.

- Nephew, Richard (2017). *The art of sanctions: A view from the field.*, Columbia University Press.
- Dafoe, Allan and Devin Caughey (2016). "Honor and war: Southern US, presidents and the effects of concern for reputation". In: *World, politics* 68.2, pp. 341-381.
- Ramsay, Kristopher W (2008). "Settling it on the field: Battlefield, events and war termination". In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52.6, pp. 850-879.

Recommended:

- Walt, Stephen (2022). *An International Relations Guide to the War in, Ukraine.*, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/08/an-international-relations-theory-guide-to-ukraines-war/?gclid=CjwKCAjw3ueiBhBmEiwA4BhspOIU-W3uWnAONRwHQLkd1dZwjSHgtDGoRQoi73RaO6aTyo8sshoCFy8QAvD_BwE.
- Carter, David B (2011). "The making of the territorial order: New, borders and the emergence of interstate conflict". In: *International, Organization* 65.2, pp. 275-309.
- Lee, Soyoung (2023). *When Economic Value Backfires: Domestic, Opposition to Resource-Rich Territory.*, <https://www.soyoungleerresearch.com/papers#h.tt8qcpjey701>.

Week 4: Alliances and the Balance of Power

Key Questions: Who forms alliances? What determines alliance stability?

Required:

- Poast, Paul (2019). *Arguing about Alliances: The Art of Agreement in, Military-Pact Negotiations.* Cornell University Press.
- Walt, Stephen M (1985). "Alliance formation and the balance of world, power". In: *International security*, pp. 3-43.
- Hemmer, Christopher and Peter J Katzenstein (2002). "Why is there no, NATO in Asia? Collective identity, regionalism, and the origins of, multilateralism". In: *International organization* 56.3, pp. 575-607.
- Bas, Muhammet and Robert Schub (2016). "Mutual optimism as a cause of, conflict: Secret alliances and conflict onset". In: *International, Studies Quarterly* 60.3, pp. 552-564.

Recommended:

- Allison, David M, Stephen Herzog, and Jiyoung Ko (2022). "Under the, Umbrella: Nuclear crises, extended deterrence, and public opinion". In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66.10, pp. 1766-1796.

Week 5: Colonialism and International Security

Key Questions: What is the legacy of colonialism for international conflict today?

Required:

- Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt (1915). *The African Roots of War.*, The Atlantic.
- Berger, Daniel, William Easterly, Nathan Nunn, et al. (2013)., "Commercial imperialism? Political influence and trade during the Cold, War". In: *American Economic Review* 103.2, pp. 863-896.

- Gartzke, Erik and Dominic Rohner (2011). “The political economy of, imperialism, decolonization and development”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 41.3, pp. 525-556.
- Paine, Jack (2019). “Ethnic violence in Africa: Destructive legacies of, pre-colonial states”. In: *International Organization* 73.3, pp., 645-683.

Recommended:

- Alesina, Alberto, William Easterly, and Janina Matuszeski (2011)., “Artificial States”. In: *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 9.2, pp. 246-277. DOI:, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-4774.2010.01009.x>. eprint:, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1542-4774.2010.01009.x>, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1542-4774.2010.01009.x>.

Week 6: Civil Conflict

Key Questions: What characteristics of civil conflicts differentiate them from international conflicts?
Required:

- Fearon, James D and David D Laitin (2000). “Violence and the social, construction of ethnic identity”. In: *International organization*, 54.4, pp. 845-877.
- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, (2011). “Horizontal inequalities and ethnonationalist civil war: A, global comparison”. In: *American Political Science Review* 105.3, pp., 478-495.
- Blattman, Christopher and Edward Miguel (2010). “Civil war”. In:, *Journal of Economic literature* 48.1, pp. 3-57.
- Yanagizawa-Drott, David (2014). “Propaganda and conflict: Evidence from, the Rwandan genocide”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129.4., pp. 1947-1994.

Recommended:

- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug, (2013). *Inequality, grievances, and civil war*. Cambridge University, Press.

Week 7: Democratic Peace¹

Key Questions: Why don't democracies fight each other?
Required:

- Maoz, Zeev and Bruce Russett (1993). “Normative and structural causes, of democratic peace, 1946-1986”. In: *American political science, review* 87.3, pp. 624-638.
- Bueno De Mesquita, Bruce, James D Morrow, Randolph M Siverson, et al., (1999). “An institutional explanation of the democratic peace”. In:, *American Political Science Review* 93.4, pp. 791-807.
- Schultz, Kenneth A (1998). “Domestic opposition and signaling in, international crises”. In: *American Political Science Review* 92.4., pp. 829-844.

¹This class will need to be rescheduled because I will be out of town. We will have a poll on the first day of class to determine the best time for a makeup class.

- Fearon, James D (1994). "Domestic political audiences and the, escalation of international disputes". In: *American political science, review* 88.3, pp. 577-592.

Recommended:

- Kertzer, Joshua D and Ryan Brutger (2016). "Decomposing audience costs:, Bringing the audience back into audience cost theory". In: *American, Journal of Political Science* 60.1, pp. 234-249.

Week 8: Commercial Peace

Key Questions: What types of economic relations make conflict less likely?

Required:

- Gartzke, Erik, Quan Li, and Charles Boehmer (2001). "Investing in the, peace: Economic interdependence and international conflict". In:, *International organization* 55.2, pp. 391-438.
- Copeland, Dale C (2014). "Economic interdependence and war". In:, *Economic Interdependence and War*. Princeton University Press.
- Grinberg, Mariya (2021). "Wartime commercial policy and trade between, enemies". In: *International Security* 46.1, pp. 9-52.
- Coe, Andrew J (2015). "The modern economic peace". In: *Unpublished, manuscript, University of Southern California*.

Recommended:

- Angell, Norman (1913). *The great illusion: A study of the relation of, military power to national advantage*. McClelland and Goodchild.
- Monteiro, Nuno P and Alexandre Debs (2020). "An Economic Theory of, War". In: *The Journal of Politics* 82.1, pp. 255-268.

Week 9: Economic Coercion

Key Questions: Why is coercion more likely in some trade relationships than in others?

Required:

- Gowa, Joanne and Edward D Mansfield (1993). "Power politics and, international trade". In: *American political science review* 87.2, pp., 408-420.
- Abdelal, Rawi and Jonathan Kirshner (1999). "Strategy, economic, relations, and the definition of national interests". In: *Security, Studies* 9.1-2, pp. 119-156.
- Carnegie, Allison (2014). "States held hostage: Political hold-up, problems and the effects of international institutions". In: *American, Political Science Review* 108.1, pp. 54-70.
- Mangini, Michael-David (2023). *The Economic Coercion Trilemma.*, <https://www.michaeldavidmangini.com/working/ect/economic-coercion-trilemma.pdf>.

Recommended:

- Hirschman, Albert O (1945). *National power and the structure of, foreign trade*. Vol. 105. Univ of California Press.

- Eaton, Jonathan and Maxim Engers (1992). "Sanctions". In: *Journal of, political economy* 100.5, pp. 899-928.
- Mulder, Nicholas (2022). *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as, a Tool of Modern War*. Yale University Press.
- Baldwin, David A (1985). *Economic Statecraft*. Princeton University, Press.

Week 10: Gender and Conflict

Key Questions: Why is conflict so gendered? What are the political consequences of associating conflict with gender?

Required:

- Barnhart, Joslyn N, Robert F Trager, Elizabeth N Saunders, et al., (2020). "The suffragist peace". In: *International Organization* 74.4,, pp. 633-670.
- Dube, Oeindrila and SP Harish (2020). "Queens". In: *Journal of, Political Economy* 128.7, pp. 2579-2652.
- Cohen, Dara Kay (2013). "Explaining rape during civil war:, Cross-national evidence (1980-2009)". In: *American Political Science, Review* 107.3, pp. 461-477.
- Lawless, Jennifer L (2004). "Women, war, and winning elections: Gender, stereotyping in the post-September 11th era". In: *Political Research, Quarterly* 57.3, pp. 479-490.

Recommended:

- Sjoberg, Laura (2013). *Gendering global conflict: Toward a feminist, theory of war*. Columbia University Press.
- Park, Yon Soo, Sarah Hummel, and Stephen Chaudoin (2022). *Elections,, War, and Gender: Choose to Run, Choose to Fight*.

Week 11: War and State Formation

Key Questions: Does war make states? When and how?

Required:

- Tilly, Charles (1992). *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD, 990-1992*. Blackwell Oxford.
- Abramson, Scott F (2017). "The economic origins of the territorial, state". In: *International Organization* 71.1, pp. 97-130.
- Gennaioli, Nicola and Hans-Joachim Voth (2015). "State capacity and, military conflict". In: *The Review of Economic Studies* 82.4, pp., 1409-1448.
- Mangini, Michael-David and Casey Petroff (2023). *Conflict Technology, as a Catalyst of State Formation.,* https://www.michaeldavidmangini.com/working/medieval-walls/walls-draft_full.pdf.

Recommended:

- Centeno, Miguel Angel (1997). "Blood and debt: War and taxation in, nineteenth-century Latin America". In: *American Journal of sociology*, 102.6, pp. 1565-1605.

- Herbst, Jeffrey (2014). *States and power in Africa: Comparative, lessons in authority and control*. Vol. 149. Princeton University, Press.
- Dincecco, Mark and Yuhua Wang (2018). “Violent conflict and political, development over the long run: China versus Europe”. In: *Annual Review, of Political Science* 21, pp. 341-358.

Week 12: Nuclear Weapons and Nonproliferation

Key Questions: Do nuclear weapons raise or lower the probability of large scale interstate conflict? How do states prevent proliferation?

Required:

- Tannenwald, Nina (1999). “The nuclear taboo: The United States and the, normative basis of nuclear non-use”. In: *International organization*, 53.3, pp. 433-468.
- Monteiro, Nuno P and Alexandre Debs (2014). “The strategic logic of, nuclear proliferation”. In: *International Security* 39.2, pp. 7-51.
- Gartzke, Erik and Matthew Kroenig (2016). “Nukes with numbers:, Empirical research on the consequences of nuclear weapons for, international conflict”. In: *Annual review of political science* 19,, pp. 397-412.
- Bas, Muhammet A and Andrew J Coe (2016). “A dynamic theory of nuclear, proliferation and preventive war”. In: *International Organization*, 70.4, pp. 655-685.

Recommended:

- Mangini, Michael-David (2023). *Coalitions and the Politics of, Restraint: Commitment Credibility and the Iran Deal.*, <https://www.michaeldavidmangini.com/working/iran-deal/iran-deal-may-2022-cloud.pdf>.

Week 13: Catch Up/Topics by Popular Demand

Over many years of school I have learned that most instructors run behind the syllabus. This week is reserved for any spillover material. If (by some miracle) we are on time, we will choose some of the recommended readings from previous weeks and discuss them in more depth.