

Professor Stephen E. Gent
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Class:
TTh 11:00-12:15
Murphey 115

Office hours:
Wed: 2:00-5:00 pm

Course Objective

This course introduces you to world politics from a logical, scientific perspective. The substantive goal is to understand why political actors in the international arena make the decisions they do. Why do nations fight? Why do they cooperate, economically and politically? How can we understand the mechanisms that encourage cooperation over conflict in world politics?

My interest here is not simply to inform you of how others have studied problems in world politics. Rather, the intent is to demonstrate how theories of world politics can be constructed and applied, and, in turn, to have you engage in this process of application. There are several options of theoretical focus for such a course. In this course the basic perspective is rationalist, a powerful but imperfect set of assumptions about human behavior. This is currently the dominant theoretical perspective in the study of international relations. As we learn about the mechanics of international relations, we will also examine the strengths and weaknesses of rational choice. The hope is that you will master this approach even if you are critical of the core assumptions.

To accomplish these objectives, we will rely on a unique textbook, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita’s (BDM) *The Principles of International Politics*. In counterpoint to the myriad introductory texts that offer discussions of theoretical and substantive issues entertained by scholars, *Principles* is novel in that it encourages you to acquire the tools necessary for investigating policy issues and outcomes in world politics yourself. We will build upon BDM’s elaboration of the “strategic perspective” to study problems in world politics as a counterpoint to theories grounded solely in domestic-level and structural-level arguments.

We will also use a textbook to learn about the International Political Economy. Andrew Sobel’s *Political Economy and Global Affairs* is quite compatible with BDM’s text in its rationalist perspective, but it is more focused on international economics with lighter treatments of rationality and conflict.

Course Requirements and Grading

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| Class participation: | 10% |
| Presentations: | 10% |
| Paper: | 20% |
| Exam 1: | 30% |
| Exam 2: | 30% |

Class Participation

This is a small group, and our class time will be spent in seminar. When necessary, I will lead discussion to get us focused and into the material. You will be major contributors to the class discussion. **You are expected to have read the material when we discuss it in class.** I will ask many questions, and the class will be responsible for providing the answers. This is a process of discovery, and we will use teamwork to accomplish our goals. Students should feel free to ask questions and debate (politely) the topics at hand. There are no wrong questions, and you are strongly encouraged to participate even if you found the readings difficult or problematic. The participation grade will be based on the quality of your comments and questions as well as your demonstration of knowledge of the course material. In order to excel in this portion of the course, you must also demonstrate an ability to build upon the contributions of your peers in the classroom. Attendance *per se* will not be evaluated; however, if you are not in class you cannot participate.

In addition, throughout the semester you will be assigned problem sets from Bennett and BDM's *Applying the Strategic Perspective* workbook that hone your analytical skills. You can work on these assignments in groups, we will go over them in class, and they will not be graded (although I will occasionally ask you to turn them in to see who is completing them, and this information will be reflected in your participation grade). These assignments are excellent preparation for the exams, so I strongly urge you to complete them.

Presentations

Every other week, a team of students will spend ten minutes making a presentation on an important issue or element of international politics. Topic choice is open, and it can be a global issue like water scarcity, a regional or local issue like the current crisis in Pakistan, or domestic legislation with international ramifications such as immigration reform. The goal is to allow students to develop some international expertise while exposing the entire class to important topics. Teams are encouraged to put some time into these presentations.

Assignments and Exams

- Exams: You will also be responsible for completing two (2) take-home exams. The exams are designed to test your skills and the application of these skills to problems in international relations. While group problem solving is encouraged during class, these exams must be completed individually.
- Essay Assignment: Due to new requirements imposed by the general curriculum, you are required to write one paper during the semester (10 pages). The basic assignment is to take one section of the course (readings, lectures, etc...) and apply it to an event or set of events in world politics. The essay is due in class before the last class, but you are encouraged to turn it in early in the semester. I will give you further instructions on this assignment at a later date.

Readings

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. (2005). *The Principles of International Politics: People's Power, Preferences, and Perceptions*. 3rd Edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly
- Powner, Leanne C. and Scott D. Bennett. (2005). *Applying the Strategic Perspective: Problems and Models*. 3rd Edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.
- Sobel, Andrew C. (2005). *Political Economy and Global Affairs*. 1st edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Additional Policies: Please try to observe these additional policies:

- **Phones:** Turn them off before class. No calls, no IMs, no text messaging, etc...
- **Laptops:** are permitted *only* if you are taking notes. No email, no IM, no games, no web surfing.

IMPORTANT: "The Honor Code is in effect in this class and all others at the University. I am committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms set out at <http://instrument.unc.edu>. If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask me about the Code's application. All exams, written work, and other projects must be submitted with a statement that you have complied with the requirements of the Honor Code in all aspects of the submitted work."¹

¹ From an August 21, 2003 Memo from Robert Shelton, Provost and Judith Wegner, Chair of the Faculty

Course Schedule

| Week | Topic | Readings and Assignments |
|---------|---|---|
| Week 1 | Introduction to course | |
| Week 2 | Foundations of International Politics A Brief Journey through Six Centuries | BDM: Introduction, Sobel: Ch.1 BDM: Ch.1, Sobel: Chs. 7-9 |
| Week 3 | Theories and Arguments in IR The Strategic Perspective | BDM: Ch.2 BDM: Ch.3 (Presentation Team 1) |
| Week 4 | Alternative Perspectives | BDM: Ch.4 BDM: Ch. 5 |
| Week 5 | Central Units of Analysis | BDM: Ch. 6, Sobel: Ch. 3 (Presentation Team 2) |
| Week 6 | Power | BDM: Ch. 7, Sobel: Ch. 4 BDM: Ch. 8 |
| Week 7 | Rationality and Preferences | BDM: Ch. 9, Sobel: Ch. 2 (Presentation Team 3) |
| Week 8 | Perceptions in International Affairs Perceptions, Deterrence, and Terrorism | BDM: Ch. 10 BDM: Ch. 11 <i>Take-home exam #1 distributed.</i> |
| Week 9 | Exam Discussion Economic Liberalism and the study of IPE | <i>Exam #1 due beginning of class</i> Sobel: Ch. 4 (Presentation Team 4) |
| Week 10 | Spring Break | |
| Week 11 | Markets and Exchange Globalization: Good or Evil? | Sobel: Ch. 5,9,10, Dollar & Kray, Rodrik (Presentation Team 5) |
| Week 12 | ISA Conference | |
| Week 13 | The Developing World & North-South Relations Human Rights: Democracy or Development? | Sachs, "The Development Challenge," Birdsall, et al. "How to Help Poor Countries" Donnelly, "Human Rights, Democracy and Development" (BB) |
| Week 14 | Collective Goods, Social Traps: The Challenge of Cooperation | Sobel: Chs. 12-13 (Presentation Team 6) |
| Week 15 | International Organizations & Alliances War and Peace | BDM: Chs. 14, 15 BDM: Ch. 16 |
| Week 16 | War and Peace Last Class & Wrap-up | BDM: Ch. 17 <i>Take-home exam #2 distributed</i> |
| 5/6 | Final Exam 8:00 – 12:00 | <i>Exam #2 due 12:00pm</i> |