POLSCI 662S: Problems in International Politics  
Fall 2014

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Office hours: Thursdays, 9:30-11:30am, or by appointment  
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Seminar location: Gross Hall 111

Objectives

This course considers many of the current debates and questions being addressed in recent and emerging scholarship related to conflict and cooperation in the international system. The objectives are to a) become familiar with the current state of the literatures related to security, peace and conflict; b) generate thesis, dissertation and/or paper ideas; and c) become literate in the state-of-the-art methods being used.

In weekly discussion, we will discuss how the existing literature has attempted to answer the questions posed for each week, what answers have emerged, what questions remain, and what types of research designs might be well suited to answer those questions. Response papers that students submit before class begins will facilitate the discussion. Students will also write a research paper in two parts that addresses a major question related to the study of security, peace and conflict.

Requirements

Class participation (20%)

Students are expected to come prepared to discuss all of the readings and to draw connections between them. This is not a lecture course, and the quality of the discussion depends largely on the willingness of the students to engage the material as a class.

Short response papers (6x5%, 30% total):

Students will submit short overviews of possible future research questions that relate to each week's readings. These overviews will consist of a one-sentence research question that covers a more specific component of the broader question asked for that week. The chosen question should be one that is left unanswered (or insufficiently answered) in the selected readings. The response will also include a paragraph about why that research question is worth asking in light of the assigned readings. The response will conclude with a paragraph or two about what a research design might look like to address this question. What is the key outcome to explain, and what sources of evidence or data might be used? In terms of evidence and sources of data, students should investigate the sources available before writing their response. Students must submit at least six papers over the course of the semester and are welcome to submit more (the highest six will count toward the semester grade). All submitted papers must cover the current week.
Research paper (1st part: 20%; final project: 30%): 

At the end of the semester, students will turn in a research paper between 25 and 40 pages in length (double spaced, including the bibliography). The paper must address a major question (could be one of the questions here, or it could be something else), make a contribution to the literature, apply to current cases, provide a coherent argument, and deliver some results of the investigation. In terms of results, students should create a research design and carry out at least a “pilot” version of the research design, which might be a small modification to an existing study. If the full research design is more extensive that what could be carried out given time and training constraints, the paper can discuss what the paths forward should be after the “pilot” study. On October 22, students will turn in the first part of their paper, which should include introduction, literature review, theory and research design sections. Papers will be returned by the following week with comments that should be taken into account when completing the final paper. The full final paper is due on December 12, by 5:00pm. The citations and bibliography should consistently be in the style of one of the major political science journals.

Schedule (readings are in no particular order)

8/27: No class, Dr. Beardsley will be in Washington, DC for the APSA conference

9/3: Can international institutions and law facilitate cooperation?

9/10: If US influence is declining, does it matter?
9/17: No class, Dr. Beardsley will be in Uppsala, Sweden for a talk

9/24: Is conflict destined to repeat?

10/1: How can peace adhere following armed violence?

10/8: Does the resource environment foster conflict?
10/15: Do hearts and minds matter to insurgency and counter-insurgency?


10/22: What alternative policies are available for counter-insurgency?


10/29: Does male dominance in security and political institutions matter?

Research papers, 1st part due.


11/5: Does leader accountability matter to state behavior?

11/12: Can we predict conflict?

11/19: How do we improve human rights?

12/3: Should we do more humanitarian intervention?


12/8: 10am Informal End-of-Class Debrief

12/12: Papers due