
POLI 142P: Crisis Areas in World Politics

University of California San Diego, Summer I 2023

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Office Hours: SSB 447, Tu 2pm-3pm

Course Information:
Tu/Th 11:00am-1:50am
WLH 2112

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1 Course Summary

This course reviews theories of political violence, interstate war and civil conflict. Students will reflect on different research areas in international security that today's academics and policy makers are concerned with. And we will evaluate conflict drivers, dynamics and challenges to inferences as we seek to make sense of security threats around the world. We will answer questions such as: Why do civil wars occur, who fights them and when do they end? How do civil wars become protracted? What crises do technological advancements and other developments pose for international peace and security? And finally, how do states mingle in the affairs of other states and seek to resolve conflicts?

2 Objectives

In this class, we will **review** the academic literature in political science as it pertains to the above mentioned questions. We will gain a deeper **understanding** of the role and patterns of political violence for political process and for national and international actors. Students will **understand** and **define** key actors, concepts, and issue areas of international relations. And we will **apply** existing theories and proposed explanations to case studies.

3 Course Requirements

Class Participation - 20%
Readings and Quizzes - 20%
Mid-Term Assignment (Week 3) - 20%
Final Group Assignment (Week 5) - 30%
Final Response Paper - 10%
Extra Credit Assignments (up to 3 points)

Grading Scale

A = 90-100% B = 80-89% C = 70-79% D = 60-69% F = 59%-below

Engagement and Asynchronous Participation

This is a class that depends on your participation in exercises and discussions. You are expected to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the assigned readings. And your colleagues and I depend on your active and meaningful participation in class. Meaningful participation is both useful and respectful. Comments and questions should be well thought out and critiques of others' points should be considerate.

Hybrid Learning Format

Given the intensity of summer instruction, we will use a hybrid format of instruction. Each week you have to complete readings in preparation for our class. Additional to the readings you will watch a pre-recorded lecture video on the major theories and concepts. We will then only meet in-person for a portion of our assigned class time, as I count reading and watching the videos as part of your class work. We will meet each TuTh from 11:00am to 12:50pm to recap the theories and discuss the readings before applying the content to real world scenarios. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU WATCH THE LECTURES AND DO THE READINGS BEFORE.

Remote Learning: Given the changing conditions for teaching and learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, I reserve the right to adapt the course to fit a hybrid or fully remote format should it become necessary. Should classes become remote during our term, classes will continue to occur as scheduled via Zoom. Regardless, materials will be available online and class participation either in-person or remotely is key to your learning in this class.

Note on Weekly Readings

The readings are essential for your understanding of the key ideas as well as for your ability to actively contribute in this class. It is paramount that you come prepared to class, ready to engage in a discussion that rests on your knowledge of the readings. I selected a minimum amount of assigned reading material. Therefore, I expect everyone to have ample time to engage with the material. Should you be further interested in a specific topic, or want to write a paper about a specific subject, you should engage with the recommended readings for that day. Please come to class with one question per assigned reading.

You will find the readings marked with (A) or (B). (A) indicates that these readings are required for our theoretical lecture part of our class. These cover theories and concepts. (B) indicates that the reading is required for our applied component. Each week, we will engage with theoretical scholarly works on a topic during the pre-recorded lecture and at the beginning of class and apply our knowledge to better understand a case in the latter half of the in-person meeting.

While reading ask yourself: What main question is the author addressing? What is the answer the author provides? What has previous literature done and how is the author speaking to it (criticizing it, confirming it etc.)? Are there any debates/disagreements in the literature? Does the article focus on explanations for the onset of conflict, its conduct or resolution? How does the article further our understanding? Does the author make a convincing argument or what evidence is weak and unconvincing? What are open questions for future debate?

Assignments and Examination

Readings and Quizzes

Each week, your reading assignments and pre-recorded lecture videos will be accompanied by a graded quiz. This quiz will be embedded into the canvas module for that class session and completion of the quiz as well as completion of the module itself count towards your participation grade.

Mid-Term Assignment

We will have a take home mid-term assignment to be completed between Thursday July 20th and Sunday July 23rd.

You are invited to choose the format in which you respond to the midterm question yourself from a list of options ("Choose your own adventure"). I want you to critically engage with a topic and question. No single method of answering the prompt is superior to others, rather your grade will be determined by the familiarity to class theories and concepts you portray as well as the thoughtfulness and critical reflection portrayed in your response.

Choose ONE of the following methods:

- traditional essay response (2 pages, single-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman)
- infographic
- AI generated image
- one powerpoint slide designed as a poster
- illustrated and annotated timeline
- illustrated and annotated map
- illustrated cause and effect chain

In each case (except the traditional essay response), provide up to one-page (single-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman) of commentary. This commentary must explain (a) your choice of medium, (b) your process of generating the response, (c) your thinking with regards to the theories from class and how they apply to the question at hand in your response. If you choose a traditional essay, your essay must include (a) introduce the question, (b) explain relevant concepts and theories from class, (b) provide a sound argument supported by evidence discussed in the class.

Due dates (no later than midnight):

- **Submission: no later than midnight on Sunday, July 23rd.**

Final Group Assignment

Your final assignment for this class is a podcast episode of 15-20 minutes in length where you and one other student provide the background, theoretical analysis and discussion of an area of crisis in the world.

This assignment involves THREE components:

- Choose your partner for the assignment and notify me of your choice (by July 13th)
- Choose your topic for the podcast and submit a broad outline (bullet points, one-page) (by July 27th)
- Record and submit your podcast episode (by Aug 3rd, midnight)

Your final podcast episode should engage with the case or crisis at hand and reflect upon it using the theories and concepts from class. Core components include: an introduction of the topic/case/crisis, a thesis statement that guides your discussion (aka your core proposed argument), a conversation about the evidence using the theories and concepts from class, a conclusion. Your podcast can be purely informative, or funny, or a mix of both. You are the hosts.

Final Response Paper

After podcast submission, you are assigned one other podcast episode to listen and respond to. In your response, reflect on how well your fellow colleagues engaged with theories and concepts from class to answer their selected prompt, and discuss how you could have improved the podcast episode. This assignment is graded for completion, but only genuine and thoughtful responses will be considered as complete. Due date: midnight on Aug 6th.

Extra Credits

To engage further with the topics discussed in class, you can choose to watch one of the following movies. To receive up to 3 bonus points, write a maximum 1-page discussion of the movie and its relation to the theories we discussed in class (*Times New Roman, 12pt, single-spaced*). To receive credit, the discussion papers are due no later than last day of class. While you can watch and discuss any of the movies throughout the quarter, the syllabus indicates where each movie best fits in with our discussion. All movies may not be suitable for some individuals and do include representation of violence. Please watch at your own risk.

- Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)
- Charlie Wilson's War (2007)
- Lone Survivor (2013)

- Zero Dark Thirty (2012)
- The Last King of Scotland (2006)
- Hotel Rwanda (2004)
- Beasts of No Nation (2015)
- Even the Rain (2010)

You can watch and comment on any movie listed here at any moment in time, but there are due dates for each extra credit assignment. The first movie response (if you choose to submit it) is due by class 4, the second response is due by class 7, the final response is due by class 10. You cannot submit response 1 after its due date, but you can decide to only submit the last response. Each response can provide you one extra credit.

Late Policy

Life happens and because of that I am willing to make accommodations for students with justified causes and needs. If you have OSD accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the summer session. If you have medical or other reasons that demand accommodations please provide proof and approach me to discuss what can be done. Without attestation of your situation, I will not grant extensions.

4 Schedule of Classes

| Week | Dates | Topic |
|---------|----------|----------------------------------------|
| Class 1 | Jul 6th | Introduction |
| Class 2 | Jul 11th | Causes of (Civil) War |
| Class 3 | Jul 13th | Rebel Rivalry and Alliances |
| Class 4 | Jul 18th | Proxy Wars (PGMs and PMCs) |
| Class 5 | Jul 20th | Peacekeeping and Intervention |
| Class 6 | Jul 25th | Failed States and Rebel Governance |
| Class 7 | Jul 27th | Terrorism (Domestic and Transnational) |
| Class 8 | Aug 1st | Migration as Security Concern |
| Class 9 | Aug 3rd | No class, work on assignments! |

For each class, you are expected to work through the designated module on canvas. Each module will guide you through the readings, the lecture, and any other preparatory materials for that class.

5 Policies

Class Contract

To foster the best possible working and learning environment, we want to engage with one another in upholding key values such as honesty, transparency, respect, and integrity. Both students and instructor agree to:

- Uphold honesty as academic and personal value and to participate in this class with an honest interest, and to commit to do the work expected of you and to receive honest feedback and evaluation from the instructor
- As instructor to communicate expectations and criteria for evaluation, and as student to be transparent about individual areas of struggle and discontent
- Be mutually respectful, both between students and instructor in recognition of the dynamic imposed by the context, and for students to engage with each other in a respectful discourse even in face of disagreement
- To fulfill the class requirements with integrity and uphold the values for engagement in this class, even in face of struggle or adversity

We affirm each individual's right to dignity and strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by mutual respect for each other, value the cultural diversity of USD because it enriches our lives and the University, and we reject acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs, and, we will confront and appropriately respond to such acts.

We acknowledge that our society carries historical and divisive biases based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs. Therefore, we seek to foster understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups, and we promote awareness through education and constructive strategies for resolving conflict.

In this class, we are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a community where all people can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of abusive or demeaning treatment.

5.1 Inclusive Classroom Statement

I am fully committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspectives, experiences, and identities. I urge each of you to contribute your unique perspectives to discussions of course questions, themes, and materials so that we can learn from them, and from each other. If you should ever feel excluded, or unable to fully participate in class for any reason, please let me know, or you may also submit anonymous written feedback to your Undergraduate Advisor. Additional resources to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in our classroom, and beyond, may be found here: Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

<https://diversity.ucsd.edu/858.822.3542> — diversity@ucsd.edu —

<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>

I respect that each and everyone of us may face individual challenges while pursuing an education. Please, do not hesitate to contact me with individual concerns that might affect your performance in this class and your ability to learn. Here are some additional resources:

For concerns about food and housing: <https://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/>

For transfer students: <https://transferstudents.ucsd.edu/resources/index.html>

For international students: <https://ispo.ucsd.edu/>

5.2 Academic Integrity

All University policies regarding academic integrity apply to this course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. For any material or ideas obtained from other sources, a reference must be given. Direct quotes from any source must be identified as such. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the Dean. All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless the professor states unambiguously that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>