

Introduction to International Relations: V53.0700

Spring, 2022, 11-12:15

Professor Bruce Bueno de Mesquita

Office hours: Tuesday, 9:30-12, 2:15-4:00 or by appointment

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This course is designed to introduce the central concepts and methods for studying international relations and foreign policy. It emphasizes a political economy perspective that draws attention to how incentives, political institutions and domestic politics shape interactions in the international arena whether those interactions concern national security or economic exchange. The course introduces a set of analytic tools designed to promote rigorous evaluation of alternative points of view regarding foreign affairs based on **logic and evidence** rather than personal opinion, partisan preferences, or wishful thinking. It is intended to provide insights into past and current international events and to develop the means of thinking about international affairs that will create a better understanding of future events than is likely to be conveyed by journalism or by more standard, state-oriented approaches to international affairs.

There is no required textbook for the course. Each week's topic includes readings that are available on Brightspace. Several readings are drawn from Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook* (hereafter referred to as DH) so you may wish to purchase a copy through Amazon or some other online source but that is not required. Many others are drawn from Annual Review of Political Science, an excellent source for learning about debates in the field and for finding references to the leading research on most topics. The course emphasizes the use of game theory reasoning. The technical elements behind solving game theory models will primarily be taught during recitation sections, leaving lectures for the introduction of ideas and application to real-world problems. There will be a forum setup on Brightspace where students can raise questions that did not come up or were not adequately addressed in class. The TAs and I will endeavor to provide prompt responses to subject-matter questions and we encourage exchanges of ideas between students as well through the class forum.

Each student will write four short essays (perhaps in the form of a lab report) of not more than 2 double spaced pages each (12 pt. Times New Roman font). Each essay will examine a different and important current debate or conflict in the international arena, such as solutions to North Korea's nuclear program; global warming; relations between the governments of China and Taiwan; government regulation of crypto currencies; or any relevant topic of the student's choosing. Each essay will identify (1) the parties (actors, stakeholders) who must come to an agreement in order to solve the dispute; (2) the issue or issues that must be resolved; (3) the incentives or coercive pressures that could resolve the dispute; and (4) how it might be settled in a way that is credible and lasting. There should be citations to relevant research into the problem and a focus on analytics rather than opinion. If possible, the logic and/or evidence for a possible solution should be tied (positively or negatively) to theories studied in the course. Each essay will count as 12.5% of the grade so that the four equal 50% of the course grade. I expect the first essay to be leniently graded as everyone learns to examine real-world problems carefully based on the competing interests of the contending parties.

Essays must be individually authored with no collaboration or coordination with anyone else. Any quoted material must be in quotation marks and accompanied by a citation to the author, source, page number, and date.

The course will also include a midterm and a final exam. The midterm will count as 20% of the grade and the final as the remaining 30%. All examinations will be a mix of lecture material and reading material.

Weekly assignments:

- January 24: Topics: Course Purpose. Reading: Principles of International Politics (PIP), "Evaluating Arguments about International Politics," pp. 35-63. Recommendation: "Different Modeling Purposes."
- January 31: The National Interest. Reading: Political Games, pp. 18-23.
- February 7: Rationality of Conflict & Bargaining to Find Solutions. Readings: James Fearon, International Organization 1995; Robert Powell, Annual Review of Political Science (hereafter ARPS) 2002. For Recitation: PIP Introduction to Game Theory, Chapter 4.
- February 14: Presidents Day – no class;
- February 16: **FIRST ESSAY DUE**
- February 21: Selectorate Governance. Readings: BdM and Smith, The Dictator's Handbook, Chapter 1 and ARPS 2012, For Recitation: PIP, Chapter 3 (Tools 1: spatial models, median voter theorem, win sets, expected utility);
- February 28: Realism & Power Transition Theories. Carsten Rauch, "Realism and Power Transition Theory: Different Branches of the Power Tree."
- March 7 Audience Costs, Cuba & Crimea; Domestic Opposition & Foreign Policy Adventurism. Kenneth Schultz, APSR 1998.
- March 9: **SECOND ESSAY DUE**
- March 14: Spring Recess
- March 21: **Midterm Exam**
- March 28: The Democratic Peace: Theory and Evidence. Reading: Siverson & BdM, "The Selectorate Theory and International Politics," Dictator's Handbook, Ch. 9, War, Peace and World Order;" Mark Perceny et al, "Dictatorial Peace?"
- April 4: Foreign Aid. Reading: Dictator's Handbook, Ch. 7, "Foreign Aid".
- April 6: **THIRD ESSAY DUE**
- April 11: International Organizations. Readings: Gilligan and Johns, ARPS 2012.
- April 18: The Environment and Collective Action. Vally Koubi, ARPS 2019.
- April 25: Topic: Human Rights. Reading: Hafner_Burton ARPS 2012.
- May 2: Topic: Political Economy of Trade. Readings: Rickard "Electoral Systems and Trade," Helen Milner ARPS 1999.
- May 4: **FOURTH ESSAY DUE**
- May 9: Review and Summary

Exam Date TBA :