Political Science 401: Comparative Foreign Policy
Fall 2013
Tuesdays and Thursdays
11:00AM-11:50AM

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Overview

How do states make foreign policy decisions? What kinds of factors most influence states’ international behavior on security, economic, and humanitarian questions? What explains the differing foreign policies of states such as the United States, China, Russia, and Iran? This course asks students to approach these fascinating and timely questions from a social scientific perspective, carefully analyzing the logic of theories and evaluating evidence in support of different explanations for how states behave internationally.

The course is organized into two parts. Part I introduces and evaluates competing theories of foreign policy formation. We will discuss the influence of a number of potential determinants of foreign policy, including:

- Anarchy and states’ desire to survive
- Domestic political institutions
- Cognitive and emotional factors
- Individual leaders’ capabilities and personality traits
- Identity, international law, and norms

Part II applies these theoretical ideas to contemporary foreign policy problems and the foreign policies of specific countries, culminating in a multi-day simulation of a foreign policy crisis. Among the questions we will address in the second part of the course are:

- When and why do states carry out humanitarian military interventions?
- When and why do states give foreign aid?
- Why did the U.S. invade Iraq, and why did so few other countries support U.S. policy?
- What determines the foreign policy behaviors of countries such as China and Iran?

To help you deepen as well as broaden your understanding of foreign policy, you will join with others in your section to follow the foreign policy of one country throughout the entire semester. Each section will receive a different set of possible countries representing each region of the world, so you will have some choice of countries. Half-way through the semester, you will submit an individual memo summarizing the most important foreign policy issues facing your country, while applying the theoretical perspectives developed in Part I.
The course then culminates in a multi-day simulation of a contemporary foreign policy crisis; the specific topic will draw from the headlines and will be announced in the last month of the course. You will join with classmates from your discussion section to play the role of the country whose policy you have been following all semester. As part of the simulation, your team will make speeches, carry out secret back-room deals, and ultimately, vote on a resolution in the UN Security Council.

**Course Information**

**Class Format**
Unlike some lecture classes, you should complete the readings before class each day. The lectures will be interactive – I will ask for your opinions, and we will also frequently do class exercises that will require you to have completed the reading.

**Grading**
Your final grade is comprised of the following:

- Individual foreign policy memo: 15%
- Simulation participation (including group memos): 15%
- Section: 20%
- Midterm: 20%
- Final exam: 30%

The final exam will be held during the University-scheduled exam period.

**Foreign Policy Memo: Due in class Thursday, November 7**
20% of your grade will be based on a 7-page memo analyzing the most important foreign policy issues facing your chosen country. The memo will ask you to a) conduct outside research to learn about the most pressing foreign policy issues facing your nation and b) to apply the theories learned in Part I of the class to understanding your country’s foreign policy. We will pass out detailed instructions for the memos later in the semester.

**Simulation**
During the last two weeks of class, you will act as part of a delegation representing an individual country during a simulated foreign policy crisis. The group simulation activities will take place during lecture and section – and also during any additional secret negotiations you might wish to carry out on your own. During the simulation period, your delegation will be asked to give short policy speeches and write short policy memos.

**Discussion Section**
20% of your grade is based on weekly discussion sections led by the Teaching Assistant, Peter Nasuti.

**Readings**
The readings include a variety of book chapters and journal articles. Most of the readings will be posted online on the course’s Learn@UW site, where you can download them and/or print them out. Some of the readings are articles and can be accessed electronically via the UW library. The readings represent some of the most up-to-date and cutting-edge research in political science and foreign policy, and will therefore be challenging at times. Don’t lose heart – we will discuss tricky parts in class. I have attempted to limit the number of pages per week so that you have time to focus on each reading carefully.
In addition to the required readings, I often list optional further readings for those who are interested in a specific topic (for example, in order to develop an idea for an independent project like a senior honors thesis).

Course Website
Our course website is available via Learn@UW. Please check the course website frequently for announcements, information about assignments, and to access the course readings.

Office Hours: I encourage you to see me during office hours with any questions. I will hold office hours on Tuesdays from 1:30pm-3:30pm. You may drop in during those hours, or sign up for a specific time here: http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/jnxv
PART I: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Tuesday, September 3: Introduction to the Course

Thursday, September 5: Levels of Analysis and Theoretical Approaches


Optional further background reading:


Tuesday, September 10: Structural Theories and “Realist” Approaches to State Behavior

John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-54).

Optional further reading:


Thursday, September 12: The Role of Domestic Institutional Structures (1)

Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, Democracies at War, 2004. Chapters 1 and 2.

Optional further reading:


For a provocative take on interest groups and foreign policy, see John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt – “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy” Middle East Policy, Vol XIII: 3, Fall 2006.
Tuesday, September 17: The Role of Domestic Institutional Structures (2)

Thursday, September 19: The Role of Domestic Institutional Structures (3)


*Optional further reading:*


Tuesday, September 24: When Do Individual Leaders Matter?


*Optional further reading:*


Thursday, September 26: Bureaucratic Politics

“Bureaucratic Politics” and “Organizational Politics,” from Mintz and DeRouen *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision-Making*, pp. 70-75

Tuesday, October 1: Norms and International Law

http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/20040301faessay_v83n2_kagan.html?_r=0


Optional further reading:


Thursday, October 3: Norms and International Law, Continued

Tuesday, October 8: Misperception and Cognitive Biases


Optional further reading:


Thursday, October 10: Emotions

Tuesday, October 15: Public Opinion and the Media


*Optional further reading:*


Thursday, October 17: Transnational Actors


*Optional further reading:*


Tuesday, October 22: Catch-Up and Midterm Review

Thursday, October 24: In-Class Midterm Exam

**PART II: FOREIGN POLICY IN THE REAL WORLD**

Tuesday, October 29: When Do States Carry Out Humanitarian Interventions? (I)


Note: readings may change due to current events.

Optional further reading:


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**Thursday, October 31: When Do States Carry Out Humanitarian Interventions?**

(Continued)

**Tuesday, November 5: Foreign Aid: Who Gives It, and Why?**


**Thursday, November 7: Foreign Aid, Continued**

***Foreign Policy Memo due in class***
**Tuesday, November 12: What Does China Want, and Why?**

*note: may change readings if there are any major developments requiring more timely readings*


*Optional further reading:*


**Thursday, November 14: What Does Iran Want, and Why?**

*note: may change readings if there are any major developments requiring more timely readings*


**Tuesday, November 19: Simulation – Intro and Team Planning (IMPORTANT)**
Thursday, November 21: The Decision to Invade Iraq


*Optional further reading:*


Tuesday, November 26: Iraq, Continued

Thursday, November 28: Thanksgiving – No Class

Tuesday, December 3: Simulation – Short Presentations

Thursday, December 5: Simulation – Short Presentations

Tuesday, December 10: Simulation – Vote

Thursday, December 12: Course Wrap-Up
Tuesday, December 17: Final Exam: 2:45-4:45pm