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# Political Science 400: Understanding War

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Prof. Stephen Long  
213 Weinstein Hall  
(804) 484-1566  
[slong@richmond.edu](mailto:slong@richmond.edu)

Office Hours:  
MW 10:30-12, F 10:30-12, 2:30-4  
Or By Appointment or Skype  
Skype ID: Prof.Long

## Course Website

Visit Blackboard at

<http://blackboard.richmond.edu/>

## Course Objectives

This course is a senior seminar examining the causes and patterns of international conflict. Rather than covering specific conflicts in depth, we will take a theoretical, analytical approach to international conflict. In so doing, we will discuss empirical evidence supporting various theories from the international relations subfields of conflict processes and security studies. This course assumes that you have taken Introduction to International Relations (PLSC 250) and Social Science Inquiry (PLSC 270).

The first goal of the course is to guide you through the literature that has resulted from decades of scientific research on the causes of international conflict. You will gain a more advanced understanding of traditional theories of international relations, such as realism and liberalism, to which you were exposed in PLSC 250, as well as research that views conflict in terms of historical relationships, contentious issues, ethnicity and identity, and other concepts and frameworks.

The second goal of the course is to provide a structure in which you can successfully complete a senior seminar research paper in fulfillment of the graduation requirement for the Political Science major. While writing such a paper can seem to be a daunting task at first, a good portion of our class time and out-of-class individual meetings will be devoted to guiding you through the process of writing a high-quality student research paper. In addition, in lieu of traditional assessments like a midterm and final exam, your assignments in the course will be formative steps that will help you move forward on your papers.

# Course Requirements

- Class Participation, Discussion Leadership, and Outlines (30% total)
- Two Exploratory Annotated Bibliographies (30% total)
- Research Paper and Presentation (40% total)
- Attendance Required

## **Class Participation, Discussion Leadership, and Outlines (30%)**

This is a discussion-oriented class in which there will be no lectures. Each week, two students will lead the class in a discussion of the assigned readings. I will assign topics in advance. Where appropriate, I will help direct the discussion, but it will be the discussion leaders' responsibility to keep the discussion moving.

Student discussion leaders will be expected to prepare an outline of the readings and at least five discussion questions *in advance of discussion* for each reading assignment. **Leaders' questions and outlines will be due at 5:00 p.m. the day before the discussion via email.** The questions and outlines for each student's two turns as a discussion leader will make up one third of the participation/leadership grade (or 10% of the course grade). Performance in class as a discussion leader will make up another third of the participation/leadership grade (or 10% of the course grade).

This does not mean that weeks in which you are not a discussion leader are less important. You will only be able to keep up with me and your responsible classmates if you *always* complete the required readings for the week, even when you are not a discussion leader. The quantity and quality of your comments during discussions will determine the remaining third of your class participation/discussion leadership grade, or 10% of your overall course grade. If you don't think you are speaking up enough in class, please arrange to meet with me to discuss the matter as early as possible.

## **Two Exploratory Annotated Bibliographies (15% each)**

In order to practice the skills necessary for your research paper and to demonstrate your understanding of the research we are reading, you will prepare two annotated bibliographies during the semester. These bibliographies should identify the major arguments made by scholars about a phenomenon in previous research, group those arguments into schools of thoughts or camps, and summarize the articles or books that belong to each school of thought. For each bibliography entry, you should identify the general argument, the specific hypotheses being tested, the evidence used for analysis, and the conclusions reached. Try to keep your summaries concise, but detailed enough for me to understand the article without reading it myself. Each bibliography should cover a minimum of 15 sources. I recommend that

you choose two topics from the literature that you believe may be useful for your research paper so that you can use one of the bibliographies as a starting point for your paper's literature review See **Baglione, Chapter 3** for more on how to write an effective annotated bibliography.

### **Research Paper and Presentation (40%)**

Your goal in this project is to identify a research question in the field of international conflict, formulate a research design to attempt to answer that question, and use some form of empirical analysis to investigate the question.

#### *Research*

To complete the project, you will need to conduct library research. Library sources include relevant books, professional journal articles, policy magazines, major newspapers, and original government documents. A bibliography must be included with each assignment. The bibliography is not counted as a part of the project length requirement. Internet sources can be used to compliment your research, provided you include the appropriate URLs in your bibliography.

#### *Installment #1: Identifying The Puzzle*

**Due September 15.** In this stage of the project, you will answer two questions: (1) What is the research question that you will address? (2) Why is this a puzzle that requires serious consideration and new research? Expected length: 1 page. See **Baglione, Chapter 2** for more on how to think productively about your research question.

#### *Installment #2: Evaluating the Literature*

**Due October 6.** After establishing your puzzle, you must identify the relevant set of studies that have attempted to address the puzzle in the past. This will require substantial reading and note-taking before you begin to write the installment. As you read the research papers that you identify through JSTOR, Google Scholar, and other search tools and databases, you should identify major arguments, themes, and schools of thought that appear in the literature. In the literature review, you will discuss the specifics of each explanation or school of thought as well as identify the plausible and implausible aspects of each explanation. The review should emphasize the opportunities for new research that the existing studies provide. Include a bibliography containing no fewer than 15 sources with this assignment. You may review sources that you used in one of your exploratory literature reviews, but they should be discussed in the context of the larger review you do for this installment of your research paper, not copied verbatim. Expected length, excluding the bibliography: 5-7 pages. See **Baglione, Chapter 4** for more on how to write an effective literature review.

#### *Installment #3: Your Argument and Testable Hypothesis/es*

**Due October 20.** In this installment, you will propose your own explanation of the phenomenon in question. This may be a theory from another part of the literature on conflict that you think applies to your question, a modification of an existing argument relating to your question, or a new argument of your own. This section should conclude with a clearly stated, testable hypothesis. Expected length: 5 pages. See **Baglione, Chapter 5** for more on how to develop your argument into testable hypotheses.

*Installment #4: Research Design*

**Due November 3.** In this installment, you will explain the social science methods that you intend to use to test your theory on the evidence, briefly describe the evidence you will be using to test your theory and why you have chosen that evidence, and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of your approach. Expected length, excluding bibliography: 2-3 pages. See **Baglione, Chapter 7** for more on how to prepare your research design.

*Installment #5: Results and Analysis*

**Due December 1.** In this installment, you will pursue the research design that you proposed in the previous installment. For most students, this will entail a comparative case analysis, following an accepted case selection method, that identifies the values of the key explanatory and control variables in the cases selected. Students who have sufficient experience with SPSS may choose to perform some form of quantitative data analysis. All proposed hypotheses must be tested in the analysis, measurement of concepts must be consistent and clear across the analysis and all relevant results must be discussed. You will write a brief conclusion explaining what you have learned from the project and suggesting a direction for future research. Expected length, excluding bibliography: 8 to 15 pages. See **Baglione, Chapters 8 and 9** for more on how to present your analysis and complete your paper.

*Final Version and Presentation*

**Due December 8.** Individual installments of the research paper will receive feedback, but no official grade. Only the final product will be graded, and your revisions may make the final product quite different than a simple assembly of your installments. The final project will be around 25-30 pages in length, not including the bibliography. The final written product will constitute 30% of your course grade.

In addition to the written product, you will present the results of your research papers to the class in a 15 to 20-minute talk at the end of the semester. Presentations should use some form of visual aid (slides, charts, etc.). The presentation will constitute 10% of your course grade. Presentations will take place during the last three class periods.

# Grading Policy

Letter grades for the course will be assigned along the following scale:

A+:	96.5% or greater
A:	93.5-96.4%
A-:	89.5-93.4%
B+:	86.5-89.4%
B:	83.5-86.4%
B-:	79.5-83.4%
C+:	76.5-79.4%
C:	73.5-76.4%
C-:	69.5-73.4%
D+:	66.5-69.4%
D:	63.5-66.4%
D-:	59.5-63.4%
F:	59.4 or below%

## Books

- Lisa A. Baglione, “Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods,” CQ Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-4833-7616-5 (paper).
- Bruce Russett and John Oneal, “Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations,” Norton, 2001. ISBN: 0-393-97684-X (paper).
- John J. Mearsheimer, “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics,” Norton, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-393-34927-6 (paper).
- Fortna, Victoria Page, “Peace Time: Cease-Fire Agreements and the Durability of Peace,” Princeton University Press, 2004. ISBN: 0-691-11512-5 (paper).
- Biddle, Stephen, “Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle,” Princeton University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0691128023 (paper).

## Schedule

### August 28–30: Realism and Neorealism

- Baglione, Chapter 2, “Getting Started: Finding a Research Question”
- Mearsheimer, Chapters 1–5
- **Discussion Leader:** Dr. Long

## September 4–6: Power Transition

- Baglione, Chapter 3, “Learning Proper Citation Forms, Finding the Scholarly Debate, and Summarizing and Classifying Arguments: The Annotated Bibliography”
- Ronald L. Tammen, Douglas Lemke, et al, *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century*, Chapters 1, 2, and 7 (BB)
- Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke, “The Power Transition Research Program: Assessing Theoretical and Empirical Advances” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## September 11–13: Liberalism and Neoliberalism

- Research Question Due September 15 by 5:00 p.m.
- Baglione, Chapter 4, “Making Sense of the Scholarly Answers to Your Research Question: Writing the Literature Review”
- Russett and O’Neal, Chapters 1–5
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## September 18–20: Psychological and Biological Approaches

- Annotated Bibliography 1 Due September 22 by 5:00 p.m.
- Baglione, Chapter 7, “Making Your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism: The Research Design”
- Jack Levy, “Loss Aversion, Framing Effects, and International Conflict: Perspectives from Prospect Theory” (BB)
- Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, Chapters 1–3 (BB)
- Robert Axelrod and William Hamilton, “The Evolution of Cooperation” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## September 25–27: Rationalist and Bargaining Approaches

- James Fearon: “Rationalist Explanations for War” (BB)
- Dan Reiter, “Exploring the Bargaining Model of War” (BB)
- David A. Lake, “Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## October 2–4: Geography, Territory, and Conflict

- Literature Review Due October 6 by 5:00 p.m.
- Baglione, Chapter 8, “Evaluating the Argument: The Analysis and Assessment Section”
- John Vasquez and Marie T. Henehan, “Territorial Disputes and the Probability of War, 1816–1992” (BB)
- Paul Huth, “Territory: Why Are Territorial Disputes Between States a Central Cause of Conflict?” (BB)
- Harvey Starr and G. Dale Thomas, “The Nature of Contiguous Borders: Ease of Interaction, Salience, and the Analysis of Crises” (BB)
- Richard Rosecrance, “The Rise of the Virtual State: Territory Becomes Passé.” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## October 9–11: History and Conflict

- Annotated Bibliography 2 Due October 13 by 5:00 p.m.
- Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl, “The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks” (BB)
- William R. Thompson, “Principal Rivalries” (BB)
- Mark Crescenzi and Andrew J. Enterline, “Time Remembered: A Dynamic Model of Interstate Interaction” (BB)
- Paul Hensel, “An Evolutionary Approach to the Study of Interstate Rivalry” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## October 18: Civil Wars and Insurgencies

- Argument Due October 20 by 5:00 p.m.
- Jeffrey Dixon, “What Causes Civil Wars? Integrating Quantitative Research Findings” (BB)
- Jacob Kathman, “Civil War Contagion and Neighboring Interventions” (BB)
- Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, “Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## October 23–25: Alliances

- James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances” (BB)
- Brett Ashley Leeds, “Alliance Reliability in Times of War: Explaining State Decisions to Violate Treaties” (BB)
- Brett Ashley Leeds, “Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## October 30–November 1: War Outcomes

- Research Design Due November 3 by 5:00 p.m.
- Baglione, Chapter 9, “Bringing the Paper Together in Three Essential Ways: The Conclusion, Introduction, and Title”
- Stephen Biddle, *Military Power* Chapters 1-4. Others recommended but optional.
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## November 6–8: Securing the Peace

- Victoria Page Fortna, *Peace Time: Cease-Fire Agreements and the Durability of Peace*
- **Discussion Leaders:**

## November 13–15: The Future of War

- Brandon Valeriano and Ryan Ce. Maness, “The Dynamics of Cyber Conflict between Rival Antagonists, 2001–11” (BB)
- Peter H. Gleick, “Water and Conflict: Fresh Water Resources and International Scarcity,” (BB)
- Nils Petter Gleditsch, “The Future of Armed Conflict” (BB)
- **Discussion Leaders:**



## November 20: Project Work Time

## November 29, December 4, December 6

- Analysis Due December 1
- Research project presentations: 15 to 20 minutes per presentation, visuals recommended.
- Final Written Version Due December 8 by 5:00 p.m.