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, Russia, 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, March 31
15% 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 few 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, Dominic Despasio.

Readings
The readings include a variety of book chapters and journal articles. There are no readings required for purchase. 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 or the internet. 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 after class, or by appointment.
PART I: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Tuesday, January 19: Introduction to the Course

Thursday, January 21: Levels of Analysis and Theoretical Approaches


Optional further background reading:


Tuesday, January 26: 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, January 28: 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, February 2: The Role of Domestic Institutional Structures (2)

Thursday, February 4: The Role of Domestic Institutional Structures (3)


Optional further reading:


Tuesday, February 9: When Do Individual Leaders Matter?


Optional further reading:


Thursday, February 11: Bureaucratic Politics

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

Tuesday, February 16: Norms and International Law


Optional further reading:


Thursday, February 18: Norms and International Law, Continued

Tuesday, February 23: Misperception and Cognitive Biases


Optional further reading:


Thursday, February 25: Emotions

Tuesday, March 1: Public Opinion and the Media


Optional further reading:


Thursday, March 3: Transnational Actors


Optional further reading:


Tuesday, March 8: Catch-Up and exam review

Thursday, March 10: In-Class Mid-semester exam

PART II: FOREIGN POLICY IN THE REAL WORLD

Note: Readings for all of these modules may change in reaction to current events. Please feel free to email me if you have come across something that could be relevant!

Tuesday, March 15: When Do States Carry Out Humanitarian Interventions? (I)


Optional further reading:


Thursday, March 17: When Do States Carry Out Humanitarian Interventions? (Continued)

[SPRING BREAK]

Tuesday, March 29: Foreign Aid: Who Gives It, and Why?


Thursday, March 31: Foreign Aid, Continued

****Foreign Policy Memo due in class
Tuesday, April 5: China


Optional further reading:


Thursday, April 7: Iran


Tuesday, April 12: Simulation – Intro and Team Planning (IMPORTANT TO BE IN LECTURE)
Thursday, April 14: Russia

Readings TBA

Tuesday, April 19: The Decision to Invade Iraq


*Optional further reading:*


Thursday, April 21: Iraq, continued

Tuesday, April 26: Simulation – Presentations

Thursday, April 28: Simulation continued

Tuesday, May 3: Simulation – Vote

Thursday May 5: Course Wrap-Up

FINAL EXAM DURING UNIVERSITY-SCHEDULED TIME: 5/13/2016 7.45am-9.45am