INSTRUCTOR:

Professor Ashley Leeds
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Office Hours: Monday 10:00-12:00 or by appointment. You are also welcome to drop by any time my office door is open.

COURSE CONTENT:

This core seminar is intended to introduce Ph.D. students to debates and contemporary research in international relations. We will cover a broad range of topics, many of which you will have the opportunity to pursue in greater depth in other seminars. The emphasis in this course will be on understanding the development of the field, recognizing common themes and unresolved questions, and learning to evaluate arguments. You should leave this course with a broad overview of the current state of international relations research, an outline for further study in world politics, and improved skills in analytical thinking and writing. This is a demanding course that is recommended only for students who are serious about pursuing a career in international relations or general political science research.

EVALUATION:

Grades will be determined in the manner described below. The Rice University Honor Code applies to all assignments for this course.

20% -- Class Participation and Attendance

The quality of a graduate level seminar depends to a great extent on the efforts of the students. You play a big role in creating your course. I expect that you will come to class each week prepared to discuss the assigned material and that you will share your ideas, questions, and views actively. Because class participation is vital to your performance in this course, please see me at once if you feel uncomfortable speaking in class.

Please leave ample time to read the work assigned for each week carefully. While you are reading, you should consider the following questions:

**What is the author's argument?** What research question is the author trying to answer, and how does he or she answer it? What are the assumptions (explicit and implicit) upon which the author’s argument is based? What are the independent and dependent variables, and what is the logic that links them together?

**Is the theory logically consistent?** Is it plausible?
Is the theory empirically relevant? Is the empirical record commensurate with expectations drawn from the theory? If the author provides empirical tests, are the operational measures of the concepts and the methods of analysis appropriate? What further evidence would you use to evaluate the argument? What further testable hypotheses follow from this theory? How would you design a study that could determine the empirical relevance of the author’s approach in comparison to other approaches?

Is the theory interesting? How does this argument fit into the literature? What does this study tell us that we didn’t already know? What should it tell us that it doesn’t? What questions still need to be answered?

What policy recommendations would you make based on this study?

How do the selections we read this week fit together? How do they fit into the course as a whole? Are we seeing progress in this research area?

I hope that we will engage in vigorous academic debate, but during these class discussions, classroom etiquette is vital. Please work to ensure that you make comments in ways that invite discussion. Our classroom contains members with various life experiences, divergent perspectives, varying levels of experience with political science research, and different strategies for defending their views. Please state your opinions constructively and respectfully, listen carefully when your colleagues are speaking, and speak to me if you are offended by something that is said in class.

Obviously it is impossible to participate in a seminar discussion if you are not in attendance. I expect no absences in the course, and I encourage you to discuss any circumstances with me that will preclude you from attending class. I also expect you to arrive on time. If you do need to miss class, please contact me ahead of time to let me know that you will not be able to attend and to make arrangements to complete an alternate assignment.

Grades for participation will be assigned at the end of the semester, but you may ask for feedback on your performance at any time. If you have concerns about the quality and quantity of your participation in the course, I hope you will speak to me.

20% – Weekly Reading Summaries

Each week, each student must submit a brief summary of the assigned reading. You should distill the main point(s) of the set of readings and integrate the week’s work coherently. I will be looking for evidence that you (1) understand the main arguments and conclusions of the articles/books, and (2) see how the assigned readings for the week relate to one another and to the course. Your summary must be typed, double spaced, with one inch margins on all sides, written with proper grammar and spelling, and in a font size no smaller than 11 point. The summary must not exceed two pages; I will not accept longer summaries. These summaries are due by 9:00 am on the day of class. They may be submitted by email as attachments in .pdf, Microsoft Word, or WordPerfect format. Alternatively, you may leave a hard copy in my mailbox in the political science department.

I will not accept any summaries after the class meets unless you have made special arrangements with
me ahead of time. You will receive a letter grade for each reading summary. At the end of the term I will drop your lowest summary grade and average the grades for the remaining summaries to determine your final reading summary grade.

**60% -- Analytical Papers (3 @ 20% each)**

Three times during the semester you will be asked to write an analytical paper in response to a question handed out in class. There is no page minimum or limit, but my guess is that your papers will be approximately 8-10 pages, double-spaced. These paper assignments will require you to show a broad familiarity with the literature you have read during that section of the course, as well as an ability to articulate linkages among the readings, to explain the major debates, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the existing literature, and to recognize profitable directions for future research. The tentative paper due dates are **February 25, April 8, and May 11**.

In grading the papers, I will consider the following dimensions: (1) Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the course material? (2) Does the student offer an insightful analysis of the readings? (For example, Does the student see ways in which different pieces fit together and/or contrast with one another? Does the student situate the work within the “big picture”? Does the student provide independent insight?) (3) Does the student make a compelling argument in response to the question posed? (4) Is the paper well organized, coherent, clear, and concise? Can I follow a clear argument from beginning to end that is well supported with evidence? Is the writing both grammatically correct and stylistically appropriate to political science scholarship?

Late papers will be penalized one half letter grade per day, including weekends, unless an extension has been granted by the instructor prior to the due date. Extensions will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances.

**SPECIAL PROVISIONS:**

Students with documented disabilities who require special accommodations should express their needs during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities must also contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center. The Department of Political Science is happy to do whatever we can to assure each student full and rewarding participation in classes.

**REQUIRED READING:**

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:


In addition, we will read selections from the following books:


The remaining readings are articles from scholarly journals that can be located at Fondren Library. Many are also available on-line through J-STOR.

**DISCUSSION SCHEDULE:**

This course is organized in three primary sections. First, we will read and discuss representative works from some of the major paradigms in the study of international relations. The dialogue between these different schools of thought has structured international relations research for much of its history. You will come away from this section of the course understanding some of the primary world views that shape analysis of world politics. Second, we will explore research on international conflict, primarily focusing on military security and explanations for war and peace. The extant literature on this topic is
enormous and we can only touch on a few issues, but we will provide you with a starting point for future study. The final section of the course will focus on the difficulties accompanying international cooperation and the means through which state leaders overcome these impediments to policy coordination. Many of our readings on international cooperation will center on economic issues.

Designing a one semester introduction to any field necessarily requires omitting and shortchanging some contributions, world views, and topics of inquiry. Foreign policy decision making and feminist approaches to international relations, for instance, didn’t make the final cut on this syllabus. There is much stronger representation for rational choice approaches and quantitative empirical work than for constructivist approaches and dependency theory. This reflects both the constraints of time and the strengths of the Rice graduate program and faculty. Our program is particularly strong in training students in statistical research methods, formal modeling, and scientific positivism. There are core aspects of this introduction to international relations that would appear on the syllabus for most any similar course in the country. On the other hand, different graduate programs emphasize different aspects of the field. A large number of syllabi from different programs are available on the World Wide Web, and I am happy to discuss varying possibilities for study with you if you are interested.

Before the list of readings for each week, I have offered a brief description that should help to prepare you for the class discussion. I have tried to list the reading assignments for each class meeting in an order that allows them to build on one another. In most cases, you will be best off reading the works in the order listed.

I. Introduction

Week #1: January 19: Introduction to Course

We will spend the first portion of our first meeting discussing the goals and requirements of the course, and the second half discussing your reactions to the Keylor survey of recent diplomatic history.


I. Paradigmatic Debates

Week #2: January 24: Realism and Neorealism

Realism has been the dominant paradigm guiding international relations thought and research for most of history. It is often dated to the Greek writer Thucydides and his account of the Peloponnesian Wars. Much of international relations scholarship continues to address realist ideas in some way, and some important policymakers (for instance, George Kennan and Henry Kissinger) are associated with this paradigm as well. Hans Morgenthau was the most famous academic proponent of realism in the mid 20th century. In 1979 Kenneth Waltz published a book entitled Theory of International Politics that proposes a more systematic and structural version of realism; Waltz’s theory has come to exemplify what we refer to as neorealism. The edited volume Neorealism and Its Critics includes four chapters from Waltz’s book (and costs considerably less than the Waltz volume!). Waltz’s book structured much of the academic debate in international relations during the 1980’s. Waltz’s work fell out of favor in the 1990’s, but John Mearsheimer is one of the strongest contemporary proponents of what he terms “offensive realism”. We’ll read and discuss sections from
his recent book as well.


**Week #3: January 31: Neoliberal Institutionalism**

In the 1980's, neorealism had a very strong influence on thinking about international politics. Some scholars, however, questioned whether the conclusions drawn from realism, especially about the impossibility of international cooperation, really followed inevitably from its assumptions. A group of scholars claimed that starting from similar basic principles, they could come to much more optimistic conclusions than realists did; this group came to be known as the neoliberal institutionalists. The figure most closely identified with neoliberal institutionalism is Robert Keohane, and his most important book on the subject is *After Hegemony*. We will discuss both Keohane’s work and work by Robert Axelrod. Axelrod and Keohane both demonstrate that cooperative outcomes can arise among self interested actors; Keohane takes a top down approach focusing on the role of international institutions in facilitating cooperation, whereas Axelrod takes a bottom up approach, showing conditions under which cooperation can emerge spontaneously given the adoption of certain types of foreign policy strategies. The two come together to write a summary piece on means of enhancing possibilities for cooperation under anarchy.


**Week #4: February 7: Liberalism and Rational Choice**

While often posed in opposition to one another, neorealism and neoliberalism actually share a great deal; Keohane himself has called neoliberal institutionalism as much realist as it is liberal. While neoliberal institutionalists question the conclusions realists arrive at, other scholars question the very basis for neorealist theory. Only a few of these stronger challenges to neorealism are represented here. Some others (such as Constructivism, Power Transition theory, World Systems theory) we will read in later weeks.

For the first half of the seminar meeting, we will discuss traditional liberal theories. There are many variants of liberalism, but what they share is a focus on the role of the individual; liberal political and economic thought is based on individual values, preferences, and choices. The roles of democracy and international trade are important to liberal theory, and we will read three authors who make arguments about the important roles these factors play in shaping international political relations.

For the second half of the seminar meeting, we will discuss rational choice. Realism and liberalism start from a non-neutral view of human nature; there are implicit assumptions in both paradigms about the nature of humankind. Rational choice approaches to politics move away from questions of the nature of humans to place focus instead on the environment in which humans make choices. Here, the basic world view expects decision makers to consider the incentives and constraints they face and to act in ways that they believe will produce the most desirable outcomes. Man is neither naturally good nor bad, but instead responds to the incentives produced by the environment. Rational choice approaches to international relations have gained substantially in popularity over the
last twenty years, and are identified most closely with Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, whose publication of *The War Trap* in 1981 sparked much of the debate and development of this approach in the field of international relations. The edited volume by Lake and Powell offers a broad discussion of the rational choice paradigm in the context of international relations.


**Week #5: February 14: Constructivism**

In the 1990’s, a new school of scholarship, often labeled constructivism, gained strength as an alternative to realism and liberalism. Constructivists place a much stronger focus on intersubjective understandings, identity formation, and the development of norms of interaction in their explanations for international outcomes. Alex Wendt is the figure most closely associated with constructivism, and we will spend this class period discussing his book. Ruggie’s review article sets up this debate.

At the end of the class, we’ll consider a review article published in 1994 by Robert Powell. This piece identifies a number of areas along which neorealism has been and can be attacked. It should serve both to help you organize some of the topics we have discussed over the last few weeks and to raise new questions.


**Paper Question #1 distributed; paper due by 5:00 pm on Friday, February 25.**

II. International Conflict

**Week #6: February 21: Power, Preferences, and International Conflict**

Some of the longest running, traditional debates in the attempt to explain war and peace center on the distribution of power in the international system, alignment patterns, and the distinction between status-quo and revisionist powers. While realists have long argued that peace is most likely when power among the major powers is balanced, power transition theory offers an alternative view of the international system in which peace is most likely when one state holds a dominant position. To a large extent, this debate hinges on whether we believe that states can be satisfied with the status quo and how we believe states respond to uncertainty regarding power relations. A.F.K. Organski is the father of power transition theory (from his 1958 book *World Politics*). We will discuss power transition theory based on a recent summary, then consider attempts to integrate and evaluate
logically what have been seen as competing theories of the relationship between distribution of power and conflict. Bueno de Mesquita argues that his expected utility research program can subsume the conclusions of both balance of power and power transition, and Powell models relationships between power, alignments, satisfaction, and war.


Week #7: February 28: Dyadic Conflict and Deterrence
This week we turn away from broad analysis of the international system to the consideration of dyadic conflict and deterrence. Most contemporary studies of international conflict behavior are conducted at the dyadic level of analysis. Which states are likely to find themselves in conflict, and under what conditions will war or peace result? Bremer offers a broad empirical study of factors affecting the likelihood of interstate war, which is typical of early statistical analysis at the dyadic level. Achen and Snidal discuss some of the research design issues that make deterrence difficult to study. Huth and Russett present an empirical evaluation of the correlates of successful immediate deterrence, and uncover some evidence they find surprising. Fearon suggests an explanation for why Huth and Russett were surprised by some of their results. Leeds offers an evaluation of the general deterrent properties of outside alliances in a dyadic context, and Reed demonstrates why it is essential to study conflict initiation and escalation as a linked process.


Week #8: Spring Break

Week #9: March 14: Bargaining Failures and War
The publication of Fearon’s 1995 article, “Rationalist Explanations for War” has had a large impact on the study of international conflict in recent years. Fearon argues that war can best be understood as a result of bargaining failure. We will first discuss Fearon’s article, and lay out his argument for why wars occur. During the rest of the seminar meeting we will discuss articles that build on Fearon’s theory. Gartzke’s article discusses implications of Fearon’s argument for our
ability to explain and predict war. Filson and Werner provide a game theoretic model designed to explain the conditions that lead to the onset and termination of war. Then Werner, Walter, and Kydd each build on Fearon’s insights to explain and predict the conditions under which peace is likely to hold following war, the conditions under which conflict is likely to recur, and how and under what conditions outside states can help to facilitate peaceful settlements.


**Week #10: March 21: Domestic Politics and Conflict I**

Over the last fifteen years, the hottest issue in conflict studies has been the influence of domestic politics on international relations. In the 1990’s, the democratic peace (the fact that democracies rarely fight one another in wars) was one of the most heavily researched and debated topics in international relations. This week, we will discuss whether and why domestic political institutional structures and domestic political conditions systematically affect international conflict. We will begin by considering varying explanations for the apparent relationship between joint democracy and peace. Then we will consider the effects of the relative ideological positions of leaders on their ability to end international rivalries. Finally, we will examine the impact of domestic unrest, and particularly revolution, on international relations.


**Week #11: March 28: Domestic Politics and Conflict II**

We will devote this class meeting to discussing the recently published book by Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow. Their study offers a general theory of comparative politics based on the assumption that a leader’s primary goal is to stay in office. According to these authors, the structure of the domestic political process that determines the leader’s continued employment has a strong influence on the leader’s policy choices over a wide range of issues, including foreign policy; from the perspective offered in this book, international relations is driven heavily by the domestic
political imperatives of leaders. Bueno de Mesquita et al. deduce a number of specific propositions and subject a wide range of hypotheses to empirical evaluation.


**Paper Question #2 distributed; paper due by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 8.**

### III. International Cooperation

**Week #12: April 4: Impediments to Cooperation: Distribution and Enforcement**

Scholars have identified two major impediments to international cooperation: disputes over the distribution of benefits and the lack of external enforcement to prevent cheating and abrogation. Fearon identifies connections between the two. We will discuss his article, then consider more detailed treatments of distributional and enforcement problems in turn.

First, we will discuss three articles on distributional issues. Powell considers the circumstances under which states are likely to concern themselves most strongly with relative rather than absolute gains. Krasner discusses the difficulty in dividing benefits from cooperation and the role of power in the process. Tollison and Willett consider how linking issues together in negotiation can help ameliorate distributional disputes.

Next, we will discuss issues of enforcement. Downs, Rocke, and Barsoom discuss the link between agreement formation and compliance, arguing that international agreements are only signed if they are expected to achieve a high level of compliance, and Simmons considers the influence of IMF agreements on state behavior.


**Week #13: April 11: Power and Cooperation**

Due to the fact that cooperation is difficult to achieve in the international system without external enforcement, a significant body of scholarship has emerged linking power distributions in the international system, and particularly hegemony, with high levels of international economic cooperation. During the first section of this seminar meeting, we will discuss hegemonic stability theory based on chapters by Robert Gilpin, one of the main proponents of hegemonic stability theory, and Yarbrough and Yarbrough, plus a review article by Lake.

In the second portion of this class meeting, we will turn to another argument about power and cooperation, focusing on the disparity in power between northern industrialized states and southern
developing states. We will read a selection by Immanuel Wallerstein, the figure most closely identified with World Systems Theory--a Marxist interpretation of the international system, and an article by James Caporaso on dependency in the global system. Then we will read an article by Mark Crescenzi that addresses how cooperation (interdependence) can create vulnerabilities and serve as a source of power, and potentially, a source of conflict.


Week #14: April 18: Designing Institutions

While neoliberal institutionalists focused a great deal of attention on the role of international organizations and cooperative agreements in the 1980's, they paid little attention to distinctions among agreements and institutions. Very recently, more scholars have become interested in explaining how agreements and institutions differ, why they are designed differently, and how variance in institutional design affects their ability to promote international cooperation. These will be our topics of discussion today. Abbott and Snidal offer some reasons that states find international institutions useful. Mitchell demonstrates the impact of institutional design on cooperation in an individual issue area. Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal discuss the causes and effects of different institutional designs in a general sense. Rosendorff and Milner analyze in more detail the role of escape clauses in encouraging the development of cooperation. Mitchell and Keilbach study institutional structures for dealing with externalities, primarily in environmental cooperation. Stasavage considers the implications of public vs. secret bargaining. Finally, Lake reminds us that anarchy and hierarchy form a continuum with organizations of sovereign states falling somewhere in between. Building on arguments developed in economics about relational contracting, Lake attempts to explain the conditions under which relations will be more and less hierarchical.


Week #15: April 25: Domestic Politics and Cooperation

For the last week of the course, we return to domestic influences on international behavior. During this class meeting we will first discuss the general question of whether particular domestic political structures are better suited to international cooperation. Based on a prior argument by Schelling about constraint and bargaining, Putnam argues that leaders who are constrained at home can be distributionally advantaged in international bargaining. Leeds claims that while democracies are advantaged at making credible commitments (which can be helpful in establishing international cooperation), the same factors that make democracies capable of making credible commitments make them wary of risky commitments. McGillivray and Smith deduce electoral motivations for leaders of democratic states to behave cooperatively in international relations.


*Paper Question #3 distributed; paper due by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, May 11.*