Purpose

The purpose of this course is to introduce students both to classic issues and contemporary concerns in international security. Much of the course will focus on one of the most vexing issues for scholars of the subject, the causes of interstate violence. Conflict initiation will be studied at the system, interstate, domestic, and individual levels of analysis. We will also delve into additional contemporary security concerns, including cyber war and the impact that environmental changes and democratic backsliding may have on conflict.

It must be emphasized that this course is a graduate seminar. For those that have not experienced graduate level education, you will immediately notice a difference from your (potentially distant) undergraduate schooling. Graduate education in the social sciences presumes that a common, relatively high level of knowledge is shared among all student participants. This allows the class to proceed on the basis of discussion rather than lecture, with the hope being that we will learn as much from the insights that our colleagues glean from the readings as from the readings themselves. It is therefore essential that students attend each seminar fully prepared to discuss the assigned material. The seminar’s success or its failure will largely depend on the quality of discussion we generate.

Course Reading

The bulk of our readings will come from the two books below and the academic journal literature. Assigned journal readings and book chapters can be found in the files folder on your canvas course page. The required books are:


Requirements and Grading

Your final grade will reflect performance in four components of the course, as follows:

- Participation and professionalism: 25%
- Discussion Leader Sessions: 25%
- Weekly Memos: 25%
- Final Paper: 25%
Participation and professionalism

Participation involves two elements. First, as noted above, active and consistent student participation is crucial to the success of the course. Students should be prepared to bring relevant points to bear and to raise pertinent questions on each week’s readings (on this, see reading from Chad Clay in week 1). Second “professionalism” refers to factors such as attendance, promptness, courtesy, overall improvement, and other intangibles, to be evaluated and assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Discussion leader sessions

Beginning with our second meeting, one student will lead our discussion each week. This individual will be responsible for providing a brief summary of the week’s readings to the class. The summary will not only review the main themes of our readings, it will also attempt to tie the concepts presented in different readings together by offering comparisons and/or synthesis. After this summary, the discussion leader will raise a (potentially long) series of questions that will compel their peers to delve into the meaning and the significance of the literature. Such questions will encourage the class to consider comparisons across the readings and connections among the concepts/theories/findings presented. After summarizing the readings and raising questions, the discussion leader will moderate the ensuing discussion (along with the professor).

When posing discussion questions, discussion leaders should dissect journal articles, books and book chapters by focusing on four components of these publications:

1) Theory. Are there discernable weaknesses or strengths in the theoretical apparatus? Does it prove useful for understanding international relations? If the article employs hypotheses, are the hypotheses appropriate to test the theory?

2) Methods. How is empirical evidence marshaled either to confirm or to confute the theory/hypotheses? Do the methods produce compelling empirical evidence?

3) Data/variable definition and measurement. Do the authors provide clear and adequate definitions of the concepts they claim to analyze? How do they measure these concepts? Are the variables that they use to measure a concept appropriate or lacking in some way?

4) Findings. What are the empirical results? Are they convincing? Are they generalizable beyond the time frame or the subject of the article? Do they further our understanding of security issues?

Obviously, well-prepared, capable discussion leaders are crucial to the smooth running of the seminar. Serving in this capacity teaches important skills as well. It teaches you how to sift through and to understand the central ideas and methods of contemporary academic international relations scholarship. It also allows you to hone your ability to facilitate and moderate an exchange of ideas, while simultaneously improving your communication competence.

Weekly Memos

Each week students must submit a one-page, single spaced memo to the professor by email (jip@ksu.edu) by 9 am on the day of class. The memos will consist of three parts:

(a) A brief summary of the readings that links together the readings’ common themes
(b) A brief discussion of potential limitations / weaknesses in the works read
(c) The identification of a new research question stemming from the readings or your critique of the readings. Explain how and why this question represents an important extension of the
work we are covering and be sure to note the substantive importance of this question.

Memos will be due a total of 12 weeks throughout the semester (see course outline and the final page of the syllabus below). Students may opt out of 2 weekly memos. In other words, only your ten best grades for weekly memos will be included in the final course grade.

Two sample memos are provided for your reference in the course canvas page.

Final Paper
Your final paper will be a literature review of one of the subjects covered in the course and will be 12-15 double spaced pages in length (excluding the bibliography). The aim of this assignment is to summarize and evaluate a body of empirical literature on a specific causal relationship (such as how do alliances [independent variable] impact interstate conflict frequency [dependent variable]). When summarizing the empirical literature on the causal relationship, you should identify common themes and discuss areas of agreement and disagreement in the research on the topic. Beyond summarizing, you should also evaluate the literature critically. In other words, you will need to reach a conclusion about how accurate and/or complete this body of empirical scholarship is. Discuss strengths and weaknesses of the literature. Most importantly, you will need to discuss possible paths for future research in this area. Substantial research beyond that introduced in the class is required and should include the most recent literature on the subject matter. Since this is a graduate seminar, your review of the literature should be relatively exhaustive – which is the only way you will be able to identify strengths, limitations and paths forward in the research. You must discuss the topic of your final paper with the professor by email by March 11. The paper is due on May 6 by 5 pm. Please submit the paper via email (jjp@ksu.edu).

Three sample research design papers are provided for your reference in the course canvas page.

Final Grades
The scale for final grades will be:

- A: 90-100
- B: 80-89
- C: 70-79
- D: 60-69
- F: 0-59

Administrative Matters.

Citations and Style
All written work should meet professional standards. If you have any questions about the appropriate citation style, please refer to the American Political Science Association Style Guide.

Late work
Given their importance to the seminar, students must make every effort to fulfill assigned discussion leader sessions. If there is any reason a discussion leader session may be missed, contact the professor as soon as possible. Tardy weekly memos will only be accepted under extreme circumstances. Late final papers will receive a one letter grade penalty for each day they are late.
Statement Regarding Academic Honesty

Kansas State University has an Honor and Integrity System based on personal integrity, which is presumed to be sufficient assurance that, in academic matters, one's work is performed honestly and without unauthorized assistance. Undergraduate and graduate students, by registration, acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Honor and Integrity System. The policies and procedures of the Honor and Integrity System apply to all full and part-time students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses on-campus, off-campus, and via distance learning. A component vital to the Honor and Integrity System is the inclusion of the Honor Pledge which applies to all assignments, examinations, or other course work undertaken by students. The Honor Pledge is implied, whether or not it is stated: "On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work." A grade of XF can result from a breach of academic honesty. The F indicates failure in the course; the X indicates the reason is an Honor Pledge violation.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who need classroom accommodations, access to technology, or information about emergency building/campus evacuation processes should contact the Student Access Center and/or their instructor. Services are available to students with a wide range of disabilities including, but not limited to, physical disabilities, medical conditions, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, depression, and anxiety. If you are a student enrolled in campus/online courses through the Manhattan or Olathe campuses, contact the Student Access Center at accesscenter@k-state.edu, 785-532-6441; for K-State Polytechnic campus, contact Julie Rowe, Diversity, Inclusion and Access Coordinator, at jarowe@ksu.edu or call 785-826-2971.

Expectations for Classroom Conduct

All student activities in the University, including this course, are governed by the Student Judicial Conduct Code as outlined in the Student Governing Association By Laws, Article V, Section 3, number 2. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment may be asked to leave the class.

Wearing of Face Coverings

To protect the health and safety of the K-State community, students, faculty, staff and visitors must wear face coverings over their mouths and noses in all indoor and outdoor spaces while you are on university property unless you are alone in a private office or workspace or alone outdoors. In addition, all new students are required to complete face covering training that also covers COVID-19 transmission, risk mitigation and the Every Wildcat a Wellcat pledge. Students needing accommodations may contact the Student Access Center at accesscenter@k-state.edu.

In classrooms, faculty have the right to deny a student entry into the room if the student is not wearing a face covering. Students not wearing a face covering will be reminded to do so and offered a clean face covering, if one is available. If the student does not comply, the faculty member will ask the student to leave the space, and if available, join the class remotely. As a last resort, campus police will be called. The faculty member will complete the Code of Conduct form and the Office of Student Life will look further into the issue and take the non-compliance with the request to leave into consideration of further accountability measures.

At no point should the professor or other students put themselves into an unsafe situation while attempting to enforce the face-covering policy.
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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| **Week 1** | Introduction (no weekly memo due) | - Clay, C. 2014. What to Expect in Graduate School: A Primer.  
| **Week 4** | Interstate explanations: Territory, Arms Races, and Rivalries | - Mitchell & Vasquez, chapters 1, 4 and 5.  
| **Week 5** | Interstate explanations: Dyadic Power, Deterrence Theory, and Nuclear Weapons | - Mitchell & Vasquez, chapters 2, 3, and 6  
Week 7  Interstate explanations: Trade and Economic Interests

Week 8  Domestic Explanations: Regime Type and Peace
3/10  -Mitchell & Vasquez, chapters 8 & 9

**March 11: Email professor proposed paper topic**

Week 9  SPRING BREAK – no class and no weekly memo
3/17

Week 10  Domestic Explanations: Diversionary Theory and Economic Interests

Week 11  Annual International Studies Association conference – no class and no weekly memo
3/31

Week 12  Individual Level Explanations

Week 13  Cyber Wars and the Environment & Conflict
Week 14
4/21
Democratic Decline and Security

Week 15
4/28
Trends and Summary
-Mitchell & Vasquez, chs. 16, 17, 18 and 19

Week 16
5/5
No class and no weekly memo – individual work on final papers.

May 6: final paper due by 5 pm via email
WEEKLY MEMOS DUE ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:

1/27
2/3
2/10
2/17
2/24
3/3
3/10
3/24
4/7
4/14
4/21
4/28