Overview

This research seminar is designed to address both general and specific questions about war and peace. First, in general, why do states fight wars, and what makes war more likely? Second, why did war break out between the U.S. and Iraq in 2003?

We will begin this course by examining prominent theories of the causes of war, drawn from a variety of theoretical “schools.” We will then turn our attention to the 2003 US/Iraq War, attempting to answer a series of puzzles:

• Why did the U.S. government favor an invasion of Iraq?

• Why did the American public and Congress support the invasion of Iraq?

• Why did the international community oppose the war, and why did the U.S. proceed without the support of the U.N.?

• Why didn’t Saddam Hussein reach a peaceful settlement with the U.S., avoiding an invasion? More generally, what did the view look like on his side?

• Why did the U.S. government plan ineffectively for the occupation phase of the conflict?

We will address these questions as social scientists, carefully weighing evidence for and against competing arguments.

Many of the assigned readings are written by individuals with potential political biases; I will ask you to differentiate between fact and opinion and to reach your own conclusions about controversial hypotheses regarding the causes of the Iraq War.

The seminar will culminate in an original research paper on a related question of your own choosing.
Course Information

Grades

The final grade in this course will have four components: attendance and participation, including co-leading 2 class discussions (30%), 1 critical reading summary (10%), a research paper (50%), and the occasional minor assignment (10%).

1. Attendance and Participation - 30%

Participation makes up an important component of your grade in this course. I will ask you to carefully digest all of the readings, and to share your thoughts, critiques, and questions in class each and every week.

In addition to weekly participation, each week one or two students will be responsible for leading the discussion. Each student should plan to lead the discussions twice, and those two weeks should not overlap with the weeks that you choose to write your critical summary (see below).

2. Critical Reading Summary - 10%

Each student must submit 1 short critical summary (2-3 pages) on the assigned reading for one week. They are due to me via email by 6pm the day before class. Signups will take place during the second week of class. The summary should include the following two main components:

• Roughly a half of the paper should summarize the reading(s) for the week.

• The other half of the paper should be devoted to comments and critiques of the readings, including some of the following elements (depending on the type of reading).
  
  – How do the readings relate to each other? Are the findings or arguments consistent or contradictory across the readings? Do the findings extend on or serve as a critique of what you read in other weeks?

  – Do you find the conclusions convincing or not? Why?

  – Do you find the data (historical or otherwise) lacking in some respect? What data would you collect to address the problem that you identify?

  – Are there any interesting research ideas triggered by the readings?
3. Research Paper - 50%

One of the most exciting purposes of this research seminar is to provide students with the opportunity to conduct their own political science research on a topic related to the outbreak, planning, and execution of the Iraq War. The project will unfold in several stages.

(1) Research proposal (5%) – due 6pm Tuesday, October 29 (3-4 pages). Your research proposal should describe the research question you are interested in pursuing and demonstrate the feasibility of your project. Describe why your question is important, what has been written to date on the topic, and what sources you propose to rely on to conduct the research. I encourage you to meet with me while developing your ideas.

(2) Draft (10%) – due Wednesday, November 27 (7-9 pages). Your first draft should introduce your (revised) research question, review any relevant theoretical literature, discuss the sources you will rely on, and relate your preliminary findings.

(3) In-class presentation (10%) – Wednesday, December 11 during seminar.

(4) Final draft (25%) – due at noon on Friday, December 20.

4. Miscellaneous Assignments – 10%

I will occasionally ask for a small research or writing “homework” assignment (for example see the assignment for the second week of class).

Readings

Our readings include a variety of book chapters and journal articles. Most of the readings will be posted online on the course website site (learn@UW), where you can download them and print them out. However, please purchase the following three books:

  - $11.68 new on Amazon, $12.99 Kindle and iTunes

  - $10.88 new on Amazon, $12.99 Kindle and iTunes

  - $16.00 new on Amazon, $9.99 Kindle
**Cell phone and laptop policy**
Please turn off your cell phones in class and do not use a laptop to take notes (in the past I have found that laptops detract from the seminar atmosphere). You may use a kindle or iPad to display notes or readings, but not to type. Please take notes by hand.

**Late Assignments**
Please consult the syllabus for information about the due dates for your assignments. In the interest of fairness to your peers, these dates are firm: extensions will only be given in the case of sickness, family emergency, or religious observance. Late assignments (including the stages of the research paper) will lose one full letter grade for every 24 hours or portion thereof.

**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/jnqxv](http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/jnqxv)
September 4 – Course Introduction

September 11 – Some General Background on the 2003 Decision to Invade

Assignment: 2013 marked the 10-year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Many commentators wrote “retrospectives” discussing either the causes or consequences of the decision to invade Iraq. Please find one article in that genre that you find intriguing, and post it to the discussion section on our Learn@UW site along with some brief commentary. Due Monday September 9th.


See also:


PBS Timeline: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/iraq/etc/cron.html

September 18– Theoretical Perspectives on War, Part 1


Recommended additional reading:


**September 25 – Theoretical Perspectives on War, Part 2**


Russett, Bruce *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (1993), Chapters 1 and 2.

**Monday, September 30 *OR* Monday, October 7: Class Pizza, Movie, and Discussion (*Bush’s War*)**

**October 2 – Theoretical Perspectives on War, Part 3**


**October 9 – The Decision to Invade**


**October 16 – The Decision to Invade, continued**


**October 23 – Perceptions and Misperceptions, Part 1 (The U.S. Side)**


Pillar, Paul R. “Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs* (Mar/Apr 2006) Vol. 85, Iss. 2; (approx 7 pages)


*Recommended further reading:*


See [http://intelligence.senate.gov/pubcurrent.html](http://intelligence.senate.gov/pubcurrent.html) for additional Senate reports.


**October 30 – Perceptions and Misperceptions, Part 2 (The Iraqi Side) (research proposals due 6pm on October 29)**


**November 6 – Assessing the Bargaining Theory of War**


Blog exchange:


**November 13 – Why Didn’t Public Opinion Constrain?**


*Optional:*


**November 20 – U.S. Imperialism? Oil? **RESCHEDULE COURSE TIME**


Leonardo Maugeri, “Not in Oil's Name” From *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2003


Antonia Juhasz, “Why the War in Iraq was Fought for Big Oil”
http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/19/opinion/iraq-war-oil-juhasz/index.html?hpt=hp_c2

**November 27 – First draft of paper due.**

**December 4 – Why Didn’t the UN Stop the War? Why Did the US Plan So Poorly?**


Robert Kagan, “America's Crisis of Legitimacy” from the March/April 2004 issue of *Foreign Affairs* (reprinted by the *New York Times*)


*After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq* (RAND study), Summary, Chapters 1-4 and, Chapter 13

**December 11 – Research Presentations**

* December 20: Final draft due *