POL 760: Core Seminar in Security Peace and Conflict  
Fall 2013

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Office hours: Mondays 1-3pm & by appointment

Overview

This course introduces students to the literature and research agendas related to security, peace and conflict studies. We will cover a wide array of approaches that relate to both interstate and intrastate conflict and cooperation. While we will not have time to comprehensively cover all the important relevant work, we will sample a spectrum of the work from the foundational studies to the state-of-the-art approaches.

Goals

Through the readings and discussion, students will get a sense for where the literature has been and where it is going. As students move forward with their studies, this course will help students develop a fuller sense of the context in which other work they read is situated. Students will also be able to better understand the contribution of new work, including their own.

Students will also develop important skills necessary for the completion of their own original scholarship. Specifically, they will hone their ability to quickly digest material in journal articles and books and be able to identify the contributions and potential flaws. Students will also be exposed to a variety of research designs and cultivate a sense for some best practices in the field.

The final paper in the course is intended to help students move from a role of being a consumer and critic of research to a producer of the research. The students will construct falsifiable hypotheses that will help advance our understanding of international security, peace and conflict and then design a rigorous research design to test those hypotheses.

Requirements

There are three requirements for this course. Students are expected to strictly adhere to the Duke Community Standard in all of their work and participation, and violations will be enforced. All sources must be correctly cited, and all work must be each student’s own.

Class Participation (20%: 10% for a formal presentation, 10% for general participation)  
The course will rely heavily on class discussion, so each student is expected to come to class with all the required reading completed. Students are also expected to contribute to the discussion. Each week, a student will present on the readings from each week. The presenters should speak for 10-15 minutes on the overall context and contribution of the readings. There should be two components of the discussion. First, the presenters should
relate the week’s readings to each other. How do they agree? How do they differ? How do they build on each other? Do some of the readings touch on completely different topics? Second, the presenters should discuss how these readings fit into the broader literature. The presenters will independently investigate the topic and summarize the major foundational pieces of the literature that the assigned pieces both build on and call into question. Also, doing a search of the major political science journals and reading the abstracts, presenters will mention some of the important pieces of the literature that were either contemporaries of the assigned reading or that came after. The purpose of this exercise is to gain experience in doing literature reviews and to introduce the class to major pieces of the literature that we do not have time to discuss in depth.

*Short Response Papers* (30% total: 6 papers @ 5% each)
During many of the weeks in which the students do not present, they will write a 2-3 page (double spaced) critique of one of the readings for that week. The students will complete 6 such papers, and they can choose which weeks to submit papers. Students cannot submit more than one paper for a given week. The students should first identify the question being addressed and the core argument. They will then briefly give an overall assessment of the reading, in terms of its general strengths and weaknesses. The bulk of the paper will be devoted to providing recommendations to make the research stronger. What are the key shortcomings, and how might one address them? The exercise is meant to strengthen the student’s ability to not just poke holes in an argument but to be able to critically think about addressing the problems that arise. The students should try to avoid “low hanging fruit” such as mere recommendations for control variables and instead focus on bigger issues related to theoretical development and research design.

*Research Paper (50%)*
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 theoretical question, make a contribution to the literature, provide a coherent argument, evaluate in depth an illustrative historical case and provide the protocol for a rigorous research design. On **September 19**, students will turn in an abstract of their paper topic and research question, including an overview of the research contribution and the selection of an illustrative case. The 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**

**29-Aug.**  **Paradigms in the study of SPC:** No class, for APSA, but readings are still required.


http://johnmearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/Leaving%20Theory%20Behind.pdf


5-Sep **Maintenance of Order: Power and Structure**

12-Sep **Maintenance of Order: Norms/Regimes**

19-Sep **Maintenance of Order: Interdependence**


26-Sep **Causes of Conflict: Information**


3-Oct **Causes of conflict: Credibility/Mistrust**


10-Oct **Causes of Conflict: Domestic Politics I**


17-Oct  **Causes of Conflict: Domestic Politics II**


24-Oct  **Causes of Conflict: Ethnicity**


31-Oct  **Termination: Agreements & Formal Institutions**


7-Nov Termination: Third-Party Conflict Management


14-Nov Economics and SPC: Natural Resources and Sanctions


21-Nov  
**Civil-Military Relations**

5-Dec  
**Political Terror**

**Grading Scale**

The assignments will be graded on a 16-point scale that is basically a 4-point scale stretched out to 16 points. These grades will not be assigned based on the docking of points, but on the comprehensive assessment of the strength of the material. Grading standards used in the assignment of these values are provided below.
16-point scale:

- [15-16] -- A
- [14-15] -- A-
- [13-14] -- B+
- [11-13] -- B
- [10-11] -- B-
- [9-10] -- C+
- [7-9] -- C
- [6-7] -- C-
- [2-6] -- D
- [0-2) -- F

**Grading Standards**

The following standards will be applied to the evaluation of assignments in the class.

**A  Exceptional Performance.**

Consistently outstanding work on all course-related tasks at a level that distinguishes the student from other members of the class. A comprehensive and incisive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A frequently demonstrated exceptional capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. The ability to master and integrate large amounts of factual material and abstract theories. An outstanding ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

**A- Excellent Performance.**

Consistently strong work on all course-related tasks. A comprehensive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A clearly demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands well and can integrate the relevant factual and theoretical material central to the course. A strong ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

**B+ Very Good Performance.**

Consistently above average work on all course-related tasks. A very good grasp of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A generally demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical, and logical thinking. A very good command of factual and theoretical material, and some capacity to integrate the two. A solid ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

**B Good Performance.**
Good and generally consistent work on all course-related tasks. A general understanding of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. Modest evidence of the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. A good understanding of factual and theoretical material, but limited evidence of the capacity to integrate the two. A basic ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B- Satisfactory Performance

Satisfactory work on course-related tasks. A reasonable understanding of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. An infrequently demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands at a basic level the facts and theories related to the course, but demonstrates weak integration skills. A limited or inconsistent ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

C+/C/C- Adequate Performance

Adequate performance on course-related tasks. An understanding of the basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A rarely demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. An inability to go beyond a recitation of basic factual material related to the class. Demonstrated weaknesses in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

D/D+ Minimal Passing Performance.

Barely acceptable work on course-related tasks. A generally superficial and often inconsistent familiarity with the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A failure to demonstrate the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking related to course content. An uneven understanding of basic factual material related to the course; no evidence of fact/theory integration. Demonstrates significant gaps in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

F Unacceptable Performance

Fails to meet minimum course expectations. Unable to understand even the most basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. Demonstrates an inability to engage in coherent written or oral discussion of course material. Does not satisfy specific course expectations with respect to attendance, deadlines, participation, etc.