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Course Description:

This course will serve as a broad introduction to international relations topics and research. The course will be framed around a series of questions or topics, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Is there an order to the international system? If so, what are the determinants of that order?
- Why do wars occur? If war is costly in terms of lives and resources, when and why do governments fail to solve their differences by other means?
- How has globalization changed the landscape of international politics? What aspects of globalization are most important for understanding contemporary trends in national and international politics?
- What role do international institutions and international law play in facilitating cooperation and order in the international system?

The course will analyze these questions through the lens of modern social scientific approaches, meaning we will spend time thinking rigorously about theoretical relationships and evidence-based approaches to adjudicating between multiple explanations. In that vein, students will be exposed to common research strategies employed by modern international relations scholars, ranging from qualitative historical and case study accounts to statistical analysis to experimental methods. Likewise, students will be exposed to a variety of theoretical approaches, including formal models of interstate interactions (i.e. game theory), psychological explanations of foreign policy-making, and ideational or sociological approaches to understanding the international system.

Course Grading:

The course will consist of the following grades:

25% class participation
25% midterm
25% final
25% expert reading assignment and paper (2-4 page analytical “thought” paper)
Class participation: This is a Plan II honors course and smaller than typical lecture themed intro to international relations classes so I will try to foster and encourage discussion. We will discuss and debate current topics like U.S. foreign policy toward nuclear proliferation, U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, or Russian intervention in Ukraine and Syria. We will do so in a professional an respectful way; I encourage students to challenge one another’s arguments but the discussion should always be focused on the substance and content of the arguments (i.e. ad hominem arguments or unfounded generalizations will not be considered valid forms of argumentation). I will take notes after each class about who participated and the quality of that participation and assign participation grades at the end of the semester accordingly. Please come see me if you’d like to know how you are doing throughout the semester in terms of participation.

Midterm and final: We will have two short answer and essay-based, in class exams. Please bring blue books on exam days. I will provide more details prior to exam dates. The final exam will be on the last day of class.

Expert reading assignment and paper: I will circulate a sign-up sheet the second week of class allowing you to choose one topic or foreign policy issue during the semester for which you will become one of the class “experts.” This will consist of writing relatively short analytical thought paper (2-4) pages stating an argument, then drawing on class material to support that argument. You will also help start class discussion off with a 5 minute or less summary statement of your argument and a list of questions you consider unanswered or appropriate for continued debate.

Readings: All readings will be posted on canvas, unless hyperlinked on the course outline. Hyper-linked articles should be accessible from campus networks. If accessed off-campus you may be subject to a monthly limit to articles from the Washington Post, New York Times, or other outlets. There will be three types of readings:

(a) current events/new articles. These will mostly be commentary or blog-like posts that address and bring analysis to bear on a contemporary problem in international relations, such as “what do we do about North Korea?;” “what’s the deal with U.S. non-participation in the 2015 Paris Agreements;?” “What’s the deal with the Iran nuclear agreement anyway?;” or “what’s this business about China being a currency manipulator? How does that hurt the U.S. (if it is true)?” The core of the course will be learning concepts and theories of international relations, but in many ways international relations is a practical field and ultimately we care about how these concepts and theories help us think about and find answers to real world problems. So we will read and think about those problems.

(b) scholarly research articles. Okay, I will be honest, most of these will bore the heck out of you. But I like to assign some research articles because in many undergraduate international relations courses students get very little idea about how political science professors actually occupy their time. Yes, as I say above, we care about
applying insights and knowledge to real world problems. However, much research is “basic research,” in the sense it is not prescriptive, but rather seeks to understand basic principles about how the political world works. In international relations, this might mean reading an article that attempts to systematically examine typical premises and arguments about interstate relations and then examine their observable implications for the onset or conduct of war. Or it could mean trying to conduct a systematic, scientific analysis of whether and how international organizations matter for state behavior. Or it could mean examining how public opinion is shaped with respect to foreign economic policy. All of these exercises help build the corpus of knowledge about the forces behind international relations, and I will assign some examples throughout the semester.

(c) The foundational reading will be from a textbook in the process of being written by UT-Austin Professors Pat McDonald, Rob Moser, and myself for a new, online platform with Pearson books. No joke, we will actually be writing it during this semester (some is already written, but we have a lot to do!). The title will likely be Opening the Global System: An Introduction to International Relations. I will post draft modules (chapters) from this project on canvas. For you, there are a couple upsides. First, no textbook to buy! Second, you get your foundational material straight from the horse’s mouth and … er … page. The textbook is intended for an introduction to international relations course, but includes information and insights from cutting edge scholarship. There are also a few upsides for us. As this is a work in progress, we need lots of feedback about various aspects of the project and from various audiences. Our course offers a different learning environment than, say, an ordinary GOV intro to international relations course. It is smaller and geared toward Plan II students. This gives us a chance to see how well the modules work for explaining core concepts and pushing you to think about international relations in this particular setting.

Technology in the classroom: NO TEXTING DURING CLASS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (Imagine I’m screaming this as loudly as possible with veins protruding from my forehead and you’ll get a small sense of how angry texting in class makes me). You can use devices for the purposes of class only; if you’d rather watch cat videos or catch up on recaps of your favorite TV shows, save it for outside of class.

Religious holy days: A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

Students with Disabilities: Please notify your instructor of any modification/adaptation you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. You may find out more information on the Services for Students with Disabilities website: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/ and/or http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/how-to-register-with-ssd/

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual,
all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be
strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Office of Student Conduct and
Academic Integrity website at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/.

**Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students:** All students should be familiar
with the University’s official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student’s
responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address.
Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay
current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain
communications may be time-critical. The complete text of this policy and instructions
for updating your e-mail address are available at

**University of Texas Honor Code:** “As A Student Of The University Of Texas At Austin,
I Shall Abide By The Core Values Of The University And Uphold Academic Integrity.”
COURSE OUTLINE (this is a list of topics and the order in which we will cover them; I have purposely not provided dates so that we have flexibility for how much time we spend on each topic. However, I will do my best to keep you updated on what I want you to have read before each class period)

**Topic 1: Introduction and the International System**

Modules 1 and 2 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman

Power and Polarity:


China:


Russia:


U.S. Grand Strategy


**Topic 2: Theory and International Relations**

Module 3 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman

**Topic 3: Causes of War I – Rationalist Models and Information Problems**

Module 8 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman


*Signaling Intentions and North Korea:*


*Alliances and uncertain commitments:*


**Topic 4: Causes of War II – Commitment Problems**

Module 9 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman


*Preventive war and North Korea:*


*Regime Change as solution to commitment problems? Iran:*
**Russia and commitment problems in Europe:**

http://www.vox.com/2016/2/9/10949894/russia-europe-war-map


**Syria – commitment problems in civil wars:**

https://www.vox.com/2016/2/10/10958878/syria-truths

https://www.vox.com/2015/11/2/9643658/syria-obama-lost

*****MIDTERM EXAM*****

**Topic 5: Globalization**

Module 25 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman

Background on the Euro Crisis: http://www.cfr.org/eu/eurozone-crisis/p22055


http://voxeu.org/article/economics-populist-backlash


**Topic 6: Trade**

Module 26 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman

*An example -- China and U.S. tire manufacturers:*
“China loses its WTO Appeal against U.S. Tire Tariffs.” Reuters 5 September 2011

Non-economic sources of trade preferences:


Trade Disputes:


Topic 7: Global Governance

Module 20 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman

Brexit:


NATO:


Paris Agreement:

Iran Nuclear Deal:


**Topic 8: International Law**

Module 21 from McDonald, Moser, and Chapman


**ICC Controversy:**


**International Investment Law:**


****FINAL EXAM****