
POLI 142P: Crisis Areas in World Politics

University of California San Diego

Summer Session II 2024

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Office Hours: SSB 447, Wed 9:00-11:00am

Sign-up: Calendly

Course Information:

Tu/Th 2:00pm-4:50pm

MCGIL 2315

Course Summary

This course reviews theories of political violence, interstate war and civil conflict. We will reflect on different research areas in international security that today's academics and policy makers are concerned with. And we will evaluate conflict drivers, dynamics and challenges to inferences as we seek to make sense of security threats around the world. We will answer questions such as: Why do civil wars occur, who fights them and when do they end? How do civil wars become protracted? What crises do technological advancements and other developments pose for international peace and security? And finally, how do states mingle in the affairs of other states and seek to resolve conflicts?

Course Objectives

1. **Review** the academic literature in political science as it pertains to the occurrence of civil war, causes of instability, the logic of violence, and armed actors in international affairs
2. **Understand** and **define** key actors, concepts, and issue areas of domestic instability
3. **Apply** existing theories and proposed explanations to case studies to gain a deeper understanding of real world crises

Course Requirements

Class Participation - 20%

Mid-Term Assignment (Week 3) - 25%

Final Group Assignment (Week 5) - 40%

- Outline submission - 10 % (pass/fail - no judgement, just feedback)
- Final recording and transcript - 30 %

Peer Review Assignment - 15%

Extra Credit Assignments (up to 3 points)

Grading Scale

A = 90-100% B = 80-89% C = 70-79% D = 60-69% F = 59%-below

Engagement and Asynchronous Participation

This is a class that depends on your participation in exercises and discussions. You are expected to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the assigned readings. Your colleagues and I depend on your *active* and *meaningful* participation in class. Meaningful participation is both useful and respectful. Comments and questions should be well thought out and critiques of others' points should be considerate.

Remote Learning: Given the changing conditions for teaching and learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, I reserve the right to adapt the course to fit a hybrid or fully remote format should it become necessary. Should classes become remote during our term, classes will continue to occur as scheduled via Zoom. Regardless, materials will be available online and class participation either in-person or remotely is key to your learning in this class.

Note on Weekly Readings

The readings are essential for your understanding of the key ideas as well as for your ability to actively contribute in this class. It is paramount that you come prepared to class, ready to engage in a discussion that rests on your knowledge of the readings. I selected a minimum amount of assigned reading material. That being said, summer courses are intense and we will be covering the content of 10 weeks in only 5 weeks time. This means that every class meeting accounts for a full week of class during the regular quarter.

While reading ask yourself: What main question is the author addressing? What is the answer the author provides? What has previous literature done and how is the author speaking to it (criticizing it, confirming it etc.)? Are there any debates/disagreements in the literature? Does the article focus on explanations for the onset of conflict, its conduct or resolution? How does the article further our understanding? Does the author make a convincing argument or what evidence is weak and unconvincing? What are open questions for future debate?

Attendance Policy

You are allowed 2 unexcused absences during the term. Any other absences will affect your grade unless they are excused by the instructor. Excused absences for reasonable cause are not included in this count.

Assignments and Examination

Readings and Quizzes

Each week, your reading assignments and pre-recorded lecture videos will be accompanied by a graded quiz. This quiz will be embedded into the canvas module for that class session and completion of the quiz as well as completion of the module itself count towards your participation grade.

Mid-Term Assignment

We will have a take home mid-term assignment to be completed between Friday August 16th and Friday August 23rd.

You are invited to choose the format in which you respond to the midterm question yourself from a list of options ("Choose your own adventure"). I want you to critically engage with a topic and question. No single method of answering the prompt is superior to others, rather your grade will be determined by the familiarity to class theories and concepts you show as well as the thoughtfulness and critical reflection portrayed in your response.

Choose ONE of the following methods:

- traditional essay response (2 pages, single-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman)
- info-graphic
- one powerpoint slide designed as a poster
- illustrated and annotated timeline
- illustrated and annotated map
- illustrated cause and effect chain

In each case (except the traditional essay response), provide up to one-page (single-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman) of commentary. This commentary must explain (a) your choice of medium, (b) your process of generating the response, (c) your thinking with regards to the theories from class and how they apply to the question at hand in your response. If you choose a traditional essay, your essay must include (a) introduce the question, (b) explain relevant concepts and theories from class, (b) provide a sound argument supported by evidence discussed in the class.

Due date:

- **Submission: no later than midnight on Friday, August 23rd.**

Final Group Assignment

You will receive finals week to work on this assignment with your partner(s)! Your final assignment for this class is a podcast episode of 15-20 minutes in length where you and one other student provide the background, theoretical analysis and discussion of an area of crisis in the world.

* A list of possible podcast topics to choose from is provided on Canvas.

This assignment involves TWO components:

- Choose your topic and submit a broad outline for feedback (bullet points, one-page). The purpose of this assignment is to guide you in the creation of your podcast episode. My feedback at this stage will - hopefully - help you improve the final product. **(by Tuesday, August 27th)**
- Record and submit your podcast episode and transcript **(by Friday, September 6th, midnight)**

Your podcast episode should engage with the case or crisis at hand and reflect upon it using the theories and concepts from class. Core components include: an introduction of the topic/case/crisis, a thesis statement that guides your discussion (aka your core proposed argument), a conversation about the evidence using the theories and concepts from class, a conclusion. Your podcast can be purely informative, or funny, or a mix of both. You are the hosts.

Final Response Paper

After podcast submission, you are assigned one other podcast episode to listen and respond to. In your response, reflect on how well your fellow colleagues engaged with theories and concepts from class to answer their selected prompt, and discuss how you could have improved the podcast episode. This assignment is graded for completion, but only genuine and thoughtful responses will be considered as complete.

Due date:

- **Submission: no later than midnight on Sunday, September 8th.**

Resources

Please visit **Canvas for additional resources** regarding your assignments. Canvas includes in particular resources regarding various assignment formats for your "Choose your own adventure"-style mid-term assignment, as well as resources for essay writing. Of course, I also gathered various resources that should aid you in the completion of the podcast assignment. The most important thing to keep in mind: a podcast is a collaborative product that reflects a conversation between the hosts and organically teaches the listener about a topic. Have fun with it!

Extra Credit

You can receive up to THREE extra credits to improve your grade! One **credit** per movie reflection on how the movie speaks to themes discussed in class and how the movie presented you with a different perspective. Responses should be around 300 words in length. Movie options:

- Civil War (2024) - U.S./Civil War
- Zero Dark Thirty (2012) - War on Terror
- The Last King of Scotland (2006) - Autocracy/Coup
- Hotel Rwanda (2004) - Genocide
- Beasts of No Nation (2015) - Child Soldiers
- Blood Diamond (2006) - Civil War
- Papicha (2019) - Women/Terrorism
- The Kite Runner (2017) - Afghanistan/Pakistan
- United 93 (2006) - Terrorism
- Battle of Algiers (1966) - Terrorism, Civil War

Late Policy

Life happens and because of that I am willing to make accommodations for students with justified causes and needs. If you have OSD accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the summer session. If you have medical or other reasons that demand accommodations please provide proof and approach me to discuss what can be done. Without attestation of your situation, I will not grant extensions.

Schedule of Classes

This course is ever evolving. As the world changes, so are we forced to adapt our understanding of “crisis areas” in world politics. Today, in 2024, I have selected the following topics as ongoing areas of concern for scholars and policymakers - expecting these will stick with us as you embark on your careers. Please let me know if there are other issue areas or particular cases, regions, or players that you would like to discuss!

* All class readings are linked on Canvas.

Week	Dates	Topic
Class 1	Tu, Aug 6th	Introduction
Class 2	Th, Aug 8th	Causes of Civil War
Class 3	Tu, Aug 13th	Failed States, Ungoverned Spaces
Class 4	Th, Aug 15th	Proxy Wars
Class 5	Tu, Aug 20th	Coups, Coup Proofing
Class 6	Th, Aug 22nd	Private Military Companies
Class 7	Tu, Aug 27th	Terrorism
Class 8	Th, Aug 29th	Democratic Decline and Far-Right Actors
Class 9/10	Sep 3rd, Sep 5th	Finals week: Work on final assignment.

Module 1 Introduction

Objectives: The introductory session will lay out the structure of the course, the course rules, and assignments. We will discuss how we will analyze crisis areas, cases, actors, and issues. Before coming to class, think about the following questions: Why are some states more stable than others? Is “civil” war and violence inevitable or preventable? Should states pursue stability by all means? What price does peace have?

No required readings, but please familiarize yourself with our Canvas page.

Module 2 Causes of Civil War

Objectives: We will discuss the nature of international politics, the meaning of anarchy and how it shapes the interactions among nations and the challenges it creates. We will assess how the shadow of war shapes states’ behavior as strategic actors.

Required Readings:

- Cederman, 2017.
- Fearon and Laitin, 2003.
- Kalyvas, 2000.

Module 3 Failed States and Ungoverned Spaces

Objectives: Often failed states are blamed as source of instability, as possible safe havens for terrorists, and as spaces without law and order. We will explore if this is true, what makes places at risk of state failure, and what are the implications. In this context, we will explore alternative modes of order, such as governance provided by rebels and its consequences.

Required Readings:

- Cunningham and Loyle, 2020.

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Module 4 International Institutions and Military Alliances

Objectives: We will discuss how international institutions constrain state behavior and why honoring them matters. We will discuss the role of military alliances in preventing war or creating motivation to go to war. Guest speaker on U.S.-Korea relations (will be announced in class).

Required Readings:

- Morrow, James D. 2000. "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3, 63-83.
- Bush, Richard. 2016. "The United States Security Partnership with Taiwan." *The Brookings Institute*.
- Drezner, Daniel. 2022. "The Perils of Pessimism: Why Anxious Nations are Dangerous Nations." *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2022.

Friday, August 16th: Submit Quiz 2, Extra Credit Assignment 1 (optional)

Module 5 Democracy and War

Objectives: We will discuss what role democracy plays in international relations, whether democracies are inherently more peaceful or constraint, and how beliefs about democracy have shaped foreign policy, especially throughout U.S. history. Should we be worried about the downturn of democracy worldwide?

Required Readings:

- Brands, Hal. 2022. "How to Make Biden's Free World Strategy Work." *Foreign Affairs*, May 24, 2022.
- Downes, Alexander and Lindsey O'Rourke. 2016. "You can't always get what you want: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Seldom Improves Interstate Relations." *International Security*, 41(2).
- Posen, Barry. "The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony: Trump's Surprising Grand Strategy." *Foreign Affairs* March/April, 2018.
- Further Recommendations: United States Signaling to China
 - NPR, 2016. US Credibility in South China Sea. [Link](#)
 - CNN, 2023. Biden's Stand on China. [Link](#)

Module 6 Domestic Actors and War

Objectives: We will discuss how domestic actors, institutions, and interests shape states decision to go to war and their conduct during war. We will see how important understanding an opponents domestic politics is to understanding their foreign policy behavior, credibility, and desires.

Required Readings:

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, et al. 1999. "An Institutional Explanation for the Democratic Peace," *American Political Science Review*, 93(4): 791-807.
- Weeks, Jessica. 2012. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review*, 106(2): 326-47.

Friday, August 23rd: Submit Mid-Term, Quiz 3, Extra Credit Assignment 2 (optional)

Module 7 Nuclear Deterrence

Objectives: We live in a world with nuclear weapons whose sole purpose is to deter their use by others. We will discuss how the existence of nuclear weapons shapes incentives for war and the risk of escalation of disputes.

Required Readings:

- Sechser, T.S. and Fuhrmann, M., 2017. "Nuclear Blackmail in International Politics." *Nuclear weapons and coercive diplomacy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, 2009. "Winning with the Bomb". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 53, no. 2 pp. 278-301.
- Background Information (recommended): Nuclear Umbrella in South Korea
 - Trachtenberg, David. 2012. "US Extended Deterrence: How Much Strategic Force Is Too Little?" *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 6(2).
 - Lind, Jennifer, and Daryl Press. 2023. "South Korea's Nuclear Options." *Foreign Affairs*.

Module 8 Leaders and War

Objectives: Some scholars argue for the importance of political leaders for foreign policy. We will discuss when and how leaders matter in the decision to go to war. Would Russia have invaded Ukraine if not for Putin? Would Chinese foreign policy differ without Xi? Will Kamela Harris or Donald Trump change how the world views and interacts with the U.S.?

The answer is more complicated than you think.

Required Readings:

- Giacomo Chiozza and H.E. Goemans. 2004. "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still Ex Post Inefficient?" *American Journal of Political Science* 48(3): 604-619.
- Horowitz, Michael C., and Allan C. Stam. 2014 "How Prior Military Experience Influences the Future Militarized Behavior of Leaders," *International Organization*, 68(3): 527-59
- Background Information: Foreign Policy through the Eyes of Putin and Xi
 - Hill, Fiona. Sep/Oct 2022. "The World Putin Wants: How Distortions About the Past Feed Delusions About the Future." *Foreign Affairs*.
 - Pottinger, Matt. 2021. "Beijing's American Hustle: How Chinese Grand Strategy Exploits U.S. Power." *Foreign Affairs*, 100(5).
 - Goldstein, Avery. 2020. "China's Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping. Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance." *International Security*, 45(1).

Friday, August 30th: Submit Quiz 4, Extra Credit Assignment 3 (optional)

Finals Week: No class meetings! Work on your podcasts!

Friday, September 6th: Submit Podcast & Transcript

Sunday, September 8th: Make final response comment

Policies

Class Contract

To foster the best possible working and learning environment, we want to engage with one another in upholding key values such as honesty, transparency, respect, and integrity. Both students and instructor agree to:

- Uphold honesty as academic and personal value and to participate in this class with an honest interest, and to commit to do the work expected of you and to receive honest feedback and evaluation from the instructor
- As instructor to communicate expectations and criteria for evaluation, and as student to be transparent about individual areas of struggle and discontent
- Be mutually respectful, both between students and instructor in recognition of the dynamic imposed by the context, and for students to engage with each other in a respectful discourse even in face of disagreement

- To fulfill the class requirements with integrity and uphold the values for engagement in this class, even in face of struggle or adversity

We affirm each individual's right to dignity and strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by mutual respect for each other, value the cultural diversity of USD because it enriches our lives and the University, and we reject acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs, and, we will confront and appropriately respond to such acts.

We acknowledge that our society carries historical and divisive biases based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs. Therefore, we seek to foster understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups, and we promote awareness through education and constructive strategies for resolving conflict.

In this class, we are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a community where all people can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of abusive or demeaning treatment.

Inclusive Classroom Statement

I am fully committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspectives, experiences, and identities. I urge each of you to contribute your unique perspectives to discussions of course questions, themes, and materials so that we can learn from them, and from each other. If you should ever feel excluded, or unable to fully participate in class for any reason, please let me know, or you may also submit anonymous written feedback to your Undergraduate Advisor. Additional resources to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in our classroom, and beyond, may be found here:

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

<https://diversity.ucsd.edu/> 858.822.3542 — diversity@ucsd.edu —

<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>

I respect that each and everyone of us may face individual challenges while pursuing an education. Please, do not hesitate to contact me with individual concerns that might affect your performance in this class and your ability to learn. Here are some additional resources:

For concerns about food and housing: <https://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/>

For transfer students: <https://transferstudents.ucsd.edu/resources/index.html>

For international students: <https://ispo.ucsd.edu/>

For students with dependents: <https://students.ucsd.edu/well-being/wellness-resources/student-parents/> and also <https://parents.ucsd.edu/>

For students with disabilities (seen or unseen): <https://osd.ucsd.edu/>

Academic Integrity

All University policies regarding academic integrity apply to this course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. For any material or ideas obtained from other sources, a reference must be given. Direct quotes from any source must be identified as such. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the Dean. All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless the professor states unambiguously that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>

Student Accessibility

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities. You are required to discuss accommodation arrangements with instructors and OSD liaisons in the department well in advance of any exams or assignments. The OSD Liaison for the Department of Political Science is Zain Sharifi; please connect with her via the Virtual Advising Center as soon as possible. I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs.

Discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy (including pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services (including membership, application for membership, performance of service, application for service, or obligation for service in the uniformed services will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any person who complains about discrimination is also prohibited. If students have questions about student-related nondiscrimination policies or concerns about possible discrimination or harassment, they should contact the Office for the Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination (OPHD) at (858) 534-8298, ophd@ucsd.edu, or reportbias.ucsd.edu.

Religious Accommodation

It is the policy of the university to make reasonable efforts to accommodate students having bona fide religious conflicts with scheduled examinations by providing alternative times or methods to take such examinations. If a student anticipates that a scheduled examination will occur at a time at which his or her religious beliefs prohibit participation in the examination, the student must submit to the instructor a statement describing the nature of the religious conflict and specifying the days and times of conflict.

For final examinations, the statement must be submitted no later than the end of the second week of instruction of the quarter. For all other examinations, the statement must be submitted to the instructor as soon as possible after a particular examination date is scheduled. If a conflict with the student's religious beliefs does exist, I will attempt to provide an alternative, equitable examination that does not create undue hardship for the instructor or for the other students in the class. Please see the EPC Policies on Religious Accommodation, Final Exams, Midterm Exams

Additional Resources

- CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- UCSD Basic Needs
- Writing Hub
- Supplemental Instruction
- Tutoring
- CAPS Student Health and Well-Being
- Community Centers
- Remote Access