PO 8008  
International Conflict

Contact Information

Thomas Chadeaux  
3 College Green, office 4.02  
Office Hours: Friday 1–3PM  
thomas.chadeaux@tcd.ie  
Phone: 01-896-3484

Description

This course is intended for graduate students. It is about the causes and consequences of conflicts between nations, as well as theories of international security. Existing empirical results will also be emphasized and particular attention will be paid to the relevance of the concepts introduced to contemporary geopolitical issues and conflicts.

Requirements and grading

Each week we will discuss a particular topic using the readings as a basis. We will also debate current international security affairs as they unfold in the world, and as they relate to the theories and concepts in this class. Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation (20 %)

Participation and attendance are essential. This is a seminar and I will not lecture. Coming prepared means having read and understood each of the required readings. You should come to class ready to a. summarize each paper’s main findings; b. explain the method used in each paper; and c. have thought about possible improvements to the paper or feasible extensions.
Response Papers (30%)

Students are required to submit five response papers (500–700 words) throughout the semester. A sixth one may optionally be submitted, in which case the weakest score will be dropped. At least one of these papers must be submitted before the seminar of week 3. Students are required to choose one of the required or suggested readings for that week (readings marked with a star may not be used) and do two things:

- Identify either a limitation of the paper (e.g., how a variable is operationalized, or an unreasonable/unnecessary assumption) or a possible extension. Either way you should have only one argument in these papers.

- Suggest a possible remedy to that limitation or describe how you would carry out the extension. Note that what you propose should be feasible (ideally by you). If, for example, you find the author’s data weak, then you should identify better data, or at least propose a plausible way of collecting these data. If you think the method is wrong, explain why and suggest a better one. If the conclusions do not follow from the premises, discuss what conclusions are actually supported. A specific course of action should be outlined. This process might help you down the line in finding a dissertation topic.

*I am not interested in a summary of the paper. Not even if it is short.* The idea is for you to try out ideas for future research projects, the research paper for this seminar, or even your dissertation. I will try to grade papers submitted before Wed. noon before class the next day. Either way, you must submit the paper before the beginning of class. I may ask you to present your idea if relevant to the class.

Research Paper (50%)

The research paper (10 pages) will be due at the latest on December 20, 23:59. It should outline a research design for a larger project (possibly a first step towards your dissertation) and is due at the end of the term. The paper needs to follow a clear structure:

1. What is your motivating question? Avoid questions that start with ‘How’.
2. How does your project relate to existing work?
3. What are your hypotheses?
4. What relevant data are available, or could feasibly be collected?
5. What method would you use to test your hypotheses? This may include any combination of comparative case studies, interviews, statistical analysis, computer simulation, mathematical modeling, etc.

6. How do you expect the results would support or falsify the hypotheses?

For both the response and researcher papers I am looking for creativity, with feasibility and theoretical or empirical fruitfulness as your only constraints. Concise and clear writing is also essential. Papers merely reviewing existing work or listing historical facts will not receive a passing grade.

**Turnitin**

Please submit all your written work, including response papers, through Turnitin: (turnitin.com).

- Class ID: 10765148
- Password: PO8008

**Plagiarism**

Please follow the standard of academic honesty set forth in the College Calendar (http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/calendar) and online: http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism. You should also complete the online tutorial on avoiding plagiarism http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/ready-steady-write.

**Readings**

There is no textbook for this class. Instead, three types of readings are required: (1) scholarly articles and (2) policy-oriented pieces are listed in this syllabus. Students must read all readings listed in the ‘required’ section for each class and be ready to discuss each of them in class. The required readings are either on Blackboard or on reserve in the library. Some weeks (3, 5 & 6) require a large amount of reading, so I advise you to plan ahead (on average 145 pages per week). Finally, students are also expected to have read (3) the news and relevant sources of information such as:

- Council on Foreign Relations (http://www.cfr.org/)
- Foreign Affairs (http://www.foreignaffairs.com/)
- Foreign Policy (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/)
- The Economist (http://www.economist.com/)
• The Washington Post (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/)
• The Financial Times (e.g., http://www.ft.com/intl/comment/columnists/gideonrachman)
## Course Outline

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Schedule

Week 1. Introductory Session: The End of War?

Required Readings (125 pages):

- Walter R Mead. The Return of Geopolitics. *Foreign Affairs.* 17 Apr. 2014. 7 pages *
- John G Ikenberry. The Illusion of Geopolitics. *Foreign Affairs.* 17 Apr. 2014. 7 pages *
- Bear Braumoeller. Is war disappearing? In *APSA Chicago 2013 Meeting,* 2013. 28 pages

Suggested Readings:

Week 2. Is War in our Genes?

Required Readings (153 pages):

A. War in Human Nature?

B. The Evolution of Cooperation

Suggested Readings:
- Robert M Axelrod. The evolution of cooperation. Basic books, 2006. ch. 1&2, pp. 3-54
Week 3. War and Society

Required Readings (153 pages):

A. The Emergence of the State
  Oxford, 1992 pp. 67–95
- Hendrik Spruyt. Institutional selection in international relations: state anarchy

B. History of Warfare
- Geoffrey Best. War and society in revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870. McGill-
- John A Lynn. The evolution of army style in the modern west, 800–2000. The
- Geoffrey Parker. The military revolution: Military innovation and the rise of

Suggested Readings:
- Hendrik Spruyt. The sovereign state and its competitors: an analysis of systems
  change. Princeton University Press, 1996. Ch. 8
- Larry H Addington. The patterns of war since the eighteenth century. Indiana
  University Press, 1994. *
- Richard Arthur Preston, Sydney F Wise, Herman O Werner, and Alex Roland.
  Men in arms: a history of warfare and its interrelationships with Western so-
- Paul Kennedy. The rise and fall of the great powers. Random House LLC,
  2010. *
- Michael Duffy. The Military Revolution and the State 1500-1800. Humanities
  Press, 1980. *
Week 4. Anarchy, Polarity and War

Required Readings (141 pages):

A. Realist approaches

B. Polarity

C. Power Transition Theory

Suggested Readings:
Week 5. The Security Dilemma and Arms Races

Required Readings (138 pages):

A. The Security Dilemma

B. Offense-Defense Theory

C. Arms Races

Suggested Readings:
Week 6. Alliances

Required Readings (130 pages):

A. Alliance formation

B. Burden-Sharing

C. Alliance Reliability

Suggested Readings:
Week 7. Reading Week: no seminar

Week 8. Bargaining and Conflict

Required Readings (134 pages):

A. Incomplete Information

B. Commitment Problems
  (Review from week 4.)

C. The Iraq War

Suggested Readings:

Week 9. Domestic Politics and War

Required Readings (143 pages):

**A. Commitment, Signaling and Audiences**
- Thomas C Schelling. *Arms and Influence: With a New Preface and Afterword*. Yale University Press, 2008. ch. 2 (pp. 35–91)

**B. The Democratic Peace**

Suggested Readings:
Week 10. Economic Interdependence and International Conflict

Required Readings (128 pages):

- Marina Ottaway, David Ottaway. *How the Kurds Got Their Way*. Foreign Affairs, 17 Apr. 2014. *(Skim)*

Suggested Readings:

Week 11. Conflict Outcomes

Required Readings (157 pages):

A. Combat Outcomes


B. The Duration of Peace


Suggested Readings:

Week 12. Recent Trends in Warfare

Required Readings (81 pages), subject to change:


Suggested Readings: