Theories of Interstate Conflict

This seminar is designed to familiarize the student with the theoretical and empirical literature on the onset, expansion, and consequences of war as well as the conditions for peace. Among the theories reviewed will be the balance of power, power transition, formal theories on war, the territorial explanation of war, and the democratic peace. Emphasized will be the role of alliances, arms races, and crisis escalation in generating conflict processes, and the impact of norms, regimes, and institutions on building peace. The goal of this seminar is the development of critical thinking, analysis, and application.

REQUIREMENTS:

I require attendance. The class meets only once per week, so please make arrangements to be in class and prepared for every single meeting. If you must miss more than one class meeting, then please drop the course immediately. Missing two or more classes without an approved excuse may be grounds for a failing grade in the course.

The main task each week will be a discussion of the readings. We will begin with a brief overview of the subject area followed by student-led discussions of specified topics. Critical analyses of the readings are expected; discussions should outline both the flaws and relative merits of the readings as well as possible extensions and connections to other areas of the field.

Each student will be responsible for presenting a required reading on a rotating basis, most likely once every other week. These presentations can be PowerPoint or Beamer and should address the (1) main points of the article, (2) the research design, (3) the results, and (4) the importance of the article as it relates to the field.

Each student will also complete two (5-page, typed, double-spaced) literature reviews during the course of the semester. We will assign topics at the second class meeting, and the literature review itself is due on the day the class discusses each particular topic. Note that you should not present on the day a literature review is due. Literature reviews should adequately cover the readings assigned for the discussion but should also go well beyond these readings and discuss other pertinent articles and books.

A third requirement of the course is an empirical research paper, of quality comparable to a conference paper or journal article. The papers should explore an original topic and provide evidence testing a hypothesis developed from the literature on conflict as covered in the class. These papers are due at the last meeting of the course.
The requirements of the course are as follows with relative weight assigned in parentheses:

- Discussion (15%)
- Bi-weekly presentations (15%)
- Two literature reviews (30%)
- Research Paper (40%)

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**
After successfully completing this course, each student should:

- Be able to interpret scientific findings
- Be able to apply scientific findings to explain historic events
- Be able to construct a theory
- Be able to develop a research design to test a scientific theory
- Be able to understand difficulties in measurement and testing of IR theories

In addition to the course material on original research in International Relations, after successful completion of the activities in this course, students should also:

- Be able to critically discriminate between reliable and less reliable information in their decision-making
- Be able to understand the scientific method and evaluate scientific findings
- Be familiar with scholarly and research methods

**CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM:**
I take academic integrity very seriously and will not tolerate plagiarism or cheating. There are very serious penalties for cheating at UA that could have consequences far beyond your college career. Cheating of any form is a really stupid thing to do so don't try, and if you have any doubts about what cheating is, ask me, examine the UA policies (see below), or better still, take this tutorial on plagiarism that was developed by UA's libraries: Play-it-safe.

The [Code of Academic Conduct](https://www.ua.edu/academics/policies/higher-education/policies/academic-conduct/) in the University of Alabama Undergraduate Catalog defines plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty as follows:

- Plagiarism: representing the words, data, works, ideas, computer programs or output, or anything not generated in an authorized fashion, as one’s own
- Cheating: using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, study aids, or computer-related information
- Fabrication: presenting as genuine any invented or falsified citation or material
- Misrepresentation: falsifying, altering, or misstating the contents of documents or other materials related to academic matters, including schedules, prerequisites, and transcripts.

Remember- the following require the use of a citation:

- Any material directly quoted from another’s work
- Any information that is summarized or paraphrased
- Any idea derived from a known source
- Any fact or data not common knowledge and borrowed from another’s work
Material that is common or general knowledge does not have to be footnoted, unless the wording is taken directly from a particular source. A general rule is that if a fact can be found in five or more sources, it is considered to be common knowledge and does not have to be documented.

**GRADING POLICY:**
There is no official grading policy at UA, so I thought students might like to know the general outline I use for assignments:

- **A (90s) Excellent:** Students have mastered the material, exams or papers have no serious mistakes and display creativity, thoughtfulness, or insight beyond points made in the readings.
- **B (80s) Solid:** there may be a couple of mistakes on exams, or weaknesses in written work, but the basic ideas and comprehension of the material are correct. B is a very good grade in my classes.
- **C (70s) Average:** there are some basic misunderstandings of the material because the student has not put enough effort into the work.
- **D (60s) Deficient:** there are serious misunderstandings in the work and/or little evidence of any hard work.
- **F (50s or less) Failure to even try.**

**DISABILITY ACCESS:**
To request disability accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 348-4285. After consultation with that office, contact your professor. However, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements for the accommodations on a timely basis. Special arrangements for exams must be made at least one week prior to the exam date or your instructor is not required to provide requested accommodations. Any request for special arrangements made less than one week prior to an exam date may not be able to be honored.

**EMAIL POLICY:**
Email is a convenient way to continue contact between professor and student outside of class. Students should take advantage of this opportunity but should also do so in a professional manner. I will not reply to emails that do not include a salutation ('`Dear Prof…" or `Hello Dr…"'). I will not reply to emails that are hastily written and filled with grammatical errors and misspellings. I will also not respond to emails that ask for answers to questions that can easily be found on the syllabus, in the notes, or on the class blog. Last, if you have a question regarding lectures, discussions or assigned material that you just cannot seem to master, then ask a question in class, come visit me during office hours, or post a question on the blog for other students to answer. Email is best for 1-2 sentence responses, and conceptual questions do not lend themselves well to email.

**CELL PHONES:**
Cell phones are a distraction to both the instructor and to fellow students, even if the phone is only used for texting. You should TURN YOUR CELL PHONES OFF! before entering the classroom.
CLASS SCHEDULE:
Students are responsible for ALL articles listed on the syllabus. Those works listed in bold are to be covered by student-led presentations.

**August 23rd – Conceptualizing War**


**August 30th — No Class, APSA Meeting in New Orleans**

**September 6th – Territorial Issues**


**September 13th – Alliances**


**September 20th – Arms Races**


*September 27th – Deterrence, Bargaining, and Crisis Escalation*


**October 4th—No Class, Fall Break**

**October 11th— Rivalries**


**October 18th—No Class**

**October 25th—No Class, Peace Science Society Meeting in New Orleans, LA**

**November 1st— War Expansion**


**November 8th – The Democratic Peace**


**November 15th – Other Findings Associated with the Democratic Peace**


November 22nd—No Class, Thanksgiving

November 29th – Democratic Peace, Diffusion, and Territorial Issues


December 6th – An Alternative View of the Democratic Peace

Chapter 3—required for all
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapters 8 and 9