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 week ten, I will impose my own draft manuscript upon you.

Assignments:

1) All students must write two critical analyses (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 prior to the first class (see below) to ensure a relatively equal distribution across the course. Each paper is due on Tuesday before the assigned class and must be posted on Canvas. All students are expected to read all the papers in advance. Each of the two papers will constitute 30 percent of the grade for this course.

2) Each student will also lead the discussion for one class session on a week different from the book they critique above. Students will a) interview the author during the first hour (except for week 6), b) offer a critique of the book based on their own evaluations, and c) chair the discussion, including integrating the papers by other students. I will join the discussion only as necessary to raise points the discussion leader might miss. Leadership of the discussion will be graded and constitute an additional 30 percent of course grade. I will understand if no one wants to take responsibility for Week 10, but I hope someone will volunteer.

3) A signup sheet for discussion leadership and critical analyses is available at [here](#).

4) All students are expected to read each book each week. Participation in class discussions is mandatory, regardless of whether you wrote on the book assigned for that week. Participation will count for 10 percent of the course grade.

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. Several of the recent books published by Cambridge University Press are outrageously priced and likely too recent to be available in the library. My apologies for this, but they are books I want to read and discuss. You may want to share copies. Several books may also be available electronically for free through the UCSD library.
Week 1: Jan. 7


Conversation with Melissa Lee, 9-10 AM

Week 2: Jan. 14


Conversation with Joshua Kertzer, 9-10 AM

Week 3: Jan. 21


Conversation with Ayse Zarakol, 9-10 AM

Week 4: Jan. 28


Conversation with Jonathan Renshon, 9-10 AM

Week 5: Feb. 4


Conversation with Aila Matanock, 9-10 AM

Week 6: Feb. 11


Week 7: Feb. 18

Conversation with Allison Carnegie, 9-10 AM

**Week 8: Feb. 25**


Conversation with Dara Cohen, 9-10 AM

**Week 9: March 4**


Conversation with Rich Nielsen, 9-10 AM

**Week 10: March 11**


**Guide for Critiques:**

The critical analyses and our discussion in weeks 1-8 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 are the assumptions?
   b. 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?