

GOV 360N 2 (38923) **Causes of War**

University of Texas, Spring 2013

TTH 11a-1215p, MEZ B0.306

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Course Description and Objectives

This course examines the theory and evidence on the causes of war. We focus on systematic, scientific explanations for the why and the how of decisions over war and peace, and we will discuss both the international and domestic sources of these policies. The goal is to build a useful, 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, or even one about current events—though students will walk away from this course with a broad set of tools for thinking, speaking, and acting intelligently about the causes of war in the future. Specifically, by the end of the course, you should be able to

- use the framework of preferences, incentives, and strategy to understand war and peace
- think critically about policy alternatives and assess them with rigorous thought and evidence
- be able to change someone else's mind about the causes of war
- be *willing* to change your own mind about the causes of war
- perhaps most importantly, hold your own arguments to the same standards of 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 fact that it's so costly and both sides are usually still standing at the end? Part II takes up one of the three fundamental causes of war: uncertainty over what deals one's enemy will accept and the inability to credibly reveal such information. Part III deals with our second major cause of war: shifting power and incentives to fight in the present before one's position becomes worse in the future. Next, Part IV explores a different mechanism, whereby leaders fight because they can use war to bolster their political position at home. Finally, in Part V, we integrate the explanations in Parts II-IV into a broader theory of how war ends, and we conclude by applying the insights of the course to the initiation and termination of the Mexican-American War.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, though students are likely to perform better with some basic courses in political science as a background.

Grading

The following components make up the course grade:

- 20% **first midterm exam**, 19 February
- 25% **second midterm exam**, 2 April
- 35% **final exam**, 10 May 9a-12p
- 20% **short assignments and quizzes**, given randomly

I assign letter grades on a distribution rather than against an absolute numerical scale. Therefore, numerical grades may not reflect your ultimate letter grade.

Quizzes are brief and are designed to evaluate whether students are keeping up with the readings, while assignments are typically short (1-2 pages) and designed to get students to apply the logic of arguments used in class to current issues in American foreign policy. As such, I recommend that you keep up with current events by paying particular attention to the World or International News sections of major news sources like the New York Times, the BBC, or the Economist. Current events *as they relate to the substantive material of the course* will be a frequent topic of discussion when useful.

Course Policies

While I have no attendance policy *per se*, missing information in the lectures will be a serious problem for your ability to perform well in the course, because (1) some of the readings are demanding on their own and may need to be clarified in class and (2) lectures will *very often* contain important information not found in the readings. Additionally, I will post neither lecture notes nor slides online: getting that information through attendance and participation is your responsibility. Obviously, missing class will also prevent you from earning a decent participation grade, because quizzes are part of that grade. Finally, I usually give quizzes by asking questions at the beginning of class, and I won't re-ask a question (or re-give the quiz) if you're late.

Missed exams will be excused and made-up after the fact in cases of illness and personal emergency *only with proper documentation*. Exams missed due to a university sponsored event or religious holiday may also be excused, provided that the student informs me of the absence *at least two weeks in advance*. Vacation (e.g. leaving early for fall or semester break) and social engagements will *not* be excused. Check the exam schedule before making travel plans as well, as I will *not* give makeup exams in advance. There will be no exceptions.

Should you wish to challenge a grade you received on a specific question on an exam, you must (a) write a memo detailing why you deserve more points (i.e. why you came closer to getting the right answer than points reflect) and (b) turn that memo in to me within two weeks of the class receiving the grades. Otherwise, I won't consider challenges to your grade.

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 online at the course website and/or Blackboard.

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 the following website: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html>. 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 Blackboard, unless otherwise noted, in which case the readings are linked in the syllabus. There are also three required texts:

- Clark, Gen. Wesley. 2001. *Waging Modern War* PublicAffairs Press.
- Keegan, John. 2005. *The Iraq War* Vintage Books.
- Henderson, Timothy J. 2007. *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and its War with The United States* Hill and Wang.

Further, students are expected to have completed readings by the day for which they are assigned.

Course Outline and Schedule

Part I: The Puzzle of War

Session 1 (15 January). *politics, science, and the germ theory of disease*

Session 2 (17 January). *a quick and dirty look at ancient warfare*

- Cioffi-Revilla, Claudio. 2000. "Ancient Warfare: Origins and Systems" in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed. *Handbook of War Studies II* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. [Blackboard]

Session 3 (22 January). *the nature of modern war, or war as politics*

- Chapter 1, "The Diplomacy of Violence," of Schelling, Thomas C. 1966. *Arms and Influence* New Haven: Yale University Press. [Blackboard]

Session 4 (24 January). *the puzzle of war, or putting the bargaining metaphor to use*

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

Session 5 (29 January). *bad explanations for war, and what good ones ought to look like*

Part II: Uncertainty, Reputation, and War

Session 6 (31 January). *uncertainty and war, and why talk is so often cheap*

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

Session 7 (5 February). *more uncertainty and war, and how talk can be made valuable*

- Clark 2001, Chapter 5

Session 8 (7 February). *the Kosovo War, or when signals fail to signal*

- Clark 2001, Chapter 6

Session 9 (12 February). *reputation-building and war, or why tomorrow causes war today*

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

Session 10 (14 February). *reputation in the Russia-Georgia War of 2008*

- CRS Report - 2008 South Ossetia War [Blackboard]

Session 11 (19 February). *first midterm exam*

Part III: Shifting Power, the Credibility of Commitments, and War

Session 12 (21 February). *shifting power, 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 [Blackboard]

Session 13 (26 February). *power transitions, weapons programs, and preventive war*

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

Session 14 (28 February). *commitment problems in the Iraq War of 2003*

- Keegan 2005, Chapter 5

Session 15 (5 March). *shifting power, military technology, and World War I*

- Chapter 3 of Keegan, John. 2000. *The First World War* New York: Vintage Books. [Blackboard]

Session 16 (7 March). *shifting power, hegemonic war, and global dominance*

Session 17 (19 March). *the shadow of the successor, or leader change as a commitment problem*

- Selections (TBA) from Wolford, Scott. 2012. “Incumbents, Successors, and Crisis Bargaining: Leadership Turnover as a Commitment Problem.” *Journal of Peace Research* 49.4:517-530. [Blackboard]

Session 18 (21 March). *leadership change and successor-driven wars*

Session 19 (26 March). *buffer states, and why they don't last terribly long*

- Fazal, Tanisha M. 2004. “State Death in the International System.” *International Organization* 58.2:311-344. [Blackboard]

Session 20 (28 March). *how commitment-driven wars end (or not)*

- Selections (TBA) from Fearon, James D. 2004. “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?” *Journal of Peace Research* 41.3:275-301. [Blackboard]

Session 21 (2 April). *Second midterm exam*

Part IV: Domestic Politics, Political Survival, and War

Session 22 (4 April). *wars of “distraction” and partisan fantasy*

- Chapter 5, “Death-Watch and Scapegoat Wars,” of Blainey, Geoffrey. 1988. *The Causes of War, 3rd Ed.* New York: Free Press. [Blackboard]

Session 23 (9 April). *fighting for survival—political and personal*

- Chapter 2, “Why and when do leaders fight?” of Chiozza, Giacomo, and H.E. Goemans. 2011. *Leaders and International Conflict* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Blackboard]

Session 24 (11 April). *losing a coup is worse than an election, and what that means for war*

- Chapter 4, “The fate of leaders and incentives to fight,” of Chiozza, Giacomo, and H.E. Goemans. 2011. *Leaders and International Conflict* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Blackboard]

Session 25 (16 April). *the democratic peace*

Part V: War Termination and a Case Study of the Mexican-American War

Session 26 (18 April). *the puzzle of war termination, and why everyone misreads Clausewitz*

- Henderson, Chapters 1 & 2

Session 27 (23 April). *explanations for war and different modes of war termination*

- Henderson, Chapters 3 & 4

Session 28 (25 April). *the causes of the Mexican-American War*

- Henderson, Chapters 5 & 6

Session 29 (30 April). *the termination of the Mexican-American War*

- Henderson, Chapter 7 & Epilogue/Conclusion

Session 30 (2 May). *Wrap-up and concluding thoughts*

Final Exam (10 May). *9a-12p*