

PLS459: International Conflict Processes

Chun-Young Park

Fall 2023

E-mail: chunyoung.park@nu.edu.kz

Class Room: Room 8.322B

Class Hours: F 12:00pm-2:50pm

Office: Room 8.502

Office hours: T/R 1:00pm-3:30pm & by appointment

Course Description

Why do countries go to war with one another? This question has captivated the attention of politicians, philosophers, scholars, and citizens for centuries, and there is therefore no shortage of proposed answers to it. In this course, we examine many of these answers in detail. We begin by grounding ourselves in a research tradition that examines international events through a scientific process – one that builds and evaluates theoretical models and constantly questions and assesses its own purpose. After that, we review conceptual definitions of conflict episodes (e.g., war, militarized conflict, crises, and rivalry), as well as the larger trends in these episodes over time. We next examine the many factors that theoretically might lead to (a lack of) militarized conflict across numerous levels of analysis, including the systemic, dyadic, national, and individual levels. Our primary goal will be to dissect and analyze these various theoretical explanations. In doing so, we will see that the issues under dispute, the strategic complications that arise during negotiations, the relationships states develop with one another, the shortcomings of human cognition, the structure of the international system, and the domestic institutions of states (among other factors) may all contribute to matters of war and peace. Finally, we will participate in a role-playing exercise that extends our knowledge from war between states to war within states, ultimately trying to discern whether the same factors are at work in both contexts. Throughout each phase of the course, we will consider what conflict scholars do (i.e., theory construction), how they do it (i.e., research design and methods), what problems they face, and what they can do better to understand why states employ militarized conflict to achieve political goals.

Course Reading Materials

- All required reading materials will be uploaded via moodle.
 - Clark, Kevin A., and David M. Primo. (2012) *A Model Discipline*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Most, Benjamin A., and Harvey Starr. (2015) *Inquiry, Logic, and International Politics*. 2nd Ed. Columbia: South Carolina University Press.
 - Vasquez, John A. (2009) *The War Puzzle Revisited*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - Vasquez, John A. ed. (2012) *What Do We Know about Interstate War?*, 2nd Ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman
- Any other recommended reading materials can be found at library website.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe the characteristics and trends of different types of international conflict;
2. Explain why international conflict occurs – from multiple perspectives and levels of analysis;
3. Identify, dissect, and critique theoretical models advanced by scholars;
4. Interpret quantitative and qualitative evidence used to evaluate theoretical models;
5. Find a puzzle, build a theoretical model to explain it, and marshal evidence to evaluate that model;
6. Write a scholarly research paper in political science/international relations.

Course Structure

Assessment

The grade will count the assessments using the following proportions:

- **65%** Research Project
 - **10%** Research Question (Due by **Aug. 25th**)
 - **10%** Annotated Bibliography (Due by **Sep. 22nd**)
 - **10%** Theoretical framework (Due by **Oct. 13th**)
 - **10%** Data Report (Due by **Nov. 3rd**)
 - **25%** Finalized Research Paper (Due by **Nov. 25th**)
- **10%** Discussion Leader
- **10%** Research Paper Presentation
- **5%** Reflection Paper (Due by **Nov. 17th**)
- **10%** Attendance & Participation

Research Design / Research Paper

For this course, we are going to work on making a research paper (for version-M) or research design (for version-U) by the end of the semester. You are asked to choose a topic of your interest that is related to the contents of the course. Frankly speaking, anything that is related to international conflict or security will be fine. The assignment will ask you to state **1) a clear, well-motivated research question; 2) a literature review that places the question in context of extant knowledge of the topic; 3) a convincing argument and hypotheses that are derived from your understanding of the literature; and 4) critical and logical analysis based on your theoretical arguments.** By end of the semester, I expect you to have a research paper that can be developed into publishable research paper in other opportunities. Throughout the assignments, you should communicate with me. Research Papers will require full research paper with analysis and conclusion.

Research Question and Motivation

As a first step of designing a political science research, you will be asked to write a brief outline on what you want to research. The outline should clearly state your research question, and your motivation behind why you want to answer this question. This part will be crucial part of the introduction of your research design. The explanations on your motivation should include what made you to choose this question, why this question is important, how would answering this question can contribute to global security debate.

Annotated Bibliography

A bibliography is a list of citations to sources (books, articles, films, websites, etc.) that you've used when researching a topic. An annotated bibliography includes a summary and evaluation of each source. These annotations are written in paragraph form and for the purposes of this class should include the following information:

1. an explanation of the main purpose of the source
2. a short summary of key findings or arguments of the source
3. the academic/intellectual credentials of the source. Does it appear in a peer-reviewed journal? Is the author someone who has expertise in the area?
4. any shortcomings or biases you notice
5. the value of this work as a contribution to the topic you're exploring.

You are asked to make an annotated bibliography that consists of 6-7 sources (academic journal articles or books).

Thesis Statement

After writing an annotated bibliography, you should write a thesis statement that includes your original argument with theoretical framework. Your thesis statement should also include a set of hypotheses, which you would like to test to strengthen your argument.

Data Report

Find one source of data related to your research topic. Share the link on Moodle. For the data report, you will (1) present a general overview of a dataset that is related to your research topic, (2) provide a brief report (1-2 pages) that outline the source, coverage, and overview of the dataset, and (3) provide a general overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the dataset and how it connects to your research question and theoretical arguments. The goal of this assignment is to increase familiarity with common datasets used in international relations research.

Research Presentation

Students will be presenting their research on Week 14 and 15 within 10-15 mins. I will be providing comments to develop your research paper before the final submission.

Discussion Leading

Each week will have a discussion session. Students are required to choose your preferred weeks to lead the discussion (maximum 2 students for each week). Students will be responsible for leading discussion each week. The role of the discussion leader is to provide a short brief on the overarching theme of the week based on the readings provided. You should distribute the brief before an hour before the class period. You will be provided with 15-20 mins to share your brief to the class. The brief should include: (1) brief summaries of the contents, which should not exceed a quarter of your brief; (2) a comprehensive overview on the readings; and (3) critiques on the readings with several discussion questions. Sign-up sheet will be passed around after drop and add period.

Discussion Participation

Students are expected to actively engage in discussions and respect other students while engaging in active discussions. Your grade will depend on the frequency, quality, and effectiveness of your participation. For example, it will be helpful if you bear in mind that whenever you comment, try to include relevant, new information; also remember to convey your main points in the subject.

The attendance is required for this course. However, as a responsible individual, I respect your choice to attend the classes. I will not be calling attendance regularly during the course. However, your attendance will impact your discussion participation. If you have some personal reasons to be absent, please notify me before the class time. Keep in mind that you should be responsible for your own choice. For the contents that you missed, you should contact your classmates.

Reflection Paper

By the end of semester, students are going to be asked to submit a short reflection paper on how their thoughts about war and human security has changed after finishing this course. The length of this reflection paper should not exceed **two double-spaced pages formatted in Times New Roman 12-point font and justified with 1-inch margins. I will only accept submissions in pdf, docx or doc files.** The due date for this assignment is **Nov. 17th.**

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be calculated on the following scale.

94 to 100 - A	87 to 89 - B+	77 to 79 - C+	67 to 69 - D+
90 to 93 - A-	84 to 86 - B	74 to 76 - C	64 to 66 - D
	80 to 83 - B-	70 to 73 - C-	60 to 63 - D-
			59 and below - F

Course Policies and Useful Information

Discussion Etiquette

All students are expected to be good course citizens in the online discussion forum. Contributions to online discussions should be meaningfully related to the course material and advance the quality of deliberation. Students should be respectful of their classmates. This does not mean that criticism of others' ideas is barred; in fact, such criticism is helpful for advancing discussion. Importantly, though, any critiques should be cordial and professional.

Late Assignments

I do not accept late submissions under any circumstances. Missing a deadline is equally treated as a missed assessment (see below).

Plagiarism/cheating

This will never be tolerated. Students must be familiarized with the NU Student Code of Conduct and the university regulations about academic misconduct. See the Academic Misconduct section for details.

Re-grading

Students can request regrading of their assignments within one week after it is graded. Such a request must be made in written form and submitted to the professor's email with a full description of the reasons for the request. Note that the entire requested assignment, not a specific part(s), will be re-graded and that the new grade may be lower than the original one. There will be no re-grading of re-graded assignments.

Missed assessments

Students are responsible for all course assignments and assessments outlined in the syllabus, even if they have a legitimate excuse (i.e. medical emergency). Students who know they will miss a deadline for an assignment or an assessment, even if it is a School or University activity, must contact the professor before the deadline. If this is not possible, the professor must be contacted within 24 hours. Students must provide legitimate and substantial documentation legitimately explaining their missing deadlines (a simple *spravka* will not be accepted). If a student fails to do so, the student may receive a zero for the assessment.

Extension

There will be no extension of deadlines for any assignments on an individual basis. If circumstances are so dire as for a student to meet the deadline, the student must contact the professor before the deadline with substantial documentation (again, a simple *spravka* will not be accepted).

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in assignments

As we are living in the era of AI, it is important for you to use this technology responsibly. I agree with the idea of using AI to support research activities, but with precautions. I will go through the use of various AI tools during the class. However, it is unacceptable to use AI to do the assignment for you without any critical thinking. If you are unsure whether your practice with AI is acceptable, feel free to have a meeting with me to discuss the issue.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a plan for the course, and we may deviate from it. The instructor will clearly communicate to students any changes that become necessary, and will do so in a timely manner.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction

Required Readings

- Most and Starr, Chapter 1
- Clark and Primo, Chapter 1
- Preparatory Assignment:
 - *What do you expect from this course?*
 - *Why did you choose to study international relations or political science?*
 - *Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Or 10 years?*

Week 2: The Scientific Study of International Processes

Required Readings

- Clark and Primo, Chapter 2
- Most and Starr, Chapter 2 and 3
- Mahoney, James, and Rachel Sweet Vanderpoel (2015) Set Diagrams and Qualitative Research. *Comparative Political Studies* 48(1):65-100.
- Vasquez, John A. (1995) The Post-Positivist Debate: Reconstructing Scientific Enquiry and International Relations Theory After Enlightenment's Fall. In *International Relations Theory Today*, edited by Ken Booth, and Steve Smith. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. pp. 217-240.

Writing Preparation

- Share your research question and motivations behind your question in class

Week 3: Conceptualizing Interstate Conflict

Required Readings

- Vasquez (2009), Chapter 1 and 2
- Most and Starr, Chapter 4
- Levy Jack S. (2012) The "Paths to War" Concept. In Vasquez (2012)
- Wagner, R. Harrison. (2007) *War and the State*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Chapter 3

Recommended Readings

- Hewitt, J. Joseph. (2003) Dyadic Processes and International Crises. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47(5): 669-692.
- Levy, Jack S. (1988) Analytic Problems in the Identification of War. *International Interactions* 14(2): 181-186.
- Vasquez, John A. and Brandon Valentino. (2010) Classification of Interstate Wars. *Journal of Politics* 72(2): 292-309.

Week 4: Conflict Trends and Foundational Empirical Analyses

Required Reading

- Gat, Azar. (2013) Is War Declining - and Why? *Journal of Peace Research* 50(2): 149-157.
- Jenke, Libby, and Christopher Gelphi. (2017) Theme and Variations: Historical Contingencies in the Causal Model of Interstate Conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(10): 2262-2284.
- Houweling, Henk W., and Jan G. Siccama. (1985) The Epidemiology of War, 1816-1980. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 29(4): 614-663.
- Bremer, Stuart A. (1992) Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816-1965. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36(2): 309-341.

Recommended Reading

- Hensel, Paul R. (2002) The More Things Change...: Recognizing and Responding to Trends in Armed Conflict. *Conflict Management and Peace Studies* 19(1): 27-52.

Week 5: Systemic Theories of Conflict

Required Reading

- Waltz, Kenneth N. (1979) *Theory of International Politics*. Boston: McGraw Hill, Chapter 6.
- Mearsheimer, John J. (2014) *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W.Norton, Chapter 2.
- Lake David A. (2007) Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics. *International Security* 32(1): 47-79.

Recommended Reading

- Bull, Hedley (1977) *The Anarchical Society*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Week 6: Polarity and Power

Required Reading

- Organski, A.F.K., and Jacek Kugler. (1980) *The War Ledger*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 1.
- Gilpin, Robert. (1988) The Theory of Hegemonic War. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 591-613.
- Most and Starr, Chapter 6.
- Sample, Susan G. (2018) Power, Wealth, and Satisfaction: When Do Power Transitions Lead to Conflict? *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(9):1905-1931.

Recommended Readings

- De Soysa, Indra, John R. oneal, and Yong-Hee Park. (1997) Testing power Transition Theory Using Alternative Measures of National Capabilities. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41(4): 509-528.
- DiCicco, Jonathan M., and Jack S. Levy. (1999) Power Shifts and Problem Shifts: The Evolution of the Power Transition Research Program. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43(6): 675-704.
- Houweling Henk, and Jan G. Siccama. (1988) Power Transitions as a Cause of War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32(1): 87-102.
- Lebow, Richard N., and Brandon Valentino. (2009) Lost in Translation: A Critical Analysis of Power Transition Theory. *International Relations* 23(3): 389-410.

Week 7: Bargaining

Required Reading

- Fearon, James. (1995) Rationalist Explanations for War. *International Organization* 49(3): 379-414.
- Powell, Robert. (2006) War as a Commitment Problem. *International Organization* 60(1): 169-203.
- Renshon, Jonathan, Julia J. Lee, and Dustin Tingley. (2017) Emotions and the Micro-Foundations of Commitment Problems. *International Organization* 71:S189-S218.
- Wolford, Scott, Dan Reiter, and Clifford Carrubba. (2011) Information, Commitment, and War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55(4): 556-579.

Week 8: Fall Break: NO CLASS

Week 9: Issue-Based

Required Reading

- Hensel, Paul R. (2012) Territory: Geography, Contentious Issues, and World Politics. In Vasquez (2012).
- Gibler, Douglas M. (2012) The Implications of a Territorial Peace. In Vasquez (2012)
- Gibler, Douglas M., and Andrew P. Owsiak. (2018) Democracy and the Settlement of International Borders, 1919 to 2001. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(9): 1847-1875.
- Kim, Nam Kyu. (2018) Are Military Regimes Really Belligerent? *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(6):1151-1178.

Recommended Readings

- Clay, K. Chad, and Andrew P. Owsiak. (2016) The Diffusion of International Border Agreements. *Journal of Politics* 78(2): 427-442.
- Owsiak, Andrew P. (2019) Foundations for Integrating the Democratic and Territorial Peace Arguments. *Conflict Management and Peace Studies* 36(1): 63-87.
-

Week 10: Interstate Rivalries

Required Reading

- Valeriano, Brandon. (2012) Becoming Rivals: The Process of Rivalry Development. In Vasquez (2012).
- Diehl, Paul F., and Gary Goertz (2012) The Rivalry Process: How Rivalries Are Sustained and Terminated. In Vasquez (2012).
- Rider, Toby J., and Andrew P. Owsiak (2013) Border Settlement, Commitment Problems, and the Causes of Contiguous Rivalry. *Journal of Peace Research* 52(4): 717-740.
- Uzonyi, Gary (2018) Interstate Rivalry, Genocide, and Politicide. *Journal of Peace Research* 55(4): 476-490.

Recommended Readings

- Goertz, Gary, Bradford Jones, and Paul F. Diehl. (2005) Maintenance Processes in International Rivalries. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(5): 742-769.
- Findley, Michael G., James A. Piazza, and Joseph K. Young. (2012) Games Rivals Play: Terrorism in Rivalries. *Journal of Politics* 74(1): 235-248.
- Hensel, Paul R. (1999) An Evolutionary Approach to the Study of Interstate Rivalry. *Conflict Management and Peace Studies* 17(2): 175-206.
- Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin, and Cameron G. Thies. (2011) Issue Rivalries. *Conflict Management and Peace Studies* 28(3): 230-260.

Week 11: Alliances

Required Readings

- Kang, Choong-Nam (2012) Alliances: Path to Peace to Path to War? In Vasquez (2012).
- Smith, Alastair (1995) Alliances Formation and War. *International Studies Quarterly* 39(4): 405-425.
- Johnson, Jesse (2017) External Threat and Alliance Formation. *International Studies Quarterly* 61:736-745.
- Kenwick, Michael R., John A. Vasquez, and Matthew A. Powers. (2015) Do Alliances Really Deter? *Journal of Politics* 77(4): 943-954.

Recommended Readings

- Vasquez (2009), Chapter 7.
- Leeds, Brett Ashley (2003) Do Alliance Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes. *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3): 427-439.
- Morrow, James D. (1991) Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances. *American Journal of Political Science* 35(4): 904-933.

Week 12: Political Regimes

Required Reading

- Most and Starr, Chapter 5.
- Mitchell, Sara McLaughlin (2012) Norms and the Democratic Peace. In Vasquez (2012)
- Colgan, Jeff D., and Jessica L.P. Weeks. (2015) Revolution, Personalist Dictators, and International Conflict. *International Organization* 69(1): 163-194.
- Carter, Jeff (2017) The Political Costs of War Mobilization in Democracies and Dictatorships. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(8): 721-735.
- Crisman-Cox, Casey, and Michael Gbilisco. (2018) Audience Costs and the Dynamics of War and Peace. *American Political Science Review* 62(3): 566-580.

Recommended Readings

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. (1999) An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace. *American Political Science Review* 93(4): 791-807.
- Maoz, Zeev, and Bruce Russett. (1993) Normative and Structural Causes of the Democratic Peace, 1946-1986. *American Political Science Review* 87(3): 624-638.
- Rosato, Sebastian. (2003) The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory. *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 585-602.

Week 13: Individuals and Psychology

Required Reading

- Mintz, Alex. (2004) How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(1): 3-13.
- Jervis, Robert. (1988) War and Misperception. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 675-700.
- Caprioli, Mary, and Mark A. Boyer. (2001) Gender, Violence, and International Crisis. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45(4): 503-518.
- Sechser, Todd S. (2018) Reputations and Signaling in Coercive Bargaining. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(2): 318-345.

Recommended Readings

- Gat, Azar (2009) So Why Do People Fight? Evolutionary Theory and the Causes of War. *European Journal of International Relations* 15(4): 571-599.
- Levy, Jack S. (1997) Prospect Theory, Rational Choice, and International Relations. *International Studies Quarterly* 41(1): 87-112.

Week 14: Research Presentation Week 1

Week 15. Research Presentation Week 2

Final Research Paper / Design Due: November 25th 11:59pm