

GOV 360N 2 (84893)
The Causes of War

University of Texas, Summer 2014
MTWTHF 1130a-1p, MEZ B0.306
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Faculty Information

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Course Description and Objectives

This course examines the modern theory of war, where we view conflict between and within states a political phenomenon, as the product of conscious political action in the pursuit of political ends. We focus on systematic, scientific explanations for the why and the how of decisions over war, negotiation, and peace, using rigorous theoretical work to understand broad statistical patterns and specific case histories. Our goal is to build a practical base of knowledge for understanding both ongoing and future issues in war, peace, and international security. As such, this is not a history class *per se*, nor even one about current events—though students will, at course's end, possess a broad set of tools for thinking and speaking intelligently about the causes of war. Specifically, students will develop the skills to be able to

- use the framework of preferences, incentives, and strategy to understand war and peace
- think theoretically, assessing arguments and evidence rigorously and transparently
- change their own minds about the causes of war *and* change others' minds about the causes of war
- hold their own arguments and positions to the same standards of rigorous, logical thinking to which we hold the materials in the course.

We begin the course in Part I by establishing a definition of war, which allows us to identify its fundamental puzzle: why does it occur, despite the facts that (a) it is costlier than negotiation and (b) both sides are usually still standing at the end? Part II takes up one of the fundamental causes of war: uncertainty over what deals one's enemy will accept and the inability to credibly reveal and learn such information. Part III deals with our second major cause of war, commitment problems, where expectations of shifting power create incentives to fight in the present before one's position becomes worse. Finally, in Part IV, we integrate the explanations in Parts II-III, applying the insights of the course to a detailed examination of the decisions leading up to one of modern history's seminal catastrophes: the First World War.

Prerequisites

Upper-division standing and 6 semester hours of lower-division coursework in government.

Grading

The following components make up the course grade:

- 20% **first exam (24 July)**. Ten short answer questions.
- 25% **second exam (5 August)**. Ten short answer questions.
- 35% **third exam (16 August, 7-10p)**. Ten short answer questions.
- 20% **short assignments and quizzes**. Given randomly, quizzes for readings and short assignments for reaction or analysis.

I assign letter grades on a distribution—that is, a curve—rather than against an absolute numerical scale. Therefore, typical grading scales where a certain score produces a certain letter grade do not apply here. Quizzes are brief and are designed to evaluate whether students are keeping up with the readings and showing up to class on time; I give them at the beginning of class, and if you miss any part of it by being late, *then you forfeit those points*. There are no exceptions. Finally, assignments are typically short (1-2 pages) reaction or analysis pieces.

Course Policies

While I have no attendance policy, missing information in the lectures will pose a serious problem for your ability to perform well in the course, because (a) some of the readings are demanding on their own and need to be clarified in class and (b) lectures will very often contain information not found in the readings. Missing classes will also prevent you from earning a good quiz/short assignment grade, because quizzes and short assignments cannot be made up after the fact. Remember, again, that I give quizzes by asking questions at the beginning of class, and I will not re-ask a question (or re-give any part of the quiz) if you're late.

Missed exams can be excused and made up after the fact in cases of illness and personal emergency, but *only with proper documentation from the University*. Further, I do not give exams ahead of their scheduled dates. Exams missed due to a university sponsored event or religious holiday may be excused, provided that the student informs me of the absence *at least two weeks in advance*. Vacation (e.g. leaving early for spring or semester break) and social engagements will not be excused. Check the exam schedule before making travel plans, because, again, I do *not* give makeup exams in advance. There are no exceptions.

Should you wish to challenge a grade you received on a specific question on an exam, you must do so within a week of receiving the grade. Otherwise, no challenges will be considered. After you challenge a grade, I—not the TA—will re-grade the entire exam, and the new grade will supplant the original one, whether higher or lower.

Finally, the readings and schedule of the syllabus are subject to change, but any such changes will be noted with an announcement either in class and/or via email, as well as an updated copy of the syllabus posted on the course's [Canvas](#) site.

University and Campus Policies

1. Students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

2. Accommodations for religious holidays.

By university policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

3. Academic dishonesty.

“Scholastic dishonesty... includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act” (Section 11-802 (b), *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*).

If you have any questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty, you should consult with me and [this website](#). Any student that violates this policy will fail this course and have the details of the violation reported to Student Judicial Services.

4. Emergency evacuation policy.

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with “Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley” written in the subject line.

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Readings

Many course readings will be available online through the library's e-journals system or [Canvas](#), unless otherwise noted. There are also two required texts:

- Fromkin, David. 2004. *Europe's Last Summer* Vintage Books.
- Keegan, John. 2005. *The Iraq War* Vintage Books.

Students are expected to have completed readings by the day for which they are assigned.

Course Outline and Schedule

Part I: The Tragedy and Puzzle of War

Session 1 (14 July). *politics, science, and the germ theory of disease*

Session 2 (15 July). *the nature and puzzle of war*

- Pages 379-390 of Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49.3:379-414. [[Canvas](#)]

Part II: Uncertainty, Communication and Conflict

Session 3 (16 July). *uncertainty and war, or why talk is so often cheap*

- Pages 390-401 of Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49.3:379-414. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 4 (17 July). *the Russo-Japanese War*

- Chapters 1 & 15 of Connaughton, Richard. 2003. *Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: Russia's War with Japan* London: Cassell. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 5 (18 July). *costly signaling, or how talk can be made valuable*

- Chapter 5 of Clark, Wesley. 2001. *Waging Modern War* New York: PublicAffairs. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 6 (21 July). *the Kosovo War*

- Chapter 6 of Clark, Wesley. 2001. *Waging Modern War* New York: PublicAffairs. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 7 (22 July). *reputation-building and war*

- Walter, Barbara. 2006. "Building Reputation: Why Governments Fight Some Separatists but Not Others." *American Journal of Political Science* 50.2:313-330. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 8 (23 July). *the Russo-Georgian War of 2008*

- CRS Report - 2008 South Ossetia War [[Canvas](#)]

Session 9 (24 July). *first exam*

Part III: Shifting Power, Commitments, and War

Session 10 (25 July). *credible commitments, the shadow of the future, and war*

- Pages 401-409 of Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49.3:379-414. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 11 (28 July). *weapons programs and preventive war*

- Chapter 4 of Keegan 2005 (Chapters 1 & 3 strongly recommended)

Session 12 (29 July). *the Iraq War of 2003*

- Chapter 5 of Keegan 2005 (Chapters 1 & 3 strongly recommended)

Session 13 (30 July). *the Second World War in the Pacific*

- Chapter 7 in Paine, S.C.M. 2012. *The Wars for Asia 1911-1949* New York: Cambridge University Press. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 14 (31 July). *power transitions and hegemonic war*

- Chapter 1 of Tammen, Ronald L., et al. 2000. *Power Transitions* New York: Chatam House. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 15 (1 August). *the violent lives (and deaths) of buffer states*

- Fazal, Tanisha. 2004. "State Death in the International System." *International Organization* 58.2:311-344. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 16 (4 August). *the dynamics of civil war*

- Fearon, James D. 2004. "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research* 41.3:275-301. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 17 (5 August). *second exam*

Part IV: The Causes of the First World War

Session 18 (6 August). *the European great power system*

- Stevenson, David. 1997. "Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914." *International Security* 22.1:125-161. [[Canvas](#)]

Session 19 (7 August). *the trail of pre-war crises*

- Prologue and Part One of Fromkin 2004

Session 20 (8 August). *Russia, the Dual Monarchy, and the Balkan Question*

- Parts Two and Three of Fromkin 2004

Session 21 (11 August). *the assassination in Sarajevo*

- Part Four of Fromkin 2004

Session 22 (12 August). *the July Crisis I*

- Parts Five and Six of Fromkin 2004

Session 23 (13 August). *the July Crisis II*

- Part Seven of Fromkin 2004

Session 24 (14 August). *the world at war*

- Part Eight and Epilogue of Fromkin 2004

Session 25 (15 August). *wrap up and conclusion*