

POL S 315
SPECIAL TOPICS: STRATEGY & WAR
SPRING 2016
MWF 3:10–4:00AM, MACKAY 0119

Instructor: Dr. Mark Nieman, mdnieman@iastate.edu

Office Hours: T 9:00am-12:00pm (noon) and by appointment, Ross Hall 537

Overview and Objectives

In this course, we will study the strategic logic of conflict processes, such as conflict initiation, duration, and termination. This class is not a historical examination of specific wars; instead, it focuses on scientific explanations for militarized conflict and military strategy. This means that rather than treating every war as a unique event, we will investigate and systematically evaluate what characteristics are more likely to lead to war, and under what conditions specific military strategies are employed. In the first part of the class we will examine the conditions that states initiate militarized conflict. We will address questions such as: Do states strategically enter into war? How do initiators pick their targets? Why do powerful states lose limited war against weaker targets more than one would expect?

In the second part of the class we will look at factors that determine selection and effectiveness of various military strategies. We will look at both inter-state and intra-state wars. We will investigate questions such as: Why does a government choose one military strategy over another? What military strategies “work”? Why would a government select a strategy that is less likely to be effective?

Upon course completion, students should be able to answer these questions. Students should also be able to apply what they have learned to real world scenarios, such as studying historical cases of war or assessing the prospects of future conflict around the world.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand theory construction (abstraction and generalizations);
- Evaluate strategic interactions and expected behavior;
- Describe basic international relations theories of war and their causal mechanisms;
- Identify appropriate samples and how to measure concepts.

Required Texts

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 1981. *The War Trap*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

All assigned scholarly articles are available on www.scholar.google.com. Just search using the author's name and article title.

Grading

Grades are based on 2 exams (80%) and class participation (20%). You are expected to complete all readings prior to class. Students who wish to do well in the class will attend and participate in class discussions.

Two Exams: 80%

There will be two non-cumulative midterm examinations for this class. The exams will be based on the readings, lectures, and classroom discussion. The exams are composed of multiple choice and short answer questions. Students who wish to do well on the exams should read the assigned material and attend all lectures.

Class participation: 20%

This is an upper division class and will be treated as a seminar. This means that you are expected to have read that week's assigned articles, be prepared to describe an article's theory and findings, and be ready to critically discuss them. While I will give a brief lecture at the start of class to provide background for that day's topic and reading and provide some direction to the conversation, the class will be much more valuable if you as a collective body do most of the talking. To encourage this, all students start with a participation grade of "D" and improve on this by constructively participating in the class discussion. This means that if you attend every discussion section but do not participate, you have earned a "D". Remember, in order to participate, you must be in class.

Grading Scale:

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	≤ 59

Administrative Issues

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, any form of cheating, or other conduct proscribed by the Student Handbook, will result in an “F” grade for the course and be referred to the Dean of Students.

Accommodations: Please discuss any special needs with the teaching staff at the start of the semester, for example to request reasonable accommodations if an academic or work requirement conflicts with your religious practices and/or observances. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should provide a completed Student Academic Accommodation Request form from the Disability Resources office (Student Services Building 1076, phone 515-294-7220). The Dean of Students Office or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance may be able to provide additional assistance.

Harassment and Discrimination: Any concerns about prohibited discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, sex (including sexual assault), pregnancy, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, or status as a veteran should be brought to the instructor, Student Assistance (515-294-1020 or dso-sas@iastate.edu), or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance (515-294-7612).

I reserve the right to modify the syllabus to reflect the pace of the course.

Course Outline

Mar 7: Introduction and Scientific Approach Primer

The War Trap, Ch 1

Optional: Reiter, Dan. 2003. Exploring the Bargaining Model of War. *Perspectives on Politics* 1(1): 27-43.

Optional: Rosenberg, Karen “Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources” (available at: <http://wac.colostate.edu/books/writingspaces2/rosenberg-reading-games.pdf>)

Mar 14: Spring Break

No class

Mar 21: Expected Utility Theory

The War Trap, Ch 2-3

Mar 28: EU Theory—Evidence and War Outcomes

The War Trap, Ch 5

Sullivan, Patricia L. 2007. “War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 51(3): 496-524.

Apr 4: Reputation and Exam 1

Sartori, Anne E. 2002. “The Might of the Pen: A Reputational Theory of Communication in International Disputes.” *International Organization*. 56(1): 121-149.

Exam 1, April 6.

No class, April 8.

Apr 11: Military Strategies—Land

Biddle, Stephen. 2001. “Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-Defense Theory.” *The Journal of Politics* 63(3):741-774.

Reiter, Dan and Curtis Meek. 1999. “Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903-1994.” *International Studies Quarterly* 43(2): 363-387.

Apr 18: Military Strategies—Air

Horowitz, Michael and Dan Reiter. 2001. “When Does Aerial Bombing Work?: Quantitative Empirical Tests, 1917-1999.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45(2): 147-173.

Machain, Carla Martinez. 2015. “Air Campaign Duration and the Interaction of Air and Ground Forces” *International Interactions* 41(3): 539-564.

Apr 25: Civil War

Lyall, Jason and Isaiah Wilson III. 2009. “Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counter Insurgency Wars.” *International Organization* 63(1): 67-106.

Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher. 2011. “Divide and Conquer or Divide and Concede: How Do States Respond to Internally Divided Separatists?” *American Political Science Review* 105(2): 275-297.

May 2: Finals Week

Exam 2, May 5, 2:15–4:15.