COURSE DESCRIPTION

*Theories of International Security* is a seminar devoted to enduring and contemporary questions in international security, a field that at its core is about the threat and use of force by states (and, increasingly, non-state actors) to achieve their political and military objectives. The course is designed to follow PSC 8441, *Advanced Theories of International Relations*, and assumes students are familiar with the content of that course. There is inevitably some duplication of topics covered in PSC 8441, but I have endeavored to minimize overlap and maximize coverage of a broad range of topics in security studies.

The course has four major goals: (1) to understand the major theoretical perspectives or paradigms in security studies; (2) to survey some of the most important substantive areas and debates in the field with an emphasis on recent contributions; (3) to apply theories and arguments from the academic literature to contemporary policy problems; and (4) to help political science Ph.D. students prepare for preliminary exams.

The course is divided into two parts. The first half of the course focuses on the major theoretical traditions in IR and international security: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. We will read contemporary statements of each of these perspectives, but also spend one class session on the bargaining model of war that has gained prominence since the mid-1990s. In the second part of the course, the focus shifts to important substantive questions in security studies, such as alliance formation; reputation and the credibility of compellent and deterrent threats; military coercion; military effectiveness; nuclear proliferation; and the role of leaders in international conflict.

This course is by no means a comprehensive overview of the security studies literature. Many important topics and debates are not covered. The course attempts both to introduce students to the big theoretical traditions/paradigms that have long dominated the sub-field and cover a selection of recent contributions that have made an impact on the field and how we think about international security.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After taking this course, students should:

- Possess a solid grasp of the major theoretical traditions in international security, and be able to assess their strengths and weaknesses
- Understand debates about the role of structure in shaping state behavior
- Understand debates about the role of democracy in coercive diplomacy
- Understand how international institutions and economic interdependence affect security outcomes
- Understand the bargaining approach on war
- Have a good understanding of debates about the role of reputation in IR and what enables states to get their way in international crises without having to use force
- Understand the coercive strategies available to states and non-state actors in wartime, as well as the efficacy of these strategies
- Understand the determinants of victory in crises, battles, and wars
- Understand the causes and consequences of nuclear proliferation
- Understand whether and how leaders matter for international security outcomes
- Be able to make policy recommendations based on theories in different topics in security
- Have a solid foundation for studying for comprehensive exams
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students may elect either of two assignment tracks, one based on three analytical papers and the other based on a research paper. Students must choose which track they will follow by February 6, the day the first paper topic is distributed. Grades will be based on the following criteria.

All Students

- **Class Attendance, Participation, and Pre-Class Questions (25%)**: Students are expected to attend every class session, do all of the required reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. Missing more than one class session without an excuse will adversely affect the participation grade. Participation in discussion will be judged not only by the quantity of a student’s remarks, but also by their quality. Students should also e-mail two questions before each class on the week’s readings to the instructor. These should be questions that you would use to guide the discussion if you were leading it. Questions can address key themes, theoretical or methodological shortcomings, relationships to other parts of the IR literature, etc.

Track I

- **Three Analytical Papers (25% each)**: 7 double-spaced pages maximum, due in HARD COPY at the beginning of class on Week 5 (February 13), Week 11 (March 27), and Week 16 (May 1). Questions will be distributed in class the week before the due date. You may be asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a theory discussed in class or in the readings, compare the explanatory power of two or more theories, or apply theories to a case. Papers turned in after the start of class will be accepted for up to 24 hours but will be penalized one letter grade; papers will not be accepted more than 24 hours late. Exceptions will be made for illness or personal/family emergency. For more details, see below under “Class Policies.”

Track II

- **Literature Review (75%)**: 20 pages, HARD COPY due in instructor’s office by 5.00 p.m. on Friday, May 9. Students must meet with the instructor to discuss their paper topic. Papers should critically engage a question, subject, or literature of the student’s choice in the field of international security. The required readings can serve as the core of the literature that is analyzed, but students will be expected to read and analyze well beyond them. All papers should summarize and organize the literature under discussion; identify the theoretical/empirical questions it attempts to answer; explain key concepts and arguments; discuss some of the major theoretical and empirical contributions; locate logical flaws, empirical or methodological shortcomings, and unanswered questions; suggest ways to repair those shortcomings or answer those unanswered questions; and suggest directions for future research. Alternative hypotheses, potential sources of additional data, or new research designs and strategies should be explored. Papers should also evaluate the extent to which research in the area is progressing or digressing.

BOOKS

The following books – which are required reading for the course – are available for purchase at the George Washington University Bookstore. All books are on reserve at Gelman Library.

**Note**: In this course, I assume that all students are familiar with Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979). If you have not read it, please do so before the first class meeting. The book has been reprinted by Waveland Press and is now available at a reasonable price.


**ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS**

All of the journal articles listed in the required reading below are available online in databases accessible through the George Washington University Library. From the library website (http://library.gwu.edu/), click on the “Journals” tab, search for the desired journal title, and navigate to the correct volume and issue. If you are accessing the library website from off campus, you will need to enter your last name and your GWID to obtain access. For several class sessions I have assigned book chapters in addition to journal articles. These readings (denoted by BB in parentheses) have been placed online on the Blackboard site that has been established for the class. Click on “Blackboard” from the “My GW” page (http://my.gwu.edu), log in, go to the page for this class, and click on “Electronic Reserves.”

To conserve on space, I have used a short-hand notation for journal titles:

- AJPS American Journal of Political Science
- APSR American Political Science Review
- ARPS Annual Review of Political Science
- BJPS British Journal of Political Science
- EJIR European Journal of International Relations
- FA Foreign Affairs
- FP Foreign Policy
- IO International Organization
- IS International Security
- ISQ International Studies Quarterly
- JCR Journal of Conflict Resolution
- JOP Journal of Politics
- JPR Journal of Peace Research
- JSS Journal of Strategic Studies
- POP Perspectives on Politics
- PSQ Political Science Quarterly
- SS Security Studies
- WP World Politics

**GUIDE TO THE READINGS**

This syllabus is designed in part as a study aid for graduate students preparing for preliminary exams. To that end, I have included a substantial amount of recommended reading for each topic (and several additional topics) in an appendix at the end of the syllabus. This reading is not required for class, nor are students expected to read it to complete their reaction papers (although they may wish to read certain selections anyway). However, it may prove
helpful in getting started on literature review papers. In general, recommended readings are listed in reverse chronological order, with the most important selections marked by a check mark instead of the usual bullet point. To construct this list of readings, I have drawn heavily on resources that students studying for prelims may wish to consult, especially the syllabus for “International Security: A Survey of the Field,” by Ronald Krebs at the University of Minnesota (https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/rkrebs/home/teaching). Another valuable resource is Jack Levy’s lengthy syllabus (currently 119 pages) for “Theories of War and Peace” at Rutgers (http://fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/levy/courses.html).

POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- **Class Policies.** Students are expected to attend every class session, do all the reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. Exceptions will of course be made for religious holidays. Students who know they will miss class owing to observance of a religious holiday need to notify the instructor during the first week of the semester. All papers turned in for this class must be double-spaced, have one inch margins on all sides, be printed in 12-point font, and stapled. Late papers will be accepted up to 24 hours after the deadline, but one letter grade will be deducted. Papers that are more than 24 hours late will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only in cases of illness or personal/family emergency; if you find yourself in such a situation, please consult the instructor as soon as is feasible to make arrangements for an extension. Laptops are allowed in class for note-taking purposes, not for checking e-mail, Facebook, or surfing the web. The only cell phones allowed in class are those that have been turned off.

- **Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Integrity.** According to the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the rest of the code, see http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity. In general, I expect that you will not lie, cheat, steal, or otherwise conduct yourselves dishonorably, and will do something if you observe others engaging in such conduct. *All work you submit for this course must be your own.* In particular, do not collaborate on the analytical papers or literature review papers. I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. If you are found to have cheated on any assignment, the likely minimum punishment is a failing grade for that assignment. The case may also be referred to the Academic Integrity Council at the instructor’s discretion, depending on the severity of the offense. If you have questions about what constitutes proper use of published or unpublished sources, please ask the instructor.

- **Disabilities.** GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Additional information is available at http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/.

- **Counseling.** The University Counseling Center (UCC, 202.994.5300) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include crisis and emergency mental health consultations, confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals (see http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/about).

- **Security.** If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet on E Street across from the Elliott School in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: http://campusadvisories.gwu.edu/.
## COURSE CALENDAR

### Part I. Theoretical Traditions

1. January 16  
   Structural and Offensive Realism
2. January 23  
   No Class: Instructor’s Wedding
3. January 30  
   Defensive and Neoclassical Realism
4. February 6  
   Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy  
   Paper topic #1 handed out
5. February 13  
   International Institutions and Security  
   Paper #1 due
6. February 20  
   Economic Interdependence
7. February 27  
   Norms, Culture, and Force
8. March 6  
   Bargaining and War
9. March 13  
   No Class: Spring Break

### Part II. Selected Topics in Security

10. March 20  
    Alliances  
    Paper topic #2 handed out
11. March 27  
    Reputation, Credibility, and Threats  
    Paper #2 due
12. April 3  
    No Class: ISA
13. April 10  
    Military Coercion
14. April 17  
    Military Effectiveness
15. April 24  
    Nuclear Proliferation  
    Paper #3 handed out
16. April 29 (Tuesday)  
    Leaders and International Conflict
17. May 1 (Chez Downes)  
    Unipolarity and Grand Strategy  
    Paper #3 due
COURSE OUTLINE

1. **(Mostly) Structural and Offensive Realism**  
   January 16

   Does the structure of the international system determine the behavior of states?

   - Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, 1999), Chapter 6 (BB).

2. **No Class: Instructor’s Wedding**  
   January 23

3. **Defensive and Neoclassical Realism**  
   January 30

   Does the structure of the international system determine the behavior of states? Is the security dilemma an immutable feature of international politics, or does it vary in intensity? Do scholars need to include variables below the structural level to explain foreign policy?

   - Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, “Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy,” in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge, 2009), 1-41 (BB).

   **Recommended if you have not read it:**

4. **Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy**

Do democracies have advantages in international crisis bargaining?


5. **International Institutions and Security**

How do international institutions matter for international conflict?


6. **Economic Interdependence**

Do economic ties among states lower the likelihood of war? What was the role of interdependence in the causes of World War I?

7. **Norms, Culture, and Force**

February 27

What role do norms play in restraining (or enabling) the use of force?


8. **Bargaining and War**

March 6

What is the bargaining model of war? What does it contribute to our understanding of why wars occur, how long they last, and why they end?


9. **No Class: Spring Break**

March 13

10. **Alliances**

March 20

Why do states form alliances with other states?

- Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,” *IO* 44/2 (Spring 1990): 137-68.
11. Reputation, Credibility, and Threats  
March 27

What makes threats credible in international politics? What role does reputation play in making threats credible? Do nuclear weapons make threats more credible?


12. No Class: International Studies Association Meeting  
April 3

13. Military Coercion  
April 10

How can states and non-state actors get their way in a conflict without having to defeat the opponent in detail?


14. Military Effectiveness  
April 17

Why are the armies of some states highly effective military machines whereas those of others seemingly cannot perform the simplest tasks?

15. **Nuclear Proliferation**  
April 24

What factors enable the spread of nuclear weapons in the international system? Is nuclear proliferation dangerous?


16. **Make-Up Day: Leaders and International Conflict**  
April 29 (Tuesday)

Are leaders important in international security?


17. **Dinner Chez Downes: Unipolarity and Grand Strategy**  
May 1 (Thursday)

Is unipolarity stable and durable? Should the United States try to preserve its power advantage?


18. **Literature Review Papers Due**  
May 9

- 5.00 p.m., 1957 E St. NW, #605B
APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDED READING ON TOPICS COVERED IN CLASS

Offensive Realism


Recommended Critiques


Neorealism, Defensive Realism, Offense-Defense Theory, Neoclassical Realism

✓ Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *IS* 25/1 (Summer 2000): 5-41.
✓ Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,” IO 44/2 (Spring 1990): 137-68.

**Recommended Critiques**
• Peter D. Feaver, et al., “Correspondence: Brother Can You Spare a Paradigm? (Or Was Anybody Ever a Realist?),” IS 25/1 (Summer 2000): 165-93.
✓ Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?” IS 24/2 (Fall 1999): 5-55.
• Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, 1999).
• Dan Reiter, “Exploding the Powder Keg Myth: Preemptive Wars Almost Never Happen,” IS 20/2 (Fall 1995): 5-34.


“Neoclassical” Realism

✓ Steven E. Lobell et al., eds., *Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 2009).

Democratic Peace

In General

• Zeev Maoz, “The Controversy over the Democratic Peace: Rearguard Action or Cracks in the Wall?” *IS* 22/1 (Summer 1997): 162-98.
Norms


Institutions


Extensions


Critiques


International Institutions

- Beth A. Simmons and Allison Danner, “Credible Commitments and the International Criminal Court,” *IO* 64/2 (Spring 2010): 225-256.
Economic Interdependence


- Katherine Barbieri, “Economic Interdependence: A Path to Peace or a Source of Interstate Conflict?” *JCR* 33/1 (February 1996): 29-49.

**Norms and Constructivism**


**Critiques**


**Bargaining and War**


• Branislav L. Slantchev, “Feigning Weakness,” *IO* 64/3 (Summer 2010): 357-88.

**Alliances**


Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Cornell, 1997).


**Reputation, Credibility, and Threats**

**Reputation and Credibility**


**Compellence**

- Todd Sechser, “Goliath’s Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power,” *IO* 64 (Fall 2010): 627-60.

**Deterrence, General**


**Deterrence Debates**


**Nuclear Deterrence**

• Francis J. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America’s Atomic Age* (Cornell, 2012).
  ✓ Kenneth N. Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” *APSR* 84/3 (September 1990): 731-45.

**Military Effectiveness**

✓ Responses to Biddle by Daryl G. Press, Thomas A. Keaney, and Thomas A. Mahnken and Barry D. Watts, and Biddle’s rejoinder, in *IS* 22/2 (Fall 1997): 137-74.

John J. Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence (Cornell, 1983).


The Debate over Democracy and Military Effectiveness


Nuclear Proliferation, Causes and Consequences


Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Cornell, 2010).


“Causes and Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation,” Special Issue of *JCR* 53/2 (April 2009).


### Leaders/The First Image and War


David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Cornell, 2009).


Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States’s ‘Unipolar Moment’,” *IS* 31/2 (Fall 2006): 7-41.


• Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *IS* 25/1 (Summer 2000): 5-41.
✓ Michael E. Brown, et al., eds., *America’s Strategic Choices* (MIT, 1997). This volume contains some of the seminal contributions to the 1990s debate.
• Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *IS* 18/2 (Fall 1993): 44-79.
APPENDIX 2: SELECTED ADDITIONAL TOPICS IN SECURITY STUDIES

War Termination


War Termination, The Cold War


Power Transitions and War

• Michael W. Doyle, Striking First: Preemption and Prevention in International Conflict (Princeton, 2008).
• Scott A. Silverstone, Preventive War and American Democracy (Routledge, 2007).
• Dan Reiter, Preventive War and its Alternatives: The Lessons of History (Strategic Studies Institute, April 2006; http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil).

Terrorism

This previously neglected field has moved into the mainstream since 9/11. This is an introduction to some of the academic literature.

• Jacob N. Shapiro, The Terrorist’s Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations (Princeton, 2013).
• Eli Berman, Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism (MIT, 2011).
• Robert Trager and Dessislava Zagorcheva, “Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done,” *IS* 30/3 (Winter 2005/06): 87-123.
✓ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (Columbia, 2004).
✓ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (UPenn, 2004).
• Daniel L. Byman, “Al-Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand Our Enemy?” *WP* 56/1 (October 2003): 139-63.

**IR Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict, Civil War, Intervention, Occupation, and Peacekeeping**

This is by no means intended to be a comprehensive guide to the literature on these subjects, especially ethnic conflict and civil war. It is merely an introduction to some of the IR-influenced literature.

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George Downs, “Intervention and Democracy,” *IO* 60/3 (Summer 2006): 627-50.
- Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention* (Columbia, 1999).

**Domestic Politics and War**


**Diversionary War**


Bureaucratic Politics and Organization Theory
• Jeffrey W. Legro, Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II (Cornell, 1995).
✓ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., The Army and Vietnam (Johns Hopkins, 1986).
• Morton H. Halperin, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy (Brookings, 1974).
• Stephen Krasner, “Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland),” FP 7 (Summer 1972): 159-79.

Civil-Military Relations

Public Opinion, Casualties, and the Use of Force
• Adam J. Berinsky, In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq (Chicago, 2009).
✓ Christopher Gelpi, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler, Paying the Human Costs of War: American Public Opinion and Casualties in Military Conflicts (Princeton, 2008).
• Christopher Gelpi, Jason Reiffer, and Peter D. Feaver, “Iraq the Vote: Retrospective and Prospective Foreign Policy Judgments, Candidate Choice, and Casualty Tolerance,” Political Behavior 29/2 (June 2007): 151-74.


