

**POLS 311: International Conflict Resolution**  
**Fall 2009**

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Office Hours: Thurs. 1:00-3:00, or by appointment

Course materials will be posted on Learnlink, grades will be posted on Blackboard, and some readings will be available on Reserves Direct.

**Overview:**

This course will consider the roots of global conflict and the various means that actors try to resolve their disputes. A large component of the course will be focused on understanding the theories behind war initiation and termination, paying special attention to how states interact with each other strategically. The students will learn both how to conceptualize conflict situations and how actors practically go about resolving their disputes in the international system.

The readings for this course are primarily drawn from the academic literature, so that the students have first-hand exposure to the relevant scholarly debates. But as a consequence, the readings will be much more challenging than what is often found in text books. The students are required to do ALL the assigned reading and be prepared to participate in class. This will demand a substantial time commitment, but it will also help the students cultivate an ability to efficiently parse out the important content of scholarly work. To concretely engage the course concepts, we will also rely on in-depth case studies of historical conflicts and group simulations of present conflicts.

**Grading:**

2 Midterms (20% each), Simulation Paper (20%), Final (30%), In-class Quizzes & Participation (10%)

Makeup quizzes, exams or paper extensions will only be granted with proper documentation from the Office for Undergraduate Education. Students must register with the Office of Disability Services to receive accommodations. Simulation papers turned in on the day of the final exam (12/15) but after the examination period, will be deducted one letter grade. No credit will be given to any papers turned in after the day of the final exam. All work must be the original work of the student, with no assistance from any other individuals. The departmental grading standards that we apply can be found at the back of this syllabus.

Exams: There are two midterms, comprised of identification questions of key terms and concepts, short-answer questions and an in-class essay. There will also be a cumulative final exam, which will also involve identification and short-answer questions, as well as an in-class essay. The identification questions on the final will be on the topics covered since the second midterm, but the essay will cover material from the entire course.

To do well on the identification questions, the students must demonstrate a mastery of the terms by providing the following in a 4-6 sentence answer:

- 1) Concise definition – In one sentence, define the concept, individual or event.
- 2) Some points of elaboration – In 2-3 sentences, elaborate on a few points related to the term. If the term appeared in one of the readings, state the author of that reading. If the term is a topic of debate, state the arguments for and against it. If the term relates to other concepts in the course, explain how it does.
- 3) The significance of the term to the study of conflict resolution – In one sentence, explain why we care about this term. Put the term in the broader context of how it impacts our understanding of conflict and peace processes.

Without each of these elements, the student cannot earn full credit. The terms will be taken from major concepts, people or events in the readings and the lectures. Some terms may be covered in the readings but not in the lectures, while others may be covered in the lectures but not the readings. All the terms will be major points in the readings or lectures, so that it will be obvious that the student did not prepare if he/she completely misses the definition.

To do well on the in-class essay, the students must follow all the directions on the prompt. At a minimum, the students must draw from the relevant material in the assigned readings and lectures. The most successful essays will be those that are able to speak to the overarching themes that connect the lectures and readings together.

Simulation Paper: Throughout the course, students will work in groups of at least two on a “simulation” of an actual present-day international conflict. Each student will represent one side of the conflict, but will work in the groups to test different negotiation strategies and help each other better understand the dynamics of the specific conflict. At the end of the course, the groups will determine the form of outcome from their negotiations, which include war, full agreement, partial agreement or stalemate.

At the final exam, each student will turn in an 8-12 page paper with the following components:

- 1) Students should provide an overview of the general history of the conflict, supported by texts from outside of the course (only books, journal articles and periodicals – no web pages – are acceptable as sources in this section of the paper). This section should be 2-3 pages long.
- 2) Students should analyze the barriers to potential settlement in the conflict, drawing on the course concepts and scholarly works from outside of the course (only books and journal articles – no periodicals or web pages – are acceptable as references in this section of the paper). This section should be 3-4 pages.
- 3) Students should summarize the group negotiations, describing what proposals were made, accepted, or rejected. This section should be 1-2 pages.
- 4) Students should discuss the implications of the simulation to the current state of the real-world conflict and provide recommendations of strategies for future resolution, drawing on the course concepts. This section should be 2-3 pages.

The students will write most of the paper as an objective outside observer. However, the actual simulated negotiations will be conducted **from the perspective of one's side in the conflict**. So, in the summary of the group negotiations, the students should provide some justification for why the actions that they took were consistent with the preferences of their side in the conflict. Each paper must be the sole authorship of a single student. Students will be assessed based on the understanding of their side's role in the conflict, the quality of the background research, and the ability to apply the course material to an actual case.

Students should form their groups and choose their conflicts by the third week of class. Any students that cannot find a group should let the instructors know. The possible conflicts include:

- Israel-Fatah-Hamas (group of 3)
- US/EU-Iran (group of 2, or a group of 3 if US and EU are separate actors)
- US-North Korea-South Korea (group of 3)
- Sudan-Darfur Rebels (group of 2)
- India-Pakistan (group of 2)
- Russia-Georgia (group of 2)
- Colombia-FARC (group of 2)

In-Class Quizzes & Participation: Students should come to each class prepared to discuss that day's reading. Attendance will not be taken, but the in-class quizzes will be unannounced, so as to encourage active preparation. There will be between two and four in-class quizzes. The format of the quizzes will be short answer, where we provide definitions of terms from the reading for that day, and you provide the terms. If you plan on missing any classes, please let us know in advance so that we can decide if you are excused. Otherwise, if you miss a class with a quiz, you will not be able to make up the quiz without proper documentation of your legitimate excuse.

The in-class quizzes are just one part of the participation grade. We encourage all students to engage in in-class discussion, as this is one of the best mechanisms for learning. Students can improve their participation grade through consistently asking thoughtful questions and accurately responding to my questions to the class. Shyer students will not be deducted for lack of participation – their in-class quiz grades will just have more weight because this is the only information we have about the student's preparedness if he/she does not frequently participate in discussion.

**Texts:**

Geoffrey Blainey. *The Causes of War*, [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]. New York: The Free Press, 1973 [1988].  
Barbara F. Walter. *Committing to Peace*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2002.  
James D. D. Smith. *Stopping Wars*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995.  
Additional reading will be available through Reserves Direct

## Schedule:

### I: Foundations of Conflict

8/27 Introduction to the course

9/1 Overview of Conflict in the International System

Reading: Joseph Hewitt. 2008. "Trends in Global Conflict, 1946-2007." In *Peace and Conflict*, 2010, Ch. 3.

Blainey – Chapter 18.

Recommended: Blainey – Chapter 11.

9/3 Security Dilemma and Power Politics

Reading: Robert Jervis. "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* 30 (Jan 1978), 167-214.

John G. Stoessinger. *Why Nations Go to War*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. Chapter 1, 1-26.

9/8 Unpacking the Billiard Ball: Domestic Constraints

Reading: Blainey – Chapters 5, 6.

9/10 The Purpose of Force

Reading: Thomas C. Schelling. *Arms and Influence*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966. Chapter 1, 1-34.

9/15 Rational Inefficiency: War as Bargaining Failure

Reading: Blainey – Chapter 3

Andrew H. Kydd. *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Chapter 1, 3-27.

Recommended: James D. Fearon. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(Summer 1995), 379-414.

9/17 Bargaining Problem I: Incentives to Misrepresent Information

Reading: Blainey – Chapters 8, 9.

9/22 Bargaining Problem II: Commitment Problems

Reading: Smith – Chapter 6  
Walter – Chapters 2 & 8

9/24 Midterm I

## II: Coercive Diplomacy: Peace through Deterrence and Compellence

9/29 Overcoming the Credibility Gap: Brinkmanship and Signaling  
Reading: Thomas C. Schelling. *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980[1960]. Chapter 8, 187-203.

10/1 Imposing Peace: Humanitarian Intervention  
Reading: Smith – Chapter 9.

## III: The Art of Negotiating a Settlement

10/6 The Importance of Timing: Patience and Punctuality in Negotiations  
Reading: Louis Kriesberg. “Introduction: Timing Conditions, Strategies, and Errors.” In *Timing the De-Escalation of International Conflict*, edited by Louis Kriesberg and Stuart J. Thorson, 1-24. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, 1991.

Jeffrey Z. Rubin. “The Timing of Ripeness and the Ripeness of Timing.” In *Timing the De-Escalation of International Conflict*, edited by Louis Kriesberg and Stuart J. Thorson, 237-246. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, 1991.

10/8 Knowing When to Say When: Making Concessions  
Reading: Anne E. Sartori. *Deterrence by Diplomacy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Chapter 2, 19-42.

Smith – Chapter 7.

10/15 The Danger of Playing it Safe: Saving Face and Reputation  
Reading: Smith – Chapters 3, 4.

10/20 Informal Interactions: Track-Two Diplomacy  
Reading: Dalia Dassa Kaye. 2007. *Talking to the Enemy*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand. Chapter 1, pp. 1-30.

10/22 Multilateral Negotiators: Mediation  
Reading: Smith- Chapter 8

Jacob Bercovitch. “Mediation in International Conflict: An Overview of Theory, A Review of Practice.” In *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, edited by I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, 125-154. Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1997.

10/27 Case Study: Cuban Missile Crisis I

Reading: Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali. *'One Hell of a Gamble': Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997. Chapters 12-13, 216-289.

10/29 Case Study: Cuban Missile Crisis II

Reading: Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali. *'One Hell of a Gamble': Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997. Chapter 14, 216-289.

11/3 Midterm II

#### **IV: Overcoming Information Barriers**

11/5: No Class

11/10 Maximizing the Bargaining Space: Mutually Hurting Stalemates & Domestic Will

Reading: Smith – Chapters 2 & 5.

11/12 Narrowing Down the Possibilities: The Importance of Coordination

Reading: Thomas C. Schelling. *The Strategy of Conflict*, [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1960 [1980]. Chapter 3, 53-80.

11/17 Case Study: Russo-Japanese War

Reading: Thomas Princen. *Intermediaries in International Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992. Chapter 7, 107-132.

#### **V: Overcoming Credible Commitment Problems**

11/19 Cooperation with Anarchy: Self-Enforcing Institutions

Reading: Charles Lipson. "International Cooperation in Economic and Security Affairs." *World Politics* 37, 1 (Oct. 1984), 1-23.

11/24 Becoming Vulnerable: Disarmament

Reading: Andrew H. Kydd. *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Chapter 8, 214-244.

12/1 Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

Reading: Roland Paris, *At War's End*, Ch. 1, pp. 13-39.

Peter Wallensteen & Birger Heldt. 2008. "International Peacekeeping: UN versus Regional Organizations." In *Peace and Conflict, 2008*, Ch. 10.

12/3 Case Study: Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)

Reading: Walter – Chapter 6.

12/8 Case Study: Rwanda

Reading: Walter – Chapter 7.

**Final Exam: 12/15 @ 4:30 PM**

**GRADING STANDARDS:**

The following standards will be applied to the evaluation of assignments in the class.

A Exceptional Performance.

Consistently outstanding work on all course-related tasks at a level that distinguishes the student from other members of the class. A comprehensive and incisive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A frequently demonstrated exceptional capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. The ability to master and integrate large amounts of factual material and abstract theories. An outstanding ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

A- Excellent Performance.

Consistently strong work on all course-related tasks. A comprehensive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A clearly demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands well and can integrate the relevant factual and theoretical material central to the course. A strong ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B+ Very Good Performance.

Consistently above average work on all course-related tasks. A very good grasp of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A generally demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical, and logical thinking. A very good command of factual and theoretical material, and some capacity to integrate the two. A solid ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B Good Performance.

Good and generally consistent work on all course-related tasks. A general understanding of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course.

Modest evidence of the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. A good understanding of factual and theoretical material, but limited evidence of the capacity to integrate the two. A basic ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B- Satisfactory Performance

Satisfactory work on course-related tasks. A reasonable understanding of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. An infrequently demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands at a basic level the facts and theories related to the course, but demonstrates weak integration skills. A limited or inconsistent ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

C+/C/C- Adequate Performance

Adequate performance on course-related tasks. An understanding of the basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A rarely demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. An inability to go beyond a recitation of basic factual material related to the class. Demonstrated weaknesses in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

D/D+ Minimal Passing Performance.

Barely acceptable work on course-related tasks. A generally superficial and often inconsistent familiarity with the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A failure to demonstrate the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking related to course content. An uneven understanding of basic factual material related to the course; no evidence of fact/theory integration. Demonstrates significant gaps in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

F Unacceptable Performance

Fails to meet minimum course expectations. Unable to understand even the most basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. Demonstrates an inability to engage in coherent written or oral discussion of course material. Does not satisfy specific course expectations with respect to attendance, deadlines, participation, etc.