

# HON300 Social Science Research

Douglas M. Gibler

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E-mail: [dmgibler@ua.edu](mailto:dmgibler@ua.edu)  
Office: 3039 Houser Hall  
Office Hours: by appointment

Web: <http://dmgibler.people.ua.edu/>  
Class Hours: 3:30-4:45pm, Tuesdays  
Classroom: 254 BB Comer Hall

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## Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize students with the process of conducting primary research in International Conflict. We will, individually and as a class, be contributing to one of the most widely used datasets in International Relations research globally—the Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset—by identifying conflict missed in the original dataset.

The course itself begins with a broad overview of how we approach the study of international conflict. We will briefly cover the scientific method and how it is applied to social phenomena such as international disputes and wars.

During our second week we will conduct an overview of the dataset itself and will practice how we identify various militarized incidents. Following these preliminary meetings, each student will then be given a computerized ranking of states that were likely to have had a conflict. Students will then be expected to examine the history of these states and identify any missing cases outside of class. In subsequent weeks of the semester, we will meet to discuss our coding of the cases and any problems associated with the data collection process.

## Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course, each student should be able to:

- Determine the merits of various claims to causality
- Identify a theory of politics and be able to determine its originality and importance within the existing literature
- Craft a political science research design to test the theory, including the derivation of hypotheses, conceptualization and measurement, sampling, various types of data collection, and statistical inference

- Identify weaknesses in existing published studies and suggest ways of correcting those errors

In addition to learning the course material on international conflict, 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
- Understand the scientific method and critically evaluate scientific information
- Develop effective written communication skills.
- And develop skills in working together in team activities.

## Required Readings

- Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer. Militarized interstate disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, coding rules, and empirical patterns. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 15(2):163–213, 1996
- D. M. Gibler, S. V. Miller, and E. K. Little. A replication and analysis of the militarized interstate dispute (mid) dataset, 1816-2001. Working Paper, 2015. URL <http://dmgibler.people.ua.edu/mid-replication.html>

## Course Requirements

The requirements of the course are as follows with relative weight noted:

- **30%** Attendance, Discussion and Quizzes: Regular attendance AND discussion are required; random quizzes may be given to assess student ability to apply the coding methods discussed in the course
- **70%** Research Project: These are data collection and analysis efforts that will be described in class; no previous research experience is necessary to complete each project.

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 coding of the assigned incident cases. Discussions should outline any problems and concerns students have with each set of cases.

Quizzes will test student knowledge of the dataset and coding procedures.

## 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 or the class blog. Last, if you have a question regarding lectures or assigned material that you just cannot seem to master, then ask a question in class, come to 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 professor and to fellow students, even if the phone is only used for texting. You should **TURN YOUR CELL PHONES OFF!** before entering the classroom.

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

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 or examine the UA policies (see below).

The Code of 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.

### **Disabilities Policy**

Federal law mandates the provision of services at the university-level to qualified students with disabilities. Please inform the instructor immediately if special circumstances need to be discussed.

## Class Schedule

**01/19 (Tuesday): Syllabus and project discussion**

**01/26 (Tuesday): In-depth overview of the Militarized Interstate Dispute project**

- Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer. Militarized interstate disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, coding rules, and empirical patterns. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 15(2):163–213, 1996
- D. M. Gibler, S. V. Miller, and E. K. Little. A replication and analysis of the militarized interstate dispute (mid) dataset, 1816-2001. Working Paper, 2015. URL <http://dmgibler.people.ua.edu/mid-replication.html>

**02/02 (Tuesday): Discussion of research project and assignments**

**02/09 (Tuesday): Class meeting to discuss project**

**02/23 (Tuesday): Class meeting to discuss project**

**03/08 (Tuesday): Class meeting to discuss project**

**03/22 (Tuesday): Class meeting to discuss project**

**04/05 (Tuesday): Class meeting to discuss project**

**04/19 (Tuesday): Class meeting to discuss project**

**05/03 (Tuesday): Review**