This seminar is a graduate level survey of theories of international conflict. We will read and critically evaluate portions of the political science literature on the causes of conflict and war in international politics. The readings will cover central theoretical perspectives, debates, and empirical research in the field. We will start with a selection of classic/traditional theories of conflict and move into discussions of more recent perspectives, highlighting recent debates in the field. As a result, and due to the time limits in the class, some areas of research on conflict (including alliances, deterrence, learning, and psychology) have been omitted. Some suggested readings on these other topics are included at the end of the syllabus. In addition, our focus will be primarily on the causes of interstate conflict, although we will briefly discuss the expansion and duration of conflict and on non-state/terrorist conflict. Several topics that we only touch on here are examined in more detail in other courses, including civil war, casualties and the destructiveness of war, and conflict duration/conflict settlement and outcomes.

Although different research methodologies will be seen in the readings, the emphasis of discussion each week will be for the class to come up with a properly specified theoretical model and appropriate research design for the statistical testing of the theory examined. The primary objectives of the course are to identify the strengths and weaknesses in existing work on international conflict, think about what questions need to be addressed in future research, and to develop an understanding of methods for testing theories of international conflict.

Readings

The required books for this seminar are:


There is also a set of articles which you are required to read. You may borrow the entire set of articles from me to have a copy made, or locate them online / in the original journals.

The reading load is significant, and varies from week to week. You probably want to plan ahead for weeks that look like they will take more time than others. All participants in the seminar will be expected to do the required reading. Since the course is a seminar, it is assumed that everyone will have completed the reading before each class. The reading list is broken down into required and optional readings. The optional readings will be particularly useful when in comes to picking out readings and topics for your major research project.

Assignments

I expect this course to have significant discussion, and while I will lead discussion, I do not plan to spend the entire class lecturing. To facilitate discussion, I would like each of you to down questions and important issues coming out of the week’s readings and topics ahead of time, and raise them as topics for discussion. These could be real questions (e.g. “What exactly did Organski mean by the term ‘power’?”) or merely observations intended to spark discussion (e.g. “I think Zinnes is exactly right when she said balances are essential”). The more of these points you have written down before class, the more interesting our discussions will be. In addition, as we move through the class, different students will be serving as co-discussion leader with me each week.

In order to encourage discussion, facilitate interaction, and make sure we discuss what you find interesting, students will be assigned each week to help with discussion with me, starting week 3. You will sign up for weeks that you choose. Helping to lead discussion will involve collecting and writing down questions and important issues coming out of the week’s readings and topics, giving them to me before class, and helping me to raise these
questions for discussion. I will begin most classes by asking the discussion leader(s) to talk for just a few minutes about the readings as a way of getting us into the week’s topic. As discussion leader, you may also want to collect questions, ideas, issues, and major points for discussion from your classmates each week. I would like the discussion leaders to think about initial answers or reactions on the questions you raise, too. If I get these from you in time, I will look over and distribute the questions to the class, and so I prefer for you to give me questions and issues the day before class whenever possible.

**Students are expected to write a number of short (approximately 1-2 pages single-spaced) papers conducting critical analyses of articles or chapters we read and raising important questions. You must turn in 5 short papers over the semester. You may choose any piece in a given week to write on, but you can do no more than one analysis per week. These reviews are due to me in class when we discuss the piece. I encourage you to turn in the reviews early when you can, so that I can review them before class when possible. We will use the papers to help structure discussion each week, and so students should be prepared to talk about their arguments in the seminar. What I would like in these reviews is a commentary or critique of the work you analyze. This critique could take several forms. It could directly critique the arguments or methods of the work in a stand-alone fashion, for instance discussing why the measures or methods used do not serve to prove the author’s point. Alternatively, your critique could compare or tie that work into other literature that we have discussed, and comment on other literature that could have been used to improve the piece. Finally, your paper could suggest questions or issues raised by the piece that must be analyzed further, for instance alternative hypotheses, alternative theoretical perspectives, or suggest comparisons to other readings that would prove valuable. This analysis should be written in the spirit of constructive criticism - you should identify a weakness or problem in the piece and then offer suggestions about how to improve it. The most successful papers will not just throw stones or raise complaints.

[Note that in general an academic review contains three sections: 1) a brief summary of the major theory, method(s), and evidence; 2) a critique of the work on its own terms (e.g. does it answer the question it asks, is the method used correctly, is the evidence convincing, what improvements could be made); 3) a critique of the work from a broader perspective (e.g. is the question important, is the method the right one to use, does it tie into other work, what contribution does the book make). Because these are intended to be short reviews, I do not expect you to deal with each of these elements completely, but keep them in mind as another guide.]

Finally, as the final semester assignment, students must prepare and present a roughly 15-30 page (double spaced) research paper consisting of either a replication and extension of some paper we have read, OR an original analysis paper. We will discuss these options further within a few weeks, and I will require all of you to meet with me to discuss what option you have chosen mid-semester. In general, though, these are the options:

1) Replication/extension. Select one piece we have read for this class. Attempt to replicate the analysis (using data distributed by the author(s), or, if necessary, by reconstructing the data set). Note the difficulties or ease of replicating the results. Then, extend the project by noting some problem or limitation and conducting additional analysis. You might note that one or more variables are operationalized inappropriately and measure them differently. You might note a modification or limitation to the theoretical argument that can be made, or note some possibly collinear explanation that must be controlled for. Or, you might expand the data set temporally or spatially with newly available data. The literature review is likely to be smaller in this type of paper than in a research design, and the attention to operational details (and analysis) greater.

2) Original analysis. Develop a new hypothesis or hypotheses concerning one (or more) of the topics we discussed in class, and conduct an analysis testing your argument(s). You might note that two literatures fit together and propose a unified test, for instance. Or you might propose a variant on a hypothesis in the literature, or variant on a measure or research design, and explore whether you get different results with the alternative. The difference between this type of assignment and assignment type 1 is that you need not focus your attention on replicating an already published work. However, while you are not tied to some other specific work in this type of project, you must pay close attention to operational details and research design to ensure that your approach is valid.

In both projects, your final paper will have the format of a research note for a journal. A research note is basically a shortened version of a full research article. This will include a brief introduction to your topic and a brief literature review, a discussion of your hypothesis/theory, a presentation of the research design, and then analysis and interpretation. If quantitative, a research design includes discussion of the population of cases, unit of analysis,
variable conceptualization, variable measurement and operationalization, and statistical method. If comparative case study, a research design includes discussion of the cases selected, the population they are drawn from, how concepts are operationalized, what case evidence would constitute evidence, and how relationships will be “proved.” All of these elements will be defended and justified in the paper, although somewhat more briefly than in a full-blown research design paper.

The final project will be due **Tuesday of finals week**. We will have short (20 minute) presentations of research findings the last week of class, probably in two sessions (one will need to be extra), and possibly with one of them at my house over dinner if we can agree on a time and date. I would like the short presentation of your project to consist of 4 components summarized on slides/overheads/printed figures: 1) the hypothesis/hypotheses you are testing; 2) summary of the research design (unit of analysis, population, analysis method, dependent and independent variable operationalization); 3) a table of results; 4) a table of substantive effects.

The allocation of grades will be based on the following distribution:

35% 5 short analysis papers  
40% Final project research paper  
5% Final project presentation  
10% Discussion leader questions and discussion  
10% General class participation and discussion

**Academic Dishonesty**

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: [http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Academic_Integrity/integrity.shtml](http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Academic_Integrity/integrity.shtml)

**Disabilities**

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.
Week 1 (8/30): Introduction

Topic: Methodology, Overview, Theory Development and Testing, Research Design Basics

Required Reading:


Suggested Reading:


**Core data sets and issues in data**


www.OnWar.com

The Uppsala Conflict Data Project, http://www.prio.no/cwp/ArmedConflict/

COW2 (The Correlates of War 2), http://cow2.la.psu.edu/

EUGene (Expected Utility Generation and Data Management Program), http://www.eugenesoftware.org/

ICB (International Crisis Behavior Project)

Commonly cited analysis: Time trends


Blainey, Geoffrey. The Causes of War.


9/6: No class, Labor Day

Week 2 (9/13): Power: Static Theories

Topics: Balance of power, power preponderance, polarity/hegemony/power concentration. Common data sets.

More research design basics

Required Reading:

<If necessary: Review Bremer “Dangerous Dyads” to look at the research design, and findings on power parity.>


**SKIM** Bennett, D. Scott, and Allan Stam. 2000. “Research Design and Estimator Choices in the Analysis of Interstate Dyads: When Decisions Matter.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44 (October): 653-685. *In this article, look for (make a list of) the research design decisions that must be made in creating a dyadic data set for analysis.*

**Some key data sets:**

This week I’d like everyone to prepare a 1-page handout on a particular data set/key variable (data sets will be assigned in class). Please turn this in to me on Monday, the day before class, so I can copy it for distribution.

This handout should include key facts about the data set including the title, URL, a short description, unit of analysis if applicable, a list of variables included in it as applicable, key codings for the data/variables (for example, alliances are coded into 3 types), the coverage of the data set, perhaps a sample observation or two, and key observations you have about the data set or important variables.

You should use materials on the project website, and in some cases look at relevant articles/book chapters.

Some data projects may have multiple files/sub-data sets, if you can’t figure out the key data sets to focus on, please let me know.

Please be prepared to give a 5 minute summary of your data set (we may not get to all of them).

Data sets to be discussed:

1. COW State System Membership (correlatesofwar.org)
2. COW Capabilities / CINC (correlatesofwar.org)
3. COW Interstate/Intrastate/Extrastate War (correlatesofwar.org)
4. COW Militarized Interstate Dispute / MID (correlatesofwar.org)
5. UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict data: Uppsala Conflict Data Project (www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP)
6. Polity (was at CIDCM – U. Maryland; now independent? http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm)
7. International Crisis Behavior / ICB (http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/icb/data/)
8. COW Alliances (correlatesofwar.org)
9. COW Contiguity / Colonial Contiguity (correlatesofwar.org)
10. Penn World Tables (U. Pennsylvania)
11. KEDS/TABARI Events data (Schrodt – Kansas)
12. COW IGOs (correlatesofwar.org)
13. COW Bilateral Trade (correlatesofwar.org)
14. Minorities at Risk (CIDCM – U. Maryland)

**Suggested Reading:**


Polarity


**Hegemony**


**Week 3 (9/20): Power: Dynamic Theories**

*Topics: Power Transition, power shifts, power cycles, preventive war, Arms races*

**Required Reading:**


Lemke, whole book, esp. chapters 1-4


**Suggested Reading:**

*Power Transition*


John Vasquez. “When are Power Transitions Dangerous?: An Appraisal and Reformulation of the Power Transition Theory.” In Kugler and Lemke, (eds.). Parity and War, pp. 35-56.


**Power Shifts, Power Cycles**


**Arms Races**


*Long Cycles, Global War*


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**Week 4 (10/4): Democracy and War**

*Topics: The democratic peace; Democratic puzzles (Democracies and war victory; war effort; democracy and alliance); Regime Type more broadly*

*Required Reading:*


*Reiter and Stam, Democracies and War.*

*Suggested Reading:*


Huth, Paul and Todd Allee. The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century. Chs. 1, 4-8.


Li, Quan, and Adam Resnick. 2003. “Reversal of Fortunes: Democratic Institutions and Foreign Direct Investment Inflows to Developing Countries.” *International Organization* 57/1 (Winter): 175-211.


The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations 1:50-69.

International Studies Quarterly 49 (June): 179-204.

Democratic Policies?" American Journal of Political Science 45/3 (July): 620-633

Interventions.” The Journal of Peace Research 38/2 (March): 247-249

Quarterly 46/4 (December): 579-589

Peace Research 38/5 (September): 609-613


Week 5 (10/11): Other Domestic Influences and Diversionary War

Topics: Some other forms of domestic political influence (audience costs, diversionary conflict, 
democratization)

Required Reading:

American Political Science Review 88:577-592.

as Domestic Political Cover." American Political Science Review 100(2): 219-234.

War.” International Organization 56/2 (Spring): 297-337

Arena, Philip and Glenn Palmer. 2009. “Politics or the Economy? Domestic Correlates of Dispute 


Suggested Reading:

General


Koch, Michael T. 2009. “Governments, Partisanship, and Foreign Policy: The Case of Dispute 

Reassessing the Impact of Democratization on War.” International Organization 63(2): 357-359.

International Organizations 63(2): 381-390.


**Diversionary Conflict / Externalization**


**Parliamentary systems**


**Democratization / Political Development**


**Civilization and Ethnicity**


Environment


Diehl and Gleditsch, Environmental Conflict.


Week 6 (10/18): Trade, Interdependence, and Conflict

Topics: Trade and economics

Required Reading:


*Suggested Reading:*

Exchange in JPR concerning measurement of interdependence:


*International Organizations, Institutions, and Contracts*


**Week 7 (10/25): Rational Choice: The Expected Utility Theory of War**

*Topics: The first and second wave of rational choice (and testing)*

*Required Reading:*


Morrow chapter in Midlarsky, *Handbook of War Studies II*.

Suggested Reading:


**Week 8 (11/1): Rational Choice: The Bargaining Model of War**
Topics: Recent developments in rational choice

Required Reading:


Suggested Reading:


Week 9 (11/8): After Conflict Begins

Topics: The termination, duration, and aftermath of conflict

Required Reading:


Review Reiter and Stam chapter 2 on war outcomes.

Suggested Reading:


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**Week 10 (11/15): War Expansion**

*Topics: Diffusion and Joining*

*Required Reading:*


**Suggested Reading:**


11/22 No class – Thanksgiving Break week

**Week 11 (11/29): Non-state Actors and Terrorism**

*Topics: Applying conflict theories to non-state actors; data issues in studying non-state influences and conflict*

*Required Reading:*


Suggested Reading:


**Week 12 (12/6): Miscellaneous Approaches and Problems**

*Topics: Rivalries, selection, geography/contiguity*

*Required Reading:*


Rivalry: Goertz and Diehl chapter in Vasquez, *What Do We Know About War*?.


*Suggested Reading:*

Rivalries


**Issues**


**Geography and Territory**


Special Issue of *Political Analysis* on Spatial Methods in Political Science. Summer 2002.


*Network Analysis*

**Substitutability**

Morgan and Palmer.  Various.


**Law and IOs**


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**Week 13 (4/21): Synthesis; Last Class**

**Topics:** Combining models, future theoretical directions

**Required Reading:**


**Suggested Reading:**

**Methodological Issues**


**General issues, the big picture, and forward progress**


Vasquez, Paul. 2000. *What Do We Know About War?*

**Finals Week**

*Short research presentations to be scheduled during finals week, to be completed over dinner if we so choose*
Some other topics we are not covering, but we could have:

**Organizations, Offense-Defense, and the Cult of the Offensive**


**Strategy and War**


Posen, Barry.


Snyder, Jack.

**Alliances**


Crisis Bargaining, Learning, and Reciprocity


**Psychological Theory and Decision making**


**Deterrence**


Paul Huth. Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War. New Haven: Yale


Organski and Kugler, Chapter 4.


Schelling, Thomas. Arms and Influence.

Schelling, Thomas. The Strategy of Conflict.

Gender and International Conflict


Civil War


