Causes of International Conflict - Syllabus

Jon D. Carlson, University of California, Merced

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jondcarlson/18/
POLI 150: Causes of International Conflict -- “Investigation of the causes of international conflict and war, the conduct of war, its ultimate termination, and the possibility of its prevention.” Fall 2012

Instructor – Dr. Jon D. Carlson
Location – SSM 104
Time – MWF 9:30-10:20

Office – SSM 250b
Hours – MWF 11-12:30, & app’t
E-mail – jcarlson3@ucmerced.edu

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT, DO NOT LOSE IT, REFER TO IT OFTEN

“War, at first, is the hope that one will be better off; next, the expectation that the other fellow will be worse off; then, the satisfaction that he isn’t any better off; and, finally, the surprise at everyone’s being worse off.” Karl Kraus, writer (1874-1936)

“Why of course the people don’t want war. Why should some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally, the common people don’t want war: neither in Russia, nor in England, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But after all it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship… Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.”
# Nazi leader, Hermann Goering, at the Nuremberg Trials (before he was sentenced to death)

“People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war or before an election.”
-- Otto von Bismarck

I can picture in my mind a world without war, a world without hate. And I can picture us attacking that world, because they’d never expect it. - Jack Handy

INTRODUCTION
This class is an in-depth study of what is a rich body of literature in International Relations: the study of the causes and prevention of war. Increasingly, lower levels of conflict are also getting more scholarly attention and we will seek to consider “conflict” broadly, in conjunction with the traditional focus of “war”. Accordingly, you will be expected to do a significant amount of reading each week. We will examine numerous approaches for understanding war origination, as well as conflict escalation and the ending of war. Theoretical arguments will range from issues of traditional Realism (anarchy, power) to Liberalism (role of institutions and cooperation) to economic variables, psychological aspects of war initiation, economic factors of war, to “new” faces of warfare, notably terrorism. All of this is quite a broad canvas to paint in one semester, so it is that much more important that you keep abreast of the material!

PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES: The Program Learning Objectives (PLOs) for Political Science are for students to develop: 1. An understanding of the processes, theories, and empirical regularities of political institutions and political behavior in the student’s chosen emphasis area: American politics, comparative politics, or international relations. 2. An ability to employ critical thinking and demonstrate social scientific literacy, including basic quantitative literacy. 3. A capacity to utilize contemporary social science research methods to conduct rigorous research on political phenomena. 4. Effective written communication skills, especially the ability to convey complex concepts and information in a clear and concise manner. 5. An ability to apply abstract theory and research methods to understand contemporary political events and public policies.

POLI 150: Student Learning Objectives (SLO)
1. Understand and identify causes of international conflict and war, means of termination and prevention (Per PLO #1).
2. Use scientific methods to analyze the causal relationships of at least one major international conflict (Per PLO # 2, 3).
3. Develop concise argumentation and writing skills, while displaying critical thinking in discussion (written and verbal) of complex and contentious issues related to course material (Per PLO #4).
4. Comprehend three main theoretical approaches to understanding international conflict, in context of existing data and research (Per PLO #5).

TEXTBOOKS (Per SLO #1)
The following texts should be available at the bookstore and are required for the class:
2. Vasquez, John, ed. (2012). What Do We Know about War?, 2nd ed..

CASE STUDIES -- (Per SLO #1, #3)
Available at: http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/
1. Falklands/Malvinas A & B; #661.0 & 662.0
2. Beagle Channel Negotiations A,B,C; #796, 797, 798
3. Decision to Use Force in Grenada; #795
5. 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis (available at www.guisd.org ), #231
*** Additional Cases as added***

STUDENT LEARNING
Most of us, if not all, know how to ride a bicycle. Think about how you learned to ride a bike. I am sure you did not attend lectures on bike riding. Rather, with the assistance of a parent, sibling or friend you got on the bike and started riding. You may have had learning wheels, you may have fallen off the bike many times, but in the end you learned how to ride the bike and you can still do that today! This is a good example of all learning. First, it was active, not passive. You did things rather than taking lecture notes. Second, you were motivated to learn bike riding because your friends did it, or it gave you greater mobility, or for any number of other good reasons.

Another way to think about learning at a College or University is that it is like taking out a membership in a Health and Fitness Club. Your tuition at UC Merced gives you the right to attend a certain number of classes each semester. It also gives you the right to use the Library system, the computer commons and other University facilities. Similarly, your Club membership fee allows you to use the exercise machines, swimming pool and other Club facilities. However, if you never visit the Club and work out, your membership money is wasted. In the same fashion, if you just come to class most of the time without preparing and without participating, without being active in class, your tuition money is wasted too! So, as your teacher I am like a personal fitness trainer. It is my job to exercise your mind. And please remember – no pain, no gain!

Teaching Philosophy
Heterodox: Do not fear to dissent from the taken-for-granted or assumed “best” path. Question yourself; defend your point of view, without being dismissive of alternative positions or disrespectful of others. Use alternative ways of seeing to map the limitations of your own gaze, and to sharpen its focus. Recognize that learning is a process of cooperative conflict; ultimately, we argue with texts, distant authors, and each other in order to advance a dialogue, not to defend a dogma. If the instructor asks for clarification or pushes you to expand on a comment or position, he does so with this in mind, not to “make you feel dumb”.

---

1 Learning metaphors courtesy of Patrick McGowan.
**Intellectualism:** As you are in college or university, odds are good that you believe in the value of education. Indeed, knowledge is power. However, having an opinion (especially in Political Science courses) or a belief is not the same as having accurate knowledge. In fact, many of human kind’s most enduring conflicts are based on beliefs (religious or otherwise) that do not coincide with others’ beliefs. In this class I will ask you to develop the following skills:

1. **Embrace your ignorance, and then strive to overcome it.** We learn by first recognizing there is a skill or body of knowledge that we do not have, then taking steps to rectify this. Many students have their academic progress stunted because they are afraid of “looking stupid” in front of their peers; we are all here to learn, act accordingly and overcome this fear! In fact Socrates famously noted, “I know only that I know not.”

2. **Question assumptions:** Part of being in college is to challenge belief systems and to think new, often scary thoughts. Question yourself and ask WHY you believe things that you believe. It is acceptable to have opinions, but the instructor will often ask you why you hold them; have a reason why you think what you think! Part of being human is our ability to recognize when we have been wrong, and change our viewpoint in light of new information. This can be incredibly powerful, even though ‘existential crises’ are often a disturbing aspect of being in university.

3. **Opposing views:** Part of being truly educated is the ability to hold two opposite viewpoints in your mind at the same time, understand both fully, and then be able to decide which is most favorable. This does not require you to agree with one, both, or either, but rather to understand it in an objective (not reactionary) manner. For example, in American politics we have a system dominated by two parties, which often leads to emotionally heated debates. One way to cut through the emotion of such situations is to mentally “switch” the labels associated with each position, and ask yourself if you would feel the same way if a Democrat (or Republican) were taking the position being contested. This can be especially fruitful in situations dominated by personality (such as a Presidency!). You should be able to take personal views and emotions out of a debate and evaluate all sides fairly.

---

**GRADE EVALUATION:** Your performance will be based on the following learning activities:

1) **CLASS ATTENDANCE:** This is easy. I expect that you will attend all meetings of this class. By the third meeting of this course, I will take roll of the class on ten randomly selected days. You begin this course with 10 attendance points. Each absence will cost you one point off your final grade, up to a total of minus 10 points. If you are absent because of personal illness, please get a note to that effect from your MD and I will remove your absent mark. Only your own personal medical problems are acceptable reasons for being absent. By the third meeting of the class, you should be present and located in what will be your permanent seat for the remainder of the term. We will have a seating chart (yes, really) and if you are not in your assigned seat you will be counted as absent.

2) **CLASS PARTICIPATION, IN-CLASS WORK & DQs** -- This may be new to you and will be worth 25 points toward your final grade. This will include work done throughout the quarter as ‘homework’, as well as discussion questions prepared ahead of class, and other possible ‘in-class’ projects. *(SLO #1, 3, 4).* **Note:** self evaluation of overall participation will be included in your final course participation grade. Honest and forthright feedback is required; feedback deemed not to be so will be discounted or thrown out.

3) **MINI-ESSAYS** *(SLO # 1, 2, 3, 4):** You will write three mini-essays, each three to five double-spaced pages long on subjects related to the text, lectures, but particularly the case discussions. Each essay should comprise a well-written analysis of the assigned questions with a thesis, a body of the essay that develops the thesis and a conclusion. The essays should include references and, when appropriate, quotations from the relevant cases and the texts. *Please give your very best efforts from first to last!"
Your essays will be marked 50% on the quality of writing and 50% on substantive content, so please use an appropriate style-guide to make sure your essays are well written. Each essay is worth five points, for a total of 15 percentage points toward your final grade.

*** Mini-Essay prompts/topic questions are:

**Essay #1**
Is “honor” (national, personal, or otherwise) a productive variable in the scientific study of war? The Steele article & the Melian Dialogue may prove helpful.

**Essay #2**
Evaluate the relationship between “democracy” and “war”. Is democracy pacifying? Be sure to clarify variables and discuss explanatory relationships.

**Essay #3**
Compare/Contrast the mediation efforts in the Falklands case and the Beagle Channel dispute. What factors led to one being successful and the other not?

4) **RESEARCH ESSAY**: The task for the research essay is to select a war or a MID (your choice, with approval of instructor) and examine the leading explanations for its start. Select the leading two, and develop an argument for which is most persuasive. You may also refute both and propose your own explanation, but this would require specific refutation of the contending theories. Engage the theoretical and methodological literature and have “fun” with your war. Near-wars or militarized conflicts may be acceptable, but also need instructor’s approval. Your essay will be 10-12 pages in length.

**DUE 12/2. (SLO #1, 2)**

5) **MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMINATION**: There will be a Midterm and Final Examination covering text readings, case study readings and lectures material. The Final Exam will be offered during the last day of class – there will be NO early exams. Failure to take the Final will result in a zero for that portion of your grade (SLO #1, 4).

**GRADING SCHEME**

There is no “curve”; everyone can earn a grade of “A” or a grade of “F.” Your final grade will be based upon the following components:

- Class attendance .................. 100 points
- Three mini-essays ................. 150 points
- Research essay .................... 200 points
- Class discussion/DQs .......... 250 points
- Midterm & Final examination .... 300 points (150 ea.)
- TOTAL .......................... 1000 points

**CLASS ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS** (stuff I shouldn’t have to mention…)

**Cheating:**

Do not cheat. All work must be your own. Cheating on any quiz, exam, or written assignment will result in an automatic failing grade for that assignment and possibly an ‘F’ for the entire course. Extreme cases may also result in expulsion from the University, as discussed guidelines for academic dishonesty. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying any part of a classmate’s work and plagiarism – inadequately citing published material or using material without permission. Furthermore, plagiarism will be taken extremely seriously and any and all cases will be referred to the Dean for administrative action. Cite your sources appropriately.


**Due date/time:**
All papers or assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date that they are assigned as due. If not a class day, items are due by 3pm. Late work will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade per DAY (not class) it is late. Late work may be handed in to the SSHA office, where it will be time-stamped and put in my mailbox.

**Special Accommodations:**
Any and all requests for special accommodations for class lecture, written assignments or testing *must* come through the Student Disability Services Center. DSC is responsible for determining eligibility and will assist in ensuring that necessary accommodations are provided. They are located in Kolligian Library, Suite 113.

---

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1:** Intro & Syllabus;  
(Friday class only)

**DQ:** What is “war”?

**Week 2:**

Readings:

- V&H: Preface, Intro & pp. 373-388; **prepare Exercise 15-1 and 15-3 for 08/27.**
- Betts: Preface
- Vasquez: Intro

**Week 3:** (No class Monday)

Readings: **Ikle:** 1-16

- Betts: Part I –Three Visions of War and Peace, All 3 selections.
- Midlarsky: pp. 407-449: Empirical Patterns (on CROPS)
- Nye: Ch1.

**Week 4: Realism I**

Readings: **Betts: Part II: Realism: Anarchy & Power**

Read: Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes

Midlarsky: revisit Geller if needed, pg 407* (have read this)

V&H: Ch1 Levy, pg3; Siverson & King pg 161 (skim)

Nye: Finish Ch1

**JUST WAR** reading for next week (on CROPS)!

**Week 5: Realism II**

- Betts: Part II: Realism: Anarchy & Power Read: Gilpin
- Nye: Ch 3

**Just War** -- Wed

Discussion **Article** – Steele (Friday); Skim Lebow in Betts (p236)

**Week 6: Liberalism I**

**ESSAY #1 DUE Friday 09/28.**

Readings:

- **Betts: Part III: International Liberalism** Read: Kant, Wilson, Bull  
  (Bull on CROPS)
- Nye: Ch2

**Case Study:** Force in Grenada (Friday)

**Week 7: Liberalism II**

Readings: **Betts:** Doyle, Keohane & Nye

- Nye: Ch 4

**Case Study:** Taiwan Strait Crisis (Friday)

**Week 8: Democracy & Peace?**
Readings:  Betts: Part VII: Ideology & Identity
        Read: Mansfield & Snyder
Midlarsky: Russett & Starr, pg. 93
Case Study: Falklands/Malvinas A&B (Wednesday)

MIDTERM FRIDAY 10/12

Week 9: Democracy & Peace, Part II
Readings: Betts Part VII: Gellner, pg 368; Vasquez: Ch 8 (Dem Norms) & 9 (dem or capitalism)

Week 10: ESSAY #2 DUE Wed 10/24
Readings: Betts: Part IV: Psychology  Freud, Fornari (CROPS), Milgram, (Mon)
          Kahneman & Renshon - Wed
          Vasquez: Ch4&5 (rivalries) – Fri

Week 11: Social Constructivism
Case Study: Beagle Channel Negotiations (Monday)
Readings: Betts: Part V: Culture – Customs, Norms & Learning
          Wendt (skim), Mead, Mueller, Tickner; -Wed
          Inglehart & Welzel (CROPS)- World Values Survey readings Ch1 &2 – Fri & next Monday

Week 12: ESSAY #3 DUE Wed 11/07
Carlson Generations Chapter (CROPS) –Mon
Readings: Betts: Part VI: Economics Read: Lenin, Schumpeter, Waltz, Rosecrance

Week 13: (No Class Monday)
Case Study: Somalia Intervention (Wed)
Readings: Betts: Part VIII: Strategy Read: Jervis, Levy, Waltz (Fri)

Week 14: (No Class Friday - Thanksgiving)
Readings: Betts: Part IX: Terrorism & Unconventional Warfare
          Read: Lawrence, Mao, Crenshaw, Bin Ladin, Sageman, Gentile

Week 15: Transnational Sources: Migration, Resources & Environment
Readings: Betts: Part X: Environment & New
          Read: Homer-Dixon, DeSoysa, Betts&Christensen - Mon
          Case Study: Prelude to War (Wed) Research Papers Due by 3pm, 12/2!
          Nye: Ch 8(CROPS) -Fri

Week 16: Conclusions & Future Prospects
Readings: Ikle: All - Mon
          Vasquez Ch12 & 13 - Wed

Final Exam: Last day of class. FRI. 12/7,