

War, Peace, and World Order

POL-UA.0741

Fall 2017

Alastair Smith

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Place: Silver 208

Monday, Wednesday: 12:30-1:45

Office hours: Sign-up online (see below)

Room 406, 19 W 4th St

The first part of this course explores the conditions that lead to the initiation, escalation, spread, termination, and consequences of international conflict, as well as the circumstances that promote, preserve, or restore peace. We will progress through a number of different approaches using a levels of analysis perspective: This progression starts by looking at the structure of the international system, then moves to individual nations, then a focus on the internal structure of states (political systems for instance) and finishing with an analysis of individual leaders. The second half of the course focuses on the World Order aspect of title and examines such topics as international cooperation, international organizations and foreign aid.

The course emphasizes the application of models of strategic rational action as tools for assessing relations between nations, coupled with statistical and historical analysis of events. There will be substantial amount of game theory in the class and students will be expected to examine data. While the mathematics required will not be beyond a basic introductory calculus level, students should be comfortable with approaching problems from a mathematical perspective.

The basic approach to each topic will be an examination of the key substantive questions and a survey of some basic facts. This introduction will be followed by a theoretical examination of central questions, often in the form a game theoretic problem. We will then examine data to see which ideas are supported by evidence and which are not.

The overriding principle in my teaching philosophy is to use scientific approaches and to teach skills, such as mathematical model, data analysis and analytical methods that can be applied across disciplines and are not specific only to the study of International Relations. This class is not intended as a comprehensive survey of international relations. The emphasis is on evaluating and testing theory. I expect you to consider the implications of theoretical arguments and use these deductions to make predictions. We will not simply be reading theoretical arguments, but rather we will consider what each theory implies and what evidence would falsify or support the predictions. *The exams and grading will reflect these goals.*

There will be two mid-term and a final examination. There will also be several assignments. The assignments and midterm will serve as a means for the student to receive feedback on how s/he is doing in the course. Each mid-term is worth 25% of the grade; the final is worth 50%. The midterm exams are on October 23rd and November 27th (during class time). The final exam is XXXXX. You are expected to attend all exams. Please let me know immediately if this exam schedule poses any problems. I can only make accommodations if you let me know in the first week of class.

I set up a webpage associated with this class: <https://wp.nyu.edu/alastairsmith/>
Under the teaching tab there is a link to War, Peace and World Order. The page is password protected: WPWO. On this page there are links to the readings and other materials. There is also a link to calendar for office hours. If you would like to meet and you can make none of the available times, then please send me email:
alastair.smith@nyu.edu