

POLI/PWAD 287: STRATEGY & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MAYMESTER 2022 · UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

INSTRUCTOR

Prof. Stephen Gent
Office: Hamilton 364
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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:30–3:00PM, and by appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting Times: MTWThF 9:00AM–12:15PM, Murphey 115
Course Website: <https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/poli287-mm22>
Credit Hours: 3

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores how we can use game theory to analyze strategic decision making in international relations. Why is it often hard for countries to cooperate? How can leaders make credible threats and promises to achieve their goals in international politics? When will bargaining break down and lead to war? To answer questions like these, we will first learn how to create and solve game theoretic models. We will then see how these models can be used to gain insights into different strategic situations in international relations. During the course, you will have an opportunity to develop your own game theoretic model to explain an event in international relations.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will enable you to:

- Learn how to create and solve basic game theoretic models.
- Investigate how game theoretic models and rational choice analysis can be used to gain insights into strategic behavior in international relations.
- Apply you knowledge by developing a game theoretic model to explain an event in international relations.

TARGET AUDIENCE

POLI/PWAD 287 is open to undergraduate students in any major. There are no prerequisites. In this course, we will be covering material on quantitative models in social science. This will require you to use logic skills, but no advanced mathematical background is required. I do, however, expect that you are familiar with basic algebra.

COURSE STRUCTURE

SAKAI

Sakai will be your primary source of information for the course. On Sakai, you will find a dedicated page for each day of the course. This page will include the following:

- Readings and related quizzes
- Class session materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides)
- Homework and other assignments
- Additional resources and optional background readings
- Video lectures (for Friday 5/13)

CLASS SESSIONS

Our class sessions will incorporate a mix of lectures and active learning opportunities. To get the most out of the course, it is important for you to come to class prepared and actively participate. Before each class, you should complete any assigned readings and quizzes for the day. In class, you are encouraged to ask questions at any point. If something is not clear to you, there's a good chance that someone else in the class is thinking the same thing! I will post all of the PowerPoint lectures on Sakai.

READINGS

In this course, you will read several journal articles and book chapters that explore topics in game theory and strategic decision making in international relations. All of these readings will be available electronically through Sakai. There are two types of required readings:

- **Pre-class readings:** For five of the class days, you will need to complete an assigned reading before we meet. For each of these readings, you will need to complete a short quiz on Sakai by 9:00AM. These quizzes will be incorporated into your Quiz and Participation grade.
- **In-class readings:** You will also need to complete five additional required readings during our class sessions. I will give you time in class to complete the reading and submit a short reflection. These reflections will be incorporated into your Quiz and Participation grade.

In addition to these required readings, I will also post optional background reading related to the day's topic, including chapters from the optional books listed below. These readings are completely optional and are meant to provide a resource for students who want additional background beyond what I cover in class.

VIDEO LECTURES (FRIDAY, MAY 13)

On Friday, May 13, I will be out of town attending a workshop in Washington, DC. In lieu of an in-person session, I will post a series of video lectures on Sakai. After watching lectures, you will need to complete short quizzes on Sakai. You can watch the videos at your own pace (either during the scheduled class time on 5/13 or anytime over the weekend). You should just make sure to complete the quizzes before the start of class on Monday, May 16 at 9:00AM.

GRADING

Homework	30%	Final Exam	30%
Paper	30%	Quizzes/Participation	10%

HOMEWORK

You will need to complete 6 game theory homework assignments. Due dates for these assignments can be found on the schedule below. You can collaborate with other students on these assignments, but your solutions must be your own. Copying homework solutions from another student will be considered a violation of the UNC Honor Code. Assignments will be posted on Sakai. Completed assignments should be submitted online as a PDF through Gradescope by 9:00AM on the due date.

Grace Period Days

Generally, late assignments will receive a 10% grade reduction for each day late. However, you have **two** grace period days that you can use for any assignment. For example, you can turn in one assignment two days late and not receive a late penalty. Alternatively, you could turn in two different assignments one day late and not receive a late penalty. You do not need to notify me as to when you plan to use these grace period days. I will automatically apply them when grading assignments.

PAPER

You will need to write a short paper (1,500–2,500 words) in which you develop your own game theoretic model to help explain an event in international relations. Your paper is due on Thursday, May 26 at 9:00AM. You should submit your paper online through Sakai. Late papers will be penalized 3 points for each day late. Complete details on the paper assignment will be available on Sakai.

Abstract

To help you get started with the writing process, you will be required to submit a one-page abstract that summarizes your proposed paper topic by Friday, May 20 at 9:00AM. If you do not submit an acceptable abstract by May 20, the grade on your final paper will be penalized 3 points. (You can use any available grace period days towards the abstract.)

Peer Review

You will also be expected to complete a peer review session in which you provide constructive feedback to your classmates on the models they are developing for their papers. The peer review session will be held on Tuesday, May 24. Failure to complete the peer review assignment will result in a 3 point penalty to your final paper grade.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam will be held on Friday, May 27. The exam will cover material from both the lectures and the course readings. It will test your knowledge of game theory as well as your ability to use the logic of strategic choice to understand concepts in international relations.

QUIZZES AND PARTICIPATION

The quiz and participation grade will be based upon: (1) scores on online quizzes on Sakai and (2) completion of reflections on in-class readings, simulations, and other activities.

Quizzes

As discussed above, you will need to complete a short quiz on Sakai for each of the pre-class readings, as well as the video lectures for the 5/13 class. These quizzes will assess your basic understanding of the course material. You must complete the quiz by 9:00AM by the due date. Any quizzes submitted after this time will receive a score of 0. *I will drop the lowest quiz grade when calculating the final course grade.*

In-Class Reflections

Your active participation is critical for the success of this this class. As part of this participation, you will need to complete several short reflections during class. You will be asked to complete a reflection for each of the assigned in-class readings. Additionally, you will complete reflections after some of our in-class group activities and simulations. There will be no more than one reflection assigned on a given day. You must be in class to complete the reflection, unless you have a University approved absence. *To accommodate students who may need to miss a class for other reasons, I will drop the lowest reflection grade when calculating the final course grade.*

GRADING SCALE

A	94.00–100.00	B	83.00–86.99	C	73.00–76.99	D	60.00–66.99
A–	90.00–93.99	B–	80.00–82.99	C–	70.00–72.99	F	0–59.99
B+	87.00–89.99	C+	77.00–79.99	D+	67.00–69.99		

Note: I will not round final grades.

COURSE MATERIALS

All required readings for the course are available on Sakai. There is no required textbook. The following books are optional if you want additional resources on game theory:

- Dixit, Avinash K., and Barry J. Nalebuff. *The Art of Strategy*. W.W. Norton.
 - A nontechnical introduction to game theory that discusses many of the topics that we will cover in the course
- Spaniel, William. *Game Theory 101*. CreateSpace.
 - A fairly inexpensive game theory textbook
 - Free videos: <http://gametheory101.com/courses/game-theory-101/>

COURSE POLICIES

UNC HONOR CODE

You are bound by the Honor Code in taking exams and in written work. The Honor Code of the University is in effect at all times, and the submission of work signifies understanding and acceptance of those requirements. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please consult with me or visit studentconduct.unc.edu if you have any questions about the Honor Code.

ATTENDANCE

To get the most of out of this class, it is very important for you to attend class. Given the accelerated nature of the Maymester term, missing one day is the equivalent of missing a week of class during a regular semester. If you do need to miss a class, I encourage you to be in communication with me, so that we can help to make sure that you keep up with the course material. For information on the University attendance policy, please refer to the website for the University Approved Absence Office.

GRADE APPEAL PROCESS

If you feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss with me. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our department chair or appeal the grade through a formal university process based on arithmetic/clerical error, arbitrariness, discrimination, harassment, or personal malice. To learn more, go to the Academic Advising website.

SYLLABUS CHANGES

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

CLASS SCHEDULE

READINGS

- Pre-Class: Read and complete quiz on Sakai before class
 - In-Class: Read during class and complete in-class reflection
 - Optional: Background reading related to daily class content
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WEEK 1

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11: COURSE INTRODUCTION

- No reading

THURSDAY, MAY 12: INTRODUCTION TO RATIONAL CHOICE

- Pre-Class: Shepsle and Bonchek, "Rationality: The Model of Choice"

FRIDAY, MAY 13: SEQUENTIAL MOVES AND BACKWARDS INDUCTION

- Asynchronous lectures on Sakai (No class meeting)
 - Optional: Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 2
 - ***HOMEWORK 1 DUE***
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WEEK 2

MONDAY, MAY 16: PRISONERS' DILEMMA AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- In-Class: Axelrod, "The Live-and-Let-Live System in Trench Warfare in WWI"
- Optional: Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 3
- ***HOMEWORK 2 DUE***

TUESDAY, MAY 17: NASH EQUILIBRIUM AND INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

- In-Class: Huth, Croco, & Appel, "Law and the Use of Force in World Politics" (pp. 17–23)
- Optional: Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 4
- ***HOMEWORK 3 DUE***

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18: MIXED STRATEGIES AND STRATEGIC MOVES

- Optional Reading: Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 5 & 6
- ***HOMEWORK 4 DUE***

THURSDAY, MAY 19: STRATEGIC MOVES AND CREDIBILITY

- Pre-Class: Walter, *Committing to Peace*, Ch. 2
- In-Class: Fuhrmann, "On Extended Nuclear Deterrence"
- Optional: Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 7
- ***HOMEWORK 5 DUE***

FRIDAY, MAY 20: INCOMPLETE INFORMATION GAMES

- No Reading
 - ***ABSTRACT FOR PAPER DUE***
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WEEK 3

MONDAY, MAY 23: PRIVATE INFORMATION

- Pre-Class: Hyde, "Catch Us If You Can: Election Monitoring and International Norm Diffusion" (pp. 356–360)
- In-Class: Weinstein, "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment" (pp. 598–607)
- Optional: Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 8 & 13
- ***HOMEWORK 6 DUE***

TUESDAY, MAY 24: BARGAINING MODELS AND PEER REVIEW

- Pre-Class: Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War" (pp. 379–390)
- Optional: Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 11
- Optional: Muthoo, "A Non-Technical Introduction to Bargaining Theory"
- ***PEER REVIEW SESSION***

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25: BARGAINING AND WAR

- Pre-Class: Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War” (pp. 390–419)
- In-Class: Werner & Yuen, “Making and Keeping Peace” (pp. 261–272)

THURSDAY, MAY 26: CRISIS BARGAINING SIMULATION

- No Reading
- *FINAL PAPER DUE*

FRIDAY, MAY 27: FINAL EXAM

- Final exam during regular class time

SERVICES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The University facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more

TITLE IX RESOURCES

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim: titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the EOC Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

POLICY ON NONDISCRIMINATION

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.