This course is intended to introduce students to the research frontier in international relations and develop critical analysis skills. Each class will feature a single book by a first time author. In the last week, each student will read one book from a set of first books by recent UCSD graduates.

Assignments:

1) All students must write a critical analysis (no more than 10 pages double-spaced) of the book assigned for a single week and any supplementary readings they select. Books will be assigned during in the first class to ensure a relatively equal distribution across the course (students interested in writing for week one should contact me in advance). This paper is due at the beginning of class during the relevant week and will constitute 30 percent of the grade for this course.

2) All students are expected to read each book each week (for the last week, the books will be divided among students). The quality of the discussion will be directly proportional to the number of students who complete the book. Participation in class discussions is mandatory. Participation will count for 30 percent of the course grade.

3) Each student must submit a paper (no more than 20 pages double-spaced) proposing an original idea for a book-length project along with an appropriate and feasible research design. You do not need to do the actual research required to test the theory/idea you propose, but preliminary evidence in support (or not) of a hypothesis is encouraged. These research designs are due on March 15 and will count for the remaining 40 percent of the course grade.

Guidelines:

The critical analyses and our discussion each week should address the following questions. You do not need to follow these questions in any rigid format, but every analysis should be sure to address every question. You may find it useful to consult the author’s CV, articles by other authors they engage, and the writings of their dissertation supervisors and other mentors.

A. General:

1. What is the argument?
2. Why is it important? What does it contribute to the stock of human knowledge?
B. Sociology of Knowledge:

3. Why did this person, from this graduate program, at this time write the dissertation that became this book?
4. What theoretical debates were occurring in the field at the time? Who is being addressed? Who is the author arguing against?
5. Who were his/her advisors – and what ideas were “in the air” in his/her graduate program at the time? If not their dissertation advisors, who were the critical mentors in shaping the ideas in this book?
6. What real world events promoted this particular inquiry?

C. Critical Evaluation:

7. Is the theory deductively valid?
   a. What is the analogy?
   b. What are the assumptions?
   c. Do the propositions follow logically from the assumptions?
8. Are the hypotheses deductively valid? That is, do the hypotheses follow logically from the propositions?
9. Are the constructs valid? Are the IV and DV operationalized appropriately?
10. Are the tests internally valid? How serious are the threats to causal inference?
11. What other tests might have been conducted? Is there room for improvement?
12. Is the theory and test externally valid?

D. Overall evaluation:

13. Is the work persuasive?
14. Is it progressive? That is, is theory extended to uncover “new” facts?
15. What directions for new research does it suggest?

Readings

I have not ordered books through the UCSD bookstore, which charges at least list price and sometimes a surcharge for university press books. I suggest you order online or directly from the publisher. Please be aware, however, that online orders can sometimes be subject to delays. You will want to order the books as soon as possible.

Week 1, Jan. 5


Week 2, Jan. 12

Week 3, Jan. 19


Week 4, Jan. 26


Week 5, Feb. 2


Week 6, Feb. 9


Week 7, Feb. 16


Week 8, Feb. 23: No Class

Week 9, March 1


Week 10, March 8: Is There a UCSD Model? (Read one of the following)


Scott L. Kastner, *Political Conflict and Economic Interdependence Across the Taiwan Strait and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).


