

**POLI/PWAD 457: INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT PROCESSES**  
SPRING 2024 · UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

## INSTRUCTOR

Stephen Gent

Office: Hamilton 364

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00–11:30AM, or by appointment

## COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30–4:45PM, Murphey 115

Instructional Mode: In-Person (No remote option)

Credit Hours: 3

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an advanced undergraduate seminar on the causes and patterns of conflict processes in the international system. We begin with the assumption that there may be recognizable patterns of behavior that influence the occurrence of conflict. Our task is to evaluate the scientific attempts to uncover these patterns and the underlying causes of peace and conflict. In the first half of the course, we will focus on conflict between states. In the second half, we will turn our attention to intrastate conflict (i.e., civil wars).

Our emphasis in the course will be on developing your analytical capacity to examine and assess scholarly arguments. The ability to memorize factual material is taken for granted, but it is not the primary goal of the course. Please note that this is *not* a current events course. Current events will be addressed only when relevant to learning about and evaluating the theories and empirical investigations at hand.

Because this class will focus almost exclusively on scholarly research, you may notice that many of the readings have technical components. This is reflective of much contemporary research in the field of international relations. I do not expect you to have any previous knowledge of quantitative methods, such as statistics or game theory. In this class, we will mainly be analyzing the scholarly arguments and evaluating the empirical findings in these readings, which you will be able to do without delving into all the technical details. In the class, I will provide basic information about interpreting quantitative analysis that will help you be a better consumer and analyst of political science research.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

POLI/PWAD 457 is open to undergraduate students in any major. There are no prerequisites. However, the course presupposes basic familiarity with international politics as taught at the level of POLI 150.

## COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will enable you to:

- Gain a broad understanding of the contemporary social science literature that examines the causes and consequences of interstate and intrastate conflict.
- Analyze and evaluate theoretical arguments about international relations and conflict processes.
- Interpret and assess the methods and findings of empirical social science research.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

### CLASS SESSIONS

Our classroom is an active learning environment, and your active participation is critical for the success of this class. This is *not* a lecture course. Much of the class will be devoted to discussions of scholarly readings. Sometimes this will be a whole class discussion; other times you will be working in small groups. You are expected to have read the assigned material and completed the relevant reading quizzes before coming to class. I will ask many questions, and the class will be responsible for providing the answers. You should feel free to ask questions and debate 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.

### CANVAS

Canvas will be your primary source of information for the course. In the Canvas Modules, you will find a dedicated page for each day of the course, which will provide links to readings, quizzes, and other resources. I will make course announcements through Canvas, so be sure to check your notification settings.

### OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours if you have any questions or would like to chat at any point during the semester. You are also welcome to contact me with questions via email or the Canvas inbox. I will try my best to respond within 24 hours on weekdays and 48-72 hours on weekends.

## COURSE MATERIALS

All readings for the course are available on Canvas. **There is no required textbook.**

## GRADING

Exams (Midterm & Final)	50%*	Reading Quizzes	10%
Paper	30%	Participation	10%

## EXAMS

There will be two in-class, closed-book exams. The midterm (Thursday, March 7) covers material from Part I of the course (interstate conflict), while the final (Tuesday, May 9, 4pm) covers material from Part II (intrastate conflict). When calculating the final course grade, the exam with the higher grade will be worth 40%, while the exam with the lower grade will be worth 20%. Additional information on the exams will be posted on Canvas.

## PAPER

You will need to write a paper (at least 3,000 words long) in which you use one or more theories from the course readings to analyze a real-world case in contemporary international relations. Your paper is due on the last day of class, Tuesday, April 30. You should submit your paper online through Canvas. Late papers will be penalized 3 points for each day late. Complete details on the paper assignment will be posted on Canvas.

### *Summary of Paper Topic*

To help you get started with the writing process, you will be required to submit an assignment on Canvas that summarizes your proposed paper topic and includes a list of potential sources by Friday, April 19. I will not grade the summary. However, if you do not submit this assignment, the grade on your final paper will be penalized 3 points.

## READING QUIZZES

For most class days, you will need to complete a quiz on Canvas related to the readings for that day. These quizzes will assess your basic understanding of the readings. You must complete the quiz by the start of class (3:30PM). Any quizzes submitted after this time will receive a score of 0. Each quiz is worth 4 points. ***I will drop the two lowest quiz grades when calculating the final course grade.*** You can find a schedule of the quiz dates below.

## PARTICIPATION

The participation grade will be based upon active participation in class. Each class day (beginning Thursday 1/18), you can receive participation credit for a specified in-class activity. This may be a small-group activity or an individual reflection. You must be in class to complete the assignment, unless you have a University approved absence. ***To accommodate situations where you may need to miss class for other reasons, I will drop the three lowest participation assignment grades.***

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\*The exam with the higher grade will be worth 2/3 of the exam component, while the exam with the lower grade will be worth one-third of the exam component.

**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 POLICIES****ATTENDANCE**

University Policy: As stated in the University’s Class Attendance Policy, no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities: University Approved Absence Office (UAAO) website provides information related to University Approved Absences
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

To succeed in this course, it is important for you to attend. However, I understand that situations may arise that prevent you from attending class. To accommodate this, I will drop the three lowest participation assignment grades. If you need to miss class for an extended period due to health reasons or another emergency situation, please be in contact so that we can work together to keep you on track. Given the active learning nature of the course, there will not be a remote Zoom option.

**UNC HONOR CODE**

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please consult [honor.unc.edu](http://honor.unc.edu)

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE POLICY**

The following uses of generative AI tools are permitted for the **paper assignment** in this course: topic selection, brainstorming and idea generation, outlining and planning, revising, and polishing. If you use AI, you must account for and document your use. You should not use generative AI to complete in-class assignments.

### 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. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

### ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES AND SERVICE

Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS – [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu)) receives requests for accommodations, and through the Student and Applicant Accommodations Policy determines eligibility and identifies reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions to mitigate or remove the barriers experienced in accessing University courses, programs and activities. ARS also offers its Testing Center resources to students and instructors to facilitate the implementation of testing accommodations.

### COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to the CAPS website or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

### TITLE IX AND RELATED 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 EOC or by contacting the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall) or the (Report and Response Coordinators) in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. Confidential resources include Counseling and Psychological Services and the (Gender Violence Services Coordinators). Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

## CLASS SCHEDULE

[Q] Reading Quiz (complete before class)

### WEEKS 1–2: INTRODUCTION

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11: COURSE INTRODUCTION

- Class Topic: Course Introduction

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16: THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF CONFLICT

- Frieden, Jeffrey A., and David A. Lake. 2005. "International Relations as a Social Science." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

## PART I: INTERSTATE CONFLICT

### WEEKS 2–3: BARGAINING AND WAR

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18: BARGAINING AND WAR ONSET [Q]

- Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization*.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23: BARGAINING AND WAR OUTCOMES [Q]

- Slantchev, Branislav. 2004. "How Initiators End Their Wars: The Duration of Warfare and the Terms of Peace." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Sullivan, Patricia L. 2007. "War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25: BARGAINING AND THE DURATION OF PEACE [Q]

- Fortna, Virginia Page. 2003. "Scraps of Paper? Agreements and the Durability of Peace." *International Organization*.
- Werner, Suzanne, and Amy Yuen. 2005. "Making and Keeping Peace." *International Organization*.

### WEEK 4: DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30: REGIME TYPE AND WAR [Q]

- Schultz, Kenneth A. 1999. "Do Democratic Institutions Constrain or Inform? Contrasting Two Institutional Perspectives on Democracy and War." *International Organization*.
- Weeks, Jessica L. 2012. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict." *American Political Science Review*.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1: LEADERS AND WAR OUTCOMES [Q]

- Goemans, H. E. 2000. "Fighting for Survival: The Fate of Leaders and the Duration of War" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*
- Croco, Sarah E. 2011. "The Decider's Dilemma: Leader Culpability, War Outcomes, and Domestic Punishment." *American Political Science Review*.

WEEKS 5–6: ALLIANCES

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6: COSTLY SIGNALING [Q]

- Fuhrmann, Matthew, and Sechser, Todd S. 2014. "Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- McManus, Roseanne W., and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2017. "The Logic of 'Offstage' Signaling: Domestic Politics, Regime Type, and Major Power-Protégé Relations." *International Organization*.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8: ALLIANCE DESIGN [Q]

- Mattes, Michaela. 2012. "Democratic Reliability, Precommitment of Successor Governments, and the Choice of Alliance Commitment." *International Organization*.
- Chiba, Daina, Jesse C. Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds. "Careful Commitments: Democratic States and Alliance Design." *Journal of Politics*.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

- **NO CLASS: WELLBEING DAY**

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

- **NO CLASS**

WEEKS 7–9: INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20: WAR ON TERROR [Q]

- Bapat, Navin A. 2019. *Monsters to Destroy: Understanding the War on Terror*. Oxford University Press. Ch. 1 & 3

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22: STATE SPONSORSHIP AND COUNTERTERRORISM [Q]

- Carter, David B. 2012. "A Blessing or a Curse? State Support for Terrorist Groups." *International Organization*.
- Schwartz, Joshua A., Matthew Fuhrmann, and Michael C. Horowitz. 2022. "Do Armed Drones Counter Terrorism, Or Are They Counterproductive? Evidence from Eighteen Countries." *International Studies Quarterly*.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27: MARKET POWER POLITICS (THEORY) [Q]

- Gent, Stephen E., and Mark J.C. Crescenzi. 2021. *Market Power Politics: War, Institutions, and Strategic Delay in World Politics*. Oxford University Press. Ch. 1 & 3

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29: MARKET POWER POLITICS (CASES) [Q]

- Gent and Crescenzi, *Market Power Politics*. Ch. 6 & 7

## TUESDAY, MARCH 5: RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

- Documentary: "Putin's Road to War." Frontline (3/15/2022).

## \*\*\*MIDTERM EXAM: THURSDAY, MARCH 7\*\*\*

SPRING BREAK

## TUESDAY, MARCH 12 &amp; THURSDAY, MARCH 14

- NO CLASS

## PART II: INTRASTATE CONFLICT

WEEKS 10–12: CIVIL WAR

## TUESDAY, MARCH 19: BARGAINING AND CIVIL WAR [Q]

- Walter, Barbara F. 2009. Bargaining Failures and Civil War. *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher. 2013. "Actor Fragmentation and Civil War Bargaining: How Internal Divisions Generate Civil Conflict." *American Journal of Political Science*.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 21: ETHNIC GROUPS AND GRIEVANCES [Q]

- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils Benedikt Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2011. Horizontal Inequalities and Ethno-Nationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison. *American Political Science Review*.
- Bormann, Nils-Christian, and Jesse Hammond. 2016. "A Slippery Slope: The Domestic Diffusion of Ethnic Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly*.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 26: FOREIGN AID AND CIVIL WAR ONSET [Q]

- Nielsen, Richard A., Michael G. Findley, Zachary S. Davis, Tara Candland, and Daniel L. Nielson. 2011. "Foreign Aid Shocks as a Cause of Violent Armed Conflict." *American Journal of Political Science*.



- Savun, Burcu, and Tirone, Daniel C. 2011. "Foreign Aid, Democratization, and Civil Conflict: How Does Democracy Aid Affect Civil Conflict?" *American Journal of Political Science*.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

- **NO CLASS: WELLBEING DAY**

TUESDAY, APRIL 2: PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL WARS [Q]

- Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2005. "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.
- Wood, Reed M., and Jakana L. Thomas. 2017. "Women on the Frontline: Rebel Group Ideology and Women's Participation in Violent Rebellion." *Journal of Peace Research*.

THURSDAY, APRIL 4

- **NO CLASS: ISA CONFERENCE**

#### WEEKS 13–14: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION

TUESDAY, APRIL 9: NEGOTIATION [Q]

- Heger, Lindsay L., and Jung, Danielle F. 2017. "Negotiating with Rebels: The Effect of Rebel Service Provision on Conflict Negotiations." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.
- Menninga, Elizabeth J., and Alyssa Prorok. 2021. "Battles and Bargains: Escalation, Commitment, and Negotiations in Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly*.

TUESDAY, APRIL 9: MEDIATION [Q]

- Beardsley, Kyle. 2008. "Agreement without Peace? International Mediation and Time-Inconsistency Problems." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Reid, Lindsay. 2017. "Finding a Peace That Lasts: Mediator Leverage and the Durable Resolution of Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

TUESDAY, APRIL 11: PEACE AGREEMENT PROVISIONS [Q]

- Matanock, Aila M. 2017. "Bullets for Ballots: Electoral Participation Provisions and Enduring Peace after Civil Conflict." *International Security*.
- Thomas, Jakana L. 2023. "Sisters Are Doing It for Themselves: How Female Combatants Help Generate Gender-Inclusive Peace Agreements in Civil Wars." Forthcoming, *American Political Science Review*.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 16: PEACEKEEPING [Q]

- Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon. 2014. "Beyond Keeping Peace: United Nations Effectiveness in the Midst of Fighting." *American Political Science Review*.
- Fjelde, Hanne, Lisa Hultman, and Desirée Nilsson. 2019. "Protection Through Presence: UN Peacekeeping and the Costs of Targeting Civilians." *International Organization*.

**\*\*\*SUMMARY OF PAPER TOPIC DUE: FRIDAY, APRIL 19\*\*\***

WEEKS 15–16: COURSE WRAP-UP

## TUESDAY, APRIL 23: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SIMULATION

- No Reading

## THURSDAY, APRIL 25: CRISIS BARGAINING SIMULATION

- No Reading

## TUESDAY, APRIL 30: COURSE WRAP-UP

- No Reading

**\*\*\*PAPER DUE: TUESDAY, APRIL 30\*\*\***

**\*\*\*FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, MAY 9 AT 4:00PM\*\*\***