

Approaches to the Study of International Relations

PSC 504
Department of Political Science
University at Buffalo, SUNY
Fall 2024

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Description

The core course in international relations is designed to introduce students to the major concepts and theories of the field. Topics include the of development international relations theory; cognitive, psychological, rational choice, and related approaches to the study of international politics; structural models; theories of deterrence, arms races, alliances, and war. The emphasis of the course is on classical works.

Required Texts

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. *The War Trap*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Keohane, Robert, ed. *Neorealism and Its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- McLaughlin, Sara Mitchell, Paul F. Diehl and James D. Morrow, eds. *Guide to the Scientific Study of International Processes*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Organski, A.F.K. and Jacek Kugler. *The War Ledger*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Quackenbush, Stephen L. *International Conflict: Logic and Evidence*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2015.
- Sullivan, Michael P. *Theories of International Relations: Transition vs. Persistence*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002.
- Zagare, Frank C. *Game Theory: Concepts and Applications*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984.
- Zagare, Frank C. *The Games of July*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Suggested Texts

Harvey, Frank P. and Michael Brecher, eds. *Evaluating Methodology in International Studies*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002

Midlarski, Manus I. (ed.). *Handbook of War Studies II*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Strongly Recommended:

Knopf, Jeffrey W. (2006). "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 40: 127 – 132.*

McMenamin, Iain (2006). "Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 40: 132 – 146.*

Requirements

There will be two in-class exams. The first is Tuesday October 10; the second, Tuesday December 3. Unless there is a major emergency, you will be expected to take these two examinations at the time they are scheduled. Make-up examinations will be given only in extreme cases.

A major research paper, counting for 50% of the final grade, is required of each student. Paper topics must be approved by the instructor. An outline of the paper, with a suggested bibliography, is due the week of September 22. Later that week I will schedule a Zoom meeting with you to go over your proposal. The paper, which is due the last day of class, should follow the formatting policies of the International Studies Association.* Papers turned in late will be read at the convenience of the instructor. Papers turned in after May 1, 2025 will automatically receive a failing grade.

From time to time, additional assignments will be posted on the class web page that can be reached at: <http://www.buffalo.edu/~fczagare/default.htm>.

You will be notified of these assignments by e-mail.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Measures:
Be able to identify, discuss, and apply key concepts and major theories in International Politics	Participation in class discussion
Be able to explain and defend theoretical arguments clearly and effectively in writing	Participation in class discussion
Demonstrate the ability to communicate ideas clearly and persuasively in oral presentations	Participation in class discussion
Be able to identify and critically evaluate the theoretical arguments of specialized research investigating the same scholarly question	Literature review
Demonstrate the ability to think theoretically about International politics	Literature review; Final exam

Academic misconduct: Academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course. A student with a documented case of plagiarism, cheating, or another form of academic dishonesty will receive the grade of “F” for the course and might face other disciplinary action under University regulations.

Students with disabilities policy: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. This legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please notify the instructor immediately.

All materials prepared and/or assigned by me for this course are for the students’ educational benefit. Other than for permitted collaborative work, students may not photograph, record, reproduce, transmit, distribute, upload, sell or exchange course materials, without my prior written permission. “Course materials” include, but are not limited to, all instructor-prepared and assigned materials, such as lectures; lecture notes; discussion prompts; study aids; tests and assignments; and presentation materials such as PowerPoint slides, Prezi slides, or transparencies; and course packets or handouts. Public distribution of such materials may also constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law. Violation of this policy may additionally subject a student to a finding of “academic dishonesty” under the Academic Integrity Policy and/or disciplinary charges under the Student Code of Conduct.

Approaches to the Study of International Relations

The following is a chronological list of topics and suggested readings.

* = available from instructor

= available at <http://www.jstor.org/>

I. HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

- [Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi](#) (1999). *International Relations Theory*. 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 55 – 93.*
- Keohane, Chapters 1, 4 – 9.
- [Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik](#) (1999). “Is Anybody Still a Realist?” *International Security*, 24: 5 – 55.#
- [John A. Vasquez](#) (1997). “The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz’s Balancing Proposition.” *American Political Science Review*, 91: 899 – 912.#
- [Kenneth N. Waltz](#) (1997). “Evaluating Theories.” *American Political Science Review*, 91: 913 – 917.#
- [Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder](#) (1997). “Progressive Research on Degenerate Alliances.” *American Political Science Review*, 91: 919 – 922.#
- [Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman](#) (1997). “Lakatos and Neorealism: A Reply to Vasquez.” *American Political Science Review*, 91: 923 – 26.#
- [Randall L. Schweller](#) (1997). “New Realist Research on Alliances: Refining, Not Refuting, Waltz’s Balancing Proposition.” *American Political Science Review*, 91: 927 – 30.#
- [Stephen M. Walt](#) (1997). “The Progressive Power of Realism.” *American Political Science Review*, 91: 931 – 35.#
- Zagare, *The Games of July*, pp. 19 – 29.

Strongly suggested:

- [Steve Smith](#) (1997). “New Approaches to International Theory.” In John Baylis and Steve Smith, eds. *The Globalization of World Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 165 – 190.*

II. WHAT IS THEORY?

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap*, pp. ix – 10.
- Keohane, Chapters 2 and 3
- [Bruce Bueno de Mesquita](#), *Principles of International Politics*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, Chapter 5.*
- [Rapoport, Anatol](#) (1958). “Various Meanings of ‘Theory.’” *American Political Science Review*, 52: 972 – 88.#
- Zagare, *The Games of July*, Chapter 1.
- McLaughlin et al. Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5 and 14
- Quackenbush (2015), Chapter 1

III. THE DECISION-MAKING APPROACH

- [Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin](#), “The Decision-Making Approach to International Politics,” in James Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, rev. ed. New York: Free Press, 1969, pp. 199 – 206.*
- [Sidney Verba](#), “Assumptions of Rationality and Non-Rationality in Models of the International System,” in James Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, rev. ed. New York: Free Press, 1969, pp. 217 – 231.*
- [David Braybrooke and Charles E. Lindbloom](#), “Types of Decision-Making” in James Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, rev. ed. New York: Free Press, 1969, pp. 207 – 216.*
- [Glenn D. Paige](#), “The Korean Decision,” in James Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, rev. ed. New York: Free Press, 1969, pp. 461 – 472.*
- Zagare and Kilgour, Chapter 2.*
- [James E. Campbell](#), “The Referendum that Didn’t Happen: The Forecasts of the 2000 Presidential Election.” *PS*, 35: 33 – 38.*
- [Graham Allison](#) (1969). “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis.” *American Political Science Review*, 63: 689 – 718.#
- [James N. Rosenau](#), The Premises and Promises of Decision-Making Analysis.” In James C. Charlesworth, ed., *Contemporary Political Analysis*. New York: Free Press, 1967.*
- McLaughlin et al. Chapter 10

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

- [Greg Cashman](#), *What Causes War?* New York: Lexington Books, 1993, Ch 2; pp. 36 – 49 (or Sullivan Ch. 2).
- [Alexander and Juliette George](#), *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study*, in Nelson Polsby, Robert Dentler and Paul Smith, *Politics and Social Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963, pp. 192 – 208.*
- [William Freidman](#) (1994). “Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House and Political Psychobiography,” *Political Psychology*, 15: 35 – 60.#
- [Joseph de Rivera](#), *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy*, in William Vocke, *American Foreign Policy*. (New York: Free Press, 1976, pp. 38 – 63.*
- [Peter Aranson](#), “Presidential Personality and Presidential Decision-Making,” in Peter Aranson, *American Government*. Cambridge, MA: Winthrop, 1981, pp. 434 – 38.*
- [Brad Verhulst, Lindon J. Eaves and Peter K. Hatemi](#), (2012) “Correlation not Causation: The Relationship between Personality Traits and Political Ideologies.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 56: 34 – 51.
- [Charles F. Hermann and Margaret G. Hermann](#) (1967). “An Attempt to Simulate the Outbreak of World War I,” *American Political Science Review*, 61: 400 – 16.#

Strongly suggested:

- [Janice Gross Stein](#), “Psychological Explanations of International Conflict” in Walter Carlsaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002, pp. 292 – 308.*
- [Jack S. Levy](#), “Political Psychology and Foreign Policy” in David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy and Robert Jervis (ed.). *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 253 – 84.

- [David G. Winter](#), “Personality and Political Behavior” in David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy and Robert Jervis (ed.). *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 110 – 45.

V. COGNITIVE APPROACHES

- [David M. Lampton](#), “The U.S. Image of Peking in Three International Crises.” *The Western Political Quarterly*, 26: 28 – 49.#
- [Urie Bronfenbrenner](#), “The Mirror Image in Soviet-American Relations.” *Journal of Social Issues*, 16: 45 – 56. Excerpt from Ralph K. White, *Psychology and the Prevention of Nuclear War*. New York, NYU Press, 1986, pp. 71 – 81*.
- [Ole R. Holsti](#) (1962). “The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 6: 244 – 52.#
- [Ole R. Holsti, Richard A. Brody, and Robert C. North](#) (1964). “Measuring Affect and Action in International Relations Models: Empirical Materials from the 1962 Cuban Crisis.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 1: 170 – 89.#
- [Greg Cashman](#), *What Causes War?* New York: Lexington Books, 1993, pp. 49 – 76.#

Strongly suggested:

- [Richard K. Hermann](#), “Image Theory and Strategic Interaction in International Relations” in Sears, David O., Leonie Huddy and Robert Jervis (ed.). *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 285 – 314.
- [Stephen G. Walker](#) (2003). “Operational Code Analysis as a Scientific Research Program: A Cautionary Tale,” in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds. *Progress in International Relations Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mark Crescenzi, Rebecca Best and Bo Ram Kwon (2010). “Reciprocity in International Studies,” in Robert A. Denemark et al., [eds.], *The International Studies Encyclopedia*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, <http://www.isacompendium.com/>

VI. EXPECTED UTILITY MODELS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

- [Daniel Ellsberg](#), “The Theory and Practice of Blackmail,” in Oran Young, *Bargaining*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975, pp. 343 – 63.*
- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, Chapter 2.*
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap*, entire book.
- Zagare, *The Games of July*, pp. 29 – 38.

VII. INTERACTIVE MODELS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

- Zagare, *Game Theory*, pp. 1 – 64.
- McLaughlin et al., Chapter 2.
- [Gibbons, Robert](#) (1997). “An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 11: 127 – 49.#
- Zagare, *The Games of July*, Section 1.6.

VIII. RATIONAL CHOICE AND SECURITY STUDIES

- [Stephen M. Walt](#) (1999). “Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice and Security Studies.” *International Security*, 23: 5 – 48.#
- [Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and James D. Morrow](#) (1999). “Sorting Through the Wealth of Notions.” *International Security*, 24: 56 – 73.#
- [Lisa L. Martin](#) (1999). “The Contributions of Rational Choice: A Defense of Pluralism.” *International Security*, 24: 74 – 83.#
- [Emerson M.S. Niou and Peter Ordeshook](#) (1999). “Return of the Luddites.” *International Security*, 24: 84 – 96.#
- [Robert Powell](#) (1999). The Modeling Enterprise and Security Studies. *International Security*, 24: 97 – 106.#
- [Frank C. Zagare](#) (1999). “All Mortis, No Rigor.” *International Security*, 24: 107 – 114.
- [Stephen M. Walt](#) (1999). “A Model Disagreement.” *International Security*, 24: 115 – 130.#

IX. RESEARCH TOPIC: DETERRENCE

- [Intriligator, Michael and Dagobert Brito](#) (1984). “Can Arms Races Lead to the Outbreak of War?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 28: 63 – 84.#
- Waltz, Kenneth (2012). “Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Would Mean Stability.” *Foreign Affairs* 91 (2012): 2–5.
- Kugler, Jacek (2012). “A World beyond Waltz: Neither Iran nor Israel Should Have the Bomb.” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2012/09/opinion-a-world-beyond-waltz-neither-iran-nor-israel-should-have-the-bomb.html>
- Organski and Kugler, Chapter 1; pp. 147 – 79.
- Zagare, *The Games of July*, Chapters 2 – 8.
- [Achen, Christopher H. and Duncan Snidal](#) (1989). “Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies.” *World Politics*, 41: 143 – 69.#
- [George, Alexander L. and Richard Smoke](#) (1989). “Deterrence and Foreign Policy.” *World Politics*, 41: 170 – 82.#
- [Jervis, Robert](#) (1989). “Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence.” *World Politics*, 41: 183 – 207.#
- [Lebow, Richard Ned and Janice Gross Stein](#) (1989). “Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter.” *World Politics*, 41: 208 – 224.#
- [Downs, George W.](#) (1989). “The Rational Deterrence Debate.” *World Politics*, 41: 225 – 37.#
- [Quackenbush, Stephen L.](#) (2010). “General Deterrence and International Conflict: Testing Perfect Deterrence Theory.” *International Interactions*, 36: 60 – 85.#
- Quackenbush (2015). Chapter 8.
- McLaughlin et al. Chapter 13.
- Jonathan M. Di Ciccio (2018). “Power Transition Theory and the Essence of Revisionism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.

X. BALANCE OF POWER, ALLIANCES, AND WAR

- Keohane, Chapters 10 – 11
- Organski and Kugler, pp. 53 – 57.
- Zagare, *Game Theory*, pp. 64 – 85.
- McLaughlin et al., pp. 135 – 42, Chapters 7, 9 and 12. Optional, Chapter 11.
- Quackenbush (2015), Chapter 6

XI. RESEARCH TOPIC: ARMS RACES

- Organski and Kugler, pp. 180 – 202.
- [George Downs, David Rocke and Randolph Siverson](#), “Arms Races and Competition,” *World Politics*, (October 1985).#
- McLaughlin et al., pp. 142 – 50.

XII. SYSTEMS THEORY

- McLaughlin et al., Chapter 6.