

International Politics, Fall 2019

(PSCI 1102)

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:10-2:25, Cohen Hall 203

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Office Hours Tuesdays 3:30-4:30
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Overview

Why can't countries always peacefully arrive at agreements that avoid war? Given that wars do happen, why are there not more of them? How much power do presidents really have? Is 'international law' meaningful in the absence of an international government to enforce it? Is democratization inevitable? Why is an international solution to climate change so difficult? Is international trade good or bad for American workers? Why did the world descend into a global recession in 2008? Why isn't there a single global currency? Do nuclear weapons make us safer?

This course offers an introduction to international politics via an overview of the major topics in the field and a survey of the tools and methods needed to study the topics scientifically. We will begin with big questions about inter-state war and work our way through other forms of violent conflict in the first half of the course, culminating in a study of nuclear weapons. In the second half, we will consider issues of international political economy – trade, currency, development– and the politics involved in international law, human rights and global environmental concerns. We will be working through the textbook *World Politics* (listed below) and a few supplemental book chapters and journal articles when we need greater detail.

A key objective of the course is to expose the difference between being well-informed about current international events and being able to analyze international politics. While the former is admirable, the latter is different and the goal of the course. Analyzing international politics well requires a set of skills that be initially challenging. This course is designed to help you develop these skills and presumes no background in international politics– we will start with the basics. That being said, some of the material is subtle and challenging, and some of the readings are quite technical. The lectures will distill the material as much as possible, and the TA-led discussion sections will offer an additional chance to address challenging material. Students who make the most of these resources and approach the course with a willingness to rise to the challenge will do very well.

Requirements

Homework Assignments: 18%

The course covers a lot of information. Homework assignments are intended to clarify key concepts and offer practice applying course material before exams. There will be six homework assignments with varying formats throughout the semester. Details and deadlines will be distributed by the TA.

Midterms: 42%

There will be two in-class midterm exams, one Thursday, September 26th, and one on Thursday, October 17th, each worth 21% of the final grade. **The two midterm exams are held during regularly scheduled meetings of class and cannot be rescheduled.** The TA will lead a review session during class time the Tuesdays immediately prior.

Final: 40%

A cumulative final exam will be held on **Friday, December 13th at 3pm**. The time and place are determined by the University Registrar. There will be a review session led by the TA and held during class time on the last official meeting of class, Thursday, December 5th.

Additional course information will be distributed in lecture, in section, over the email list, or on the course website.

Course Materials

There is one required **book** for the course, referenced as FLS in the schedule below:

- Jeffrey A. Frieden, David A. Lake, and Kenneth A. Schultz. *World politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions*. WW Norton New York, 4th edition, 2018.

Additional readings will be available on the course website.

Two of the homework assignments will require viewing the following two **films** outside of class:

- *Seven Days in May*. Dir. John Frankenheimer. 1964.
- *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Dirs. David Naylor and Stanley Kubrick. 1964.

The films are available through many services, including for rent on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Plan ahead to ensure you will have access to a copy in time to complete the homework.

Other Resources

There will be a **Discussion Section** led by the TA that meets weekly. These meetings are designed to offer an additional opportunity to engage with challenging material, and to offer a smaller setting in which to ask questions. The TA will distribute the schedule and provide additional details.

Norton offers a suite of review materials and resources that accompany our textbook on their website.

Late Policy

Late homework assignments will not be accepted. An assignment is ‘late’ if it is submitted past the due date and time or if it is submitted in an improper format. Exceptions for documented personal emergencies will be assessed by the teaching staff on a case-by-case basis.

You may earn **one no-questions-asked homework extension** by participating in a Vanderbilt RIPS study. Additional details about how and when to participate will be distributed in class. One extension may be earned in this way during the semester. To use the extension, indicate on the late homework that you are using your RIPS extension and your homework will count as on time for **up to five days** past its original due date.

Academic Honesty

Collaboration to brainstorm answers to homework questions and to study together for exams is highly encouraged. However, *students are all expected to submit their own work for a grade*. Misrepresenting others’ work as one’s own—including the unpublished work of current or past students—is cause for failure and disciplinary action at the university level.

Schedule of Readings (subject to additions and substitutions)

Week 1: Introduction

8/22/19 : Course introduction and logistics

- FLS Introduction

Week 2: The Science of Politics

8/27/19: Studying international politics scientifically

- FLS Chapter 1
- FLS Chapter 2

8/29/19: NO LECTURE

Week 3: Game Theory and a Preview of War

9/3/19: Quick intro to game theory

- FLS Chapter 2 Appendix (p. 74-79)
- Chapters 5-7 (p. 119-199) of:

Avinash K Dixit. *Thinking strategically: The competitive edge in business, politics, and everyday life*. WW Norton & Company, 1993.

9/5/19: Game theory continued and preview of rationalist war

No new readings

Week 4: Interstate War

9/10/19: Why are there wars?

- FLS Chapter 3
- James D. Fearon. Rationalist explanations for war. *International Organization*, 49(3):379-414, 1995.

9/12/19: Why are there wars? continued

No new readings

Week 5: A Richer Picture of War

9/17/19: Domestic politics and war

- FLS Chapter 4
- Robert D. Putnam. Diplomacy and domestic politics: The logic of two-level games. *International organization*, 42(3):427–460, 1988.

9/19/19: Alliances and international institutions

- FLS Chapter 5

Week 6: Midterm I

9/24/19: TA review session

9/26/19: Midterm Exam I

Week 7: Intra-State War and Violent Conflict

10/1/19: Civil war

- FLS Chapter 6 first half, p. 214-242
- James D Fearon and David D Laitin. Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *American political science review*, 97(1):75–90, 2003.

10/3/19: Terrorism

- FLS Chapter 6 second half, p. 242-263
- Ethan Bueno De Mesquita. The quality of terror. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3):515–530, 2005.

Week 8: Nuclear Weapons

10/8/19: Nuclear weapons

- Chapters 1-6 (p. 1-107) in:
Joseph M Siracusa. *Nuclear weapons: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

10/10/19: Nuclear weapons continued

- Chapters 1, 2, and 6 (p. 3-81, 175-214) in:
Scott Douglas Sagan and Kenneth Neal Waltz. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*. WW Norton & Company, 2013.

Week 9: Midterm II

10/15/19: TA Review Session

10/17/19: Midterm Exam II

Week 10: Fall Break

10/22/19: NO LECTURE

10/24/19: NO LECTURE

Week 11: International Norms and Human Rights

10/29/19: International norms

- FLS Chapter 11

10/31/19: Human rights

- FLS Chapter 12

Week 12: International Trade and Finance

11/5/19: Trade

- FLS Chapter 7

11/7/19: International financial relations

- FLS Chapter 8

Week 13: International Currencies and Development

11/12/19: International monetary relations

- FLS Chapter 9

11/14/19: Development: the long-term

- FLS Chapter 10
- Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson. The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. *The American Economic Review*, 91(5):1369–1401, 2001.

Week 14: Development and the Environment

11/19/19: Development: the short-term

- Chapter 1 (p. 1-29) in:
Robert H Bates. *Markets and states in tropical Africa: the political basis of agricultural policies*. University of California Pr, 1981.
- Chapters 1 and 2 (p. 1-40) in:
Abhijit V Banerjee and Esther Duflo. *Poor economics: A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty*. PublicAffairs Store, 2011.

11/21/19: Global environmental issues

- FLS Chapter 13

Week 15: Thanksgiving Break

11/26/19: NO LECTURE

11/28/19: NO LECTURE

Week 16: International Politics, the Long View

12/3/19: Conflict and cooperation over time

- James D Fearon and David D Laitin. Explaining interethnic cooperation. *American political science review*, pages 715–735, 1996.
- David Skarbek. Self-governance in san pedro prison. *The independent review*, 14(4):569–585, 2010.
- Chapter 2, “The Pacification Process” (p. 31-58) in:
Steven Pinker. *The better angels of our nature: Why violence has declined*. Penguin.com, 2011.

12/5/19: TA Review Session

Final Exam

12/13/19: Final Exam, 3pm

Alternate exam date available only to those who obtain written permission from Professor Larson prior to December 2nd: 12/9/19 at noon.