

# Poli 140C: International Crisis Diplomacy

Spring 2018

**Instructor:** Brandon Merrell, [bmerrell@ucsd.edu](mailto:bmerrell@ucsd.edu)  
**Lectures:** Thursdays, 5:00-7:50pm in Sequoia 147  
**Office Hours:** Thursdays, 2:00–4:45pm (and by appointment) in SSB 341  
**Online Content:** <http://TritonEd.ucsd.edu>  
**TA:** Leo Falabella, [lfalabel@ucsd.edu](mailto:lfalabel@ucsd.edu)  
**TA Office Hours:** Mondays, 9:00am-10:00am in SSB 330

**Description:** This course introduces students to the tools and principles of international diplomacy. How can leaders use military threats to pressure foreign adversaries? When must they instead offer incentives and inducements to elicit cooperation? How can countries demonstrate that they will abide by the promises they make at the bargaining table? Why do negotiation strategies appear to succeed in some cases but fail in others?

We address these questions in two steps. First, we develop a series of analytic tools that help us understand strategic behavior in international disputes. This includes a conceptual framework for identifying relevant actors, understanding the range of available actions that leaders can take, and evaluating the international and domestic political pressures that leaders face.

In the second half of the course, our emphasis shifts from bilateral and international crises to multilateral or civil conflicts. We will consider the emergence of insurgencies and rebel movements, the behavior and interests of terrorist organizations, the formation of allied coalitions, and the influence of external actors on domestic peace agreements.

Finally, throughout the course, we explore a series of important historical crises with the goal of understanding whether the events in each crisis match our theoretic expectations. By the end of the term, students will be expected to:

- understand the role that uncertainty and commitment play in diplomatic disputes;
- identify how leaders use promises and threats to elicit cooperation or concessions;
- understand the strategic decision-making of non-state violent actors;
- offer policy advice regarding ongoing international disputes.

**Prerequisites:** This is an advanced undergraduate course. Although no previous upper-division coursework in international relations is necessary, the reading load is not light and the content is moderately technical. Finally, I expect students to participate during class as we move back and forth between analytic stylization and historical narratives. Be prepared to ask and answer questions and to discuss the reading in detail!

**Rules and Requirements:** The course requirements consist of quizzes and participation (10%), a midterm exam (25%, May 10<sup>th</sup>), a final exam (25%, June 14<sup>th</sup>), and a research paper (40%, final copy due June 7<sup>th</sup>). The exams include identification, short-answer, and essay questions. You must earn a passing grade on both the midterm and the final to pass the overall course. I use the following grading scale: “A-” = [90-93.3̄), “A” = [93.3̄-96.6̄), “A+” = [96.6̄-100], with other letter grades following equivalent intervals. Although the TA will grade your quizzes and exams, **I will personally grade and provide feedback on your research paper draft and final submission.** If you have questions regarding your grades on any assignments, contact me directly.

**Quizzes:** At the beginning of each class, students will answer a series of short questions on material from the previous lecture and/or the assigned readings. I will drop your lowest quiz score when calculating your overall grade.

**Research Paper:** Select one of the following books to read during the term. Each book addresses a different crisis or conflict. Your assignment is to write a 10-15 page paper in which you examine the crisis using the theories we develop in the course. Who are the relevant actors? What are their interests? Based on the historical evidence presented in the book, do the actors appear to behave in ways that match our expectations? Why or why not? The complete guidelines and prompt for the research paper are available on TritonEd. *If you would like to analyze an alternative crisis, contact me for approval and recommended readings.*

- Christopher Clark, 2014. *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914.*
- H.R. McMaster, 1997. *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*
- Nathan Thrall, 2017. *The Only Language They Understand: Forcing Compromise in Israel and Palestine.*
- Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, 2017. *Hard Target: Sanctions, Inducements, and the Case of North Korea.*

You must submit an electronic copy of your first draft (6 pages) for feedback on Sunday, May 20<sup>th</sup>. Final versions of the paper are due June 7<sup>th</sup> to TurnItIn.com via TritonEd. Papers must be typed, 1.5-spaced, with 1-inch margins. I am happy to read drafts of your paper throughout the term. You will also have opportunities to share your work with and receive feedback from your peers.

**Academic Dishonesty:** All work must be completed by the individual to whom it is assigned. Students are not permitted to use unauthorized assistance of any kind. Any student who is caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office for administrative sanction.

**Late Assignments and Missed Exams:** Make-up assignments are only offered under valid and documented circumstances. If you know you will miss an exam for a legitimate reason, notify me at least a week in advance. Email is perfectly acceptable. If you cannot contact me in advance, you must do so as soon as possible. I will work with you to resolve reasonable problems, but it is your responsibility to arrange with me to take a makeup exam. All make-up work must be submitted by June 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance is not mandatory but will probably improve your performance on assignments. Information we cover in class either may not be in the readings or may not be in easily interpretable form. Some material is also easier to learn when you hear someone explain it and/or when you have an opportunity to discuss it with others. Finally, a portion of your grade is determined by your participation. Come prepared to discuss and comment on assigned material. Remember that disagreement and discussion are strongly encouraged, but disrespect of other participants is not.

**Grades and Appeals:** You will be graded solely on your academic performance. This includes clarity of thought, knowledge of the material, composition, spelling, and grammar. Students can appeal grades that they believe are incorrect. Appeals will consist of one typed page that identifies the problem and presents a reasoned argument that revision is appropriate. Appeals must be submitted within one week of the return of an assignment.

**Disability:** Students who will request accommodations should register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (University Center 202; 858.534.4382) and provide me with documentation outlining appropriate accommodations. I am happy to meet with you individually to discuss your needs.

## **Readings and Course Schedule:**

### **Part I: Theories of International Diplomacy**

**Week #1: No Class** (Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup>)

**Week #2: Introduction and Overview** (Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup>)

**Topics:**

- Introduction to the course.
- What is political science?
- Why do we need theories?
- Rationality, actors, and interests.
- Reading scientific papers and case studies.

**Readings:**

- Jeffrey Frieden, 1999. "Actors and Preferences in International Relations," in David Lake and Robert Powell, eds., *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, pp. 39-76.
- Kevin A. Clarke and David M. Primo, 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach." *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 741-753.
- Frank Lovett, 2006. "Rational Choice Theory and Explanation." *Rationality and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 237-272.

**Week #3: Signaling in International Crises** (Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup>)

**Topics:**

- Anarchy in the international system.
- Game theory and strategic games.
- How and why do actors send credible signals?
- How to write a research paper.

**Readings:**

- James D. Morrow, 1999. "The Strategic Setting of Choices," in David Lake and Robert Powell, eds., *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, pp. 77-114.
- Thomas Schelling, 1960. *The Strategy of Conflict*, Chapters 2 & 3.
- Helen Milner, 1991. "The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique." *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 67-85.

#### **Week #4: Unitary Explanations for War (Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup>)**

##### **Topics:**

- Discussion of the causes of war.
- Non-rational theories of war.
- Mutual optimism, commitment problems, and issue indivisibility.
- Power shifts and preventive war.

##### **Readings:**

- James D. Fearon, 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 379-414.
- Robert Powell, 2006. "War as a Commitment Problem." *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 169-204.
- Branislav Slantchev and Ahmer Tarar, 2010. "Mutual Optimism as a Rationalist Explanation for War." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 135-148.
- Brandon Merrell and Alexei Abrahams. "The Secrecy Gambit: Clandestine Power Shifts and Preventive Conflict."

#### **Week #5: Leaders and Audiences (Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

##### **Topics:**

- Gambling, diversionary war, and rallying effects.
- Domestic constraints and audience costs.
- Review for Midterm.

##### **Readings:**

- Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans, 2011. *Leaders and International Conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.
- Branislav Slantchev, 2006. "Politicians, the Media, and Domestic Audience Costs." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, pp. 445-477.
- Jessica L. Weeks, 2012. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 2, pp. 326-347.
- Brandon Merrell. "Vetoing the Peace: The Agency Dilemma in Crisis Decision-Making."

#### **Week #6: Midterm Exam (Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup>)**

##### **Readings for the Exam:**

- Ned Lebow, 1990. "Domestic politics and the Cuban missile crisis: The traditional and revisionist interpretations reevaluated." *Diplomatic History*. 14.4: 471-492.
- Ned Lebow, 2000. "The Cuban Missile Crisis." *CIAO Case Study*.
- Jeremy Pressman, 2001. "September statements, October missiles, November elections: Domestic politics, foreign policy making, and the Cuban missile crisis." *Security Studies*. 10.3: 80-114.

## Part II: Internal and Multilateral Conflicts

### Week #7: Agents and Allies (Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>)

#### Topics:

- Principal-agent relationships in international conflict.
- International alliances and war.
- Discussion of the Danish, North Korean, and DRC cases.

#### Readings:

- Eli Berman and David Lake, eds., 2019. *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Transnational Threats through Local Agents*, Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press. Introduction.
- Brandon Merrell, 2019. "Denmark 1940-45: Armed Resistance and Agency Slippage in Germany's Model Protectorate," in Eli Berman and David Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Threats through Local Agents*. Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 2.
- James Morrow, 2000. "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 63-83.
- Crawford Young, 1978. "Critical Countries: Zaire: The Unending Crisis." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 169-185.

### Week #8: Civil and Ethnic Wars (Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup>)

#### Topics:

- Additional complexities in civil war.
- When can third parties help?
- Discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Peer discussion of research papers.

#### Readings:

- David Lake and Donald Rothchild, 1996. "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict." *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 41-75.
- Barbara Walter, 2009. "Bargaining Failures and Civil War." *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12, pp. 243-61.
- Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, 2010. "Civil War." *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 3-57.
- Moshe Yaalon, 2017. "How to Build Middle East Peace: Why Bottom-Up Is Better Than Top-Down." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 73-84.

## **Week #9: Terrorists and Insurgents (Thursday, May 31<sup>st</sup>)**

### **Topics:**

- Defining terrorism.
- Terrorism as strategic communication.
- The organization and interests of insurgent movements.
- Discussion of the LTTE case.

### **Readings:**

- David Lake, 2002. "Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-first Century." *Dialog-IO*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 15-29.
- Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, 2006. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 49-80.
- Eli Berman and Aila M. Matanock, 2015. "The Empiricists' Insurgency." *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 18, p. 443-464.
- Alexei Abrahams and Brandon Merrell. "Monopolies of Violence? Civil Insurgency and the Accountability Paradox."

## **Week #10: Counterinsurgency, Development, and Foreign Aid (Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Topics:**

- Research paper due.
- Understanding counterinsurgency.
- When do foreign aid and development help or harm?

### **Readings:**

- Eli Berman, Joseph H. Felter, and Jacob N. Shapiro. "Aid for Peace: Does Money Buy Hearts and Minds?" [www.ForeignAffairs.com](http://www.ForeignAffairs.com), January 21, 2015.
- Michael G. Findley, 2018. "Does Foreign Aid Build Peace?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 21.
- Debraj Ray and Joan Esteban, 2017. "Conflict and Development." *Annual Review of Economics*, Vol. 9, 263-293.
- Karl. W. Eikenberry, 2013. "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan: The Other Side of the COIN." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 5, pp. 59-62, 64-74.

## **Final Exam (Thursday, June 14<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Readings for the Exam:**

- Séverine Autesserre, 2008. "The Trouble with Congo: How Local Disputes Fuel Regional Conflict." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 3, pp. 94-110.
- Jason K. Stearns, 2013. "Helping Congo Help Itself: What It Will Take to End Africa's Worst War." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 5, pp. 99-112.
- Stuart A. Reid. "Congo's Slide Into Chaos: How a State Fails." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 1, pp. 97-117.