

## **POL SCI 222: Strategic Interaction**

### **Spring 2019**

*(Last updated May 29, 2019)*

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**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 2:00 - 4:00 PM  
or by appointment

**Class:** Bunche Hall 4276

Tuesdays

9:00 - 11:50 AM

### **Course Description and Learning Outcomes**

“Strategic interaction” is a broad term which typically refers to situations where each actor knows that the outcome of their choice depends on the decisions of the other actor. This dynamic can cover a vast range of activities in which actors are attempting to ascertain the intentions of their adversary in order to formulate a best response. Such interactions are often most salient and consequential around issues of international peace and conflict.

This course will build upon your knowledge of international security from the IR core seminars by delving more deeply into additional research on strategic interactions such as signaling, crisis bargaining, war, covert activity, and negotiation. The readings will all address some form of strategic interaction, and they will cover a wide variety of topics and empirical methods. We will place particular emphasis on recent work from the last decade, and we do so for two reasons. First, these works represent the forefront of our knowledge of both old and new agendas. Secondly, this will provide important context for the current state of the field, give us a chance to think about what kind of research is successful (at least in terms of being published), and hopefully offer inspiration for your own research.

The last two weeks will be left open for other relevant topics that you want to explore, whether they build upon material we have already covered or introduce different subjects. You are welcome to provide suggestions of topics—especially if you have particular readings in mind—during the first half of the quarter.

By the end of the course, you should have a much richer and more contemporary understanding of the international security subfield, be able to comment on the appropriate research, and develop some intuitions or ideas for potential research endeavors of your own.

This course does not have any formal prerequisites. However, as suggested above, it is designed to be an elective that builds on the core international relations seminar sequence (POL SCI 220A and 220B) in the Political Science Ph.D. program. Students should either be familiar with the material covered in those survey courses or be willing to catch up on some of this literature as we proceed through the readings.

## Course Requirements

- **Attendance and participation:** This course is a seminar, and seminars only work (in other words, we won't sit in lots of awkward silence) when everyone comes to class, arrives on time, does the readings, and is prepared to talk about them. Your participation is critical to ensuring that the class is effective for everyone.
- **Response papers:** You will write three response papers of between 3 and 4 pages (double-spaced, size 12 font, 1" margins) where you will discuss at least one of the readings that interests you. These are meant to be a chance to dive deeper into the material and to help inform class discussion. You should be prepared to discuss the contents of your paper during seminar should the occasion arise. These short papers can do the following:
  - Critically examine an argument or set of arguments.
  - Appraise a controversy in the literature.
  - Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the research design or theory.
  - Identify a gap in our knowledge and propose a sketch of a new research project that builds on the literature and fills that gap.

You should send your response paper to me by e-mail ([eric.min@ucla.edu](mailto:eric.min@ucla.edu)) by 3:00 on the Monday prior to the class when the reading will be discussed.

- **Research proposal:** By the end of finals week, you will submit a 10-to-12-page research proposal which must be different from designs you have proposed in past courses. The proposal should consist of the following:
  - A succinct statement of a theoretical argument on an important question that you pull out of the literature or develop on your own (as long as it remains related to the course materials and themes).
  - A review of relevant literature that already speaks to this question, as well as what your contribution would be to this extant set of research.
  - A basic outline of a theoretical claim or set of claims you would hope to make and your basis for taking this position.
  - A description of the population of cases to which the argument and hypotheses would apply, along with a description of this sample.

- An explanation of the key outcome and explanatory variables, as well as how they would be measured and collected.
- A pilot assessment, or “plausibility probe,” based on a brief examination of one or more cases from a sample. If the requisite data do not exist, this could involve a preliminary coding of variables for a straightforward descriptive analysis that shows the merit of pursuing this question further.

This research proposal is broken up into two pieces.

- *Proposal*: You will write a paper 1 or 2 pages long summarizing what topic your proposal will tackle and why you believe it is a worthwhile choice. You must submit this proposal to me by e-mail ([eric.min@ucla.edu](mailto:eric.min@ucla.edu)) by 5:00 PM on Wednesday, May 22. We will discuss this proposal in a one-on-one meeting by the end of Week 8.
- *Paper*: The paper should be 10 to 12 pages long excluding references. The final paper will be due by e-mail on Friday, June 14, by 5:00 PM.

I will not permit Incomplete grades for the course unless there is a serious personal emergency. Please plan accordingly.

## Readings

All required readings will be available on the CCLE page for this course.

## Course Policies

**General Conduct:** This course is a seminar, and seminars rely on everyone actively contributing to the discussion. Please do the reading and follow basic norms about thoughtful and respectful intellectual exchange. Active contributions can only happen when each person feels comfortable sharing and evaluating a range of ideas in an inclusive environment. To help this happen, we must all follow basic norms about thoughtful and respectful intellectual exchange. Comments in class should be respectful of other students. Disagreements should be expressed using evidence and reasoned arguments instead of hostility. Any statements or actions that harass or discriminate on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, and the like are unacceptable.

Faculty are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Coordinator—a *non-confidential* resource—should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

**Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Phones:** Laptops and tablets are permitted for note-taking during this course. Research says laptops are not ideal for learning, but it would be completely hypocritical for me to forbid laptops when I use them to take notes, too. In exchange for trusting you to use these devices, I ask that you not use them as distractions. Turn off the Wi-Fi. I maintain the right to change this policy for individual students or for everyone if these tools become problems during class. Phones are not permitted and should be put away.

**Academic Dishonesty:** As stated in the UCLA Student Conduct Code, violations or attempted violations of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to) cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions, or facilitating any of the above. See <https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Individual-Student-Code> for more details. If you are ever unsure about whether something counts as academic dishonesty, chances are that it does, but always feel free to ask me as soon as possible. UCLA and the academic community in general take academic dishonesty very seriously and do not accept ignorance as a defense.

**Other Personal Issues:** I understand that life can throw surprises that make it hard to focus on schoolwork. If you are experiencing a personal problem that is affecting your participation in this class, come speak with me. If you are not comfortable talking about these issues with me, please consider reaching out to the other student resources on campus, most of which are listed at <https://firsttogo.ucla.edu/Resources-for-Students/Campus-Resource>. Services exist to address counseling, student wellness, equity, sexual harassment, financial stress, and more. There should be absolutely no stigma involved in using these resources; they are there for a reason. I genuinely hope for all of you to thrive and succeed.

**Office Hours:** On most weeks, I will have office hours on Wednesdays between 2:00 PM and 4:00 PM. I am more than happy to discuss course materials or anything else on your mind. I would appreciate the chance to get to know each of you and your interests better. If you cannot make these scheduled office hours, or if office hours are generally filled up by undergraduate students, feel free to contact me so that we can try to find a different time that does work.

## Course Schedule

This is a tentative schedule and is subject to change. Readings already covered in this year's IR core seminars—and likely previous ones—are marked with a (C). Please ensure that you still remember each reading.

### April 2 (Week 1): Introductions and course overview

We will go over the syllabus, make introductions, and discuss contours of the course.

### April 9 (Week 2): Signaling credibility

In order for actors to attempt to either deter or coerce an adversary, they must send signals that are credible and properly interpreted. Costly signaling has become the predominant lens through which we view this problem. We will review the logic of costly signaling, discuss how well it is empirically supported, and explore other newer perspectives to how signals can be made credible and interpretable.

- (C) Schelling, Thomas C. 1966. *Arms and Influence*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1 (pages 1-34).
- (C) Jervis, Robert. 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pages 58-94.
- (C) Fearon, James D. 1994. "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88(3): 577-592.
- Fearon, James D. 1997. "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sunk Costs." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41(1): 68-90.
- Sartori, Anne E. 2002. "The Might of the Pen: A Reputational Theory of Communication in International Disputes." *International Organization* 56(1): 121-149.
- Kurizaki, Shuhei. 2007. "Efficient Secrecy: Public versus Private Threats in Crisis Diplomacy." *American Political Science Review* 101(3): 543-558.
- Katagiri, Azusa and Eric Min. 2019. "The Credibility of Public and Private Signals: A Document-Based Approach." *American Political Science Review* 113(1): 156-172.
- Quek, Kai. 2016. "Are Costly Signals More Credible? Evidence of Sender-Receiver Gaps." *Journal of Politics* 78(3): 925-940.
- Mercer, Jonathan. 2013. "Emotion and Strategy in the Korean War." *International Organization* 67(2): 221-252.

### April 16 (Week 3): Explaining and predicting conflict initiation

Fearon's seminal 1995 article marked a turning point in the study of war initiation and has sparked a huge research agenda. We will explore more recent extensions and tests of rationalist explanations for war initiation. In the last decade or so, scholars have also taken advantage of computational and technical advancements to focus on the actual prediction or forecasting of conflict. We will read some examples of this work, think about how prediction relates to explanation, and what promise this line of work has moving forward.

- (C) Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3): 379-414.
- (C) Powell, Robert. 2006. "War as a Commitment Problem." *International Organization* 60(1): 169-203.
- Weisiger, Alex. 2013. *Logics of War: Explanations for Limited and Unlimited Conflicts*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Chapter 1.
- Bas, Muhammet and Robert Schub. 2016. "Mutual Optimism as a Cause of Conflict: Secret Alliances and Conflict Onset." *International Studies Quarterly* 60(3): 552-564.
- Debs, Alexandre and Nuno P. Monteiro. 2014. "Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War." *International Organization* 68(1): 1-31.
- Gleditsch, Kristian S. and Michael D. Ward. 2013. "Forecasting is difficult, especially about the future: Using contentious issues to forecast interstate disputes." *Journal of Peace Research* 50(1): 17-31.
- Carroll, Robert J. and Brenton Kenkel. 2017. "Prediction, Proxies, and Power." Working paper, Florida State University and Vanderbilt University.
- Muchlinski, David, David Siroky, Jingrui He, and Matthew Kocher. 2016. "Comparing Random Forest with Logistic Regression for Predicting Class-Imbalanced Civil War Onset Data." *Political Analysis* 24(1): 87-103.
  - Neunhoeffer, Marcel and Sebastian Sternberg. 2019. "How Cross-Validation Can Go Wrong and What to Do About It." *Political Analysis* 27(1): 101-106. (Briefly skim)
  - Wang, Yu. 2019. "Comparing Random Forest with Logistic Regression for Predicting Class-Imbalanced Civil War Onset Data: A Comment." *Political Analysis* 27(1): 107-110. (Briefly skim)
  - Muchlinski, David, David Siroky, Jingrui He, and Matthew Kocher. 2019. "Seeing the Forest through the Trees." *Political Analysis* 27(1): 111-113. (Briefly skim)

**April 23 (Week 4): After conflict initiation**

Most core IR seminars address the puzzle of why wars start, but often shortchange an examination of how wars progress and eventually come to an end. This is sad. A rich set of literature explores various aspects of wartime activity, as well as post-conflict peace. We will fly through a wide assortment of research that shows various aspects, methods, and philosophies to analyzing the conduct of war itself. For many of these readings, it will be useful to think about how they relate to our understanding of war initiation and paint a more coherent picture about conflict as a whole.

- (C) Reiter, Dan. 2003. "Exploring the Bargaining Model of War." *Perspectives on Politics* 1(1): 27-43.
- Bennett, D. Scott and Allan C. Stam. 1996. "The Duration of Interstate Wars, 1816-1985." *American Political Science Review* 90(2): 239-257.
- Wagner, R. Harrison. 2000. "Bargaining and War." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 469-484. (Just skim)
- Slantchev, Branislav. 2003. "The Principle of Convergence in Wartime Negotiations." *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 621-632.
- Weisiger, Alex. 2016. "Learning from the Battlefield: Information, Domestic Politics, and Interstate War Duration." *International Organization* 70(2): 347-375.
- Valentino, Benjamin, Paul Huth, and Sarah Croco. 2006. "Covenants without the Sword: International Law and the Protection of Civilians in Times of War." *World Politics* 58(3): 339-377.
- Zeitzoff, Thomas. 2018. "Does Social Media Influence Conflict? Evidence from the 2012 Gaza Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(1): 29-63.
- Werner, Suzanne and Amy Yuen. 2005. "Making and Keeping Peace." *International Organization* 59(2): 261-292.

**April 30 (Week 5): Diplomacy during conflict**

Most wars end through negotiated settlements—not complete military victory or defeat. However, thanks to the notion that talk is cheap (especially compared to costly fighting), relatively little effort has been made to understand the role of diplomacy in war. More recent scholarship has directly addressed the causes and effects of this form of diplomatic activity, as well as whether it helps us understand anything about strategic interactions more broadly. We will read several examples of this research and consider how this agenda can be extended.

- Zartman, I. William. 2001. “The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments.” *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 1(1): 8-18.
- Beardsley, Kyle. 2011. *The Mediation Dilemma*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1-43).
- Mastro, Oriana S. 2019. *The Costs of Conversation: Obstacles to Peace Talks in Wartime*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 12-62).
- Min, Eric. 2019. “Negotiation as an Instrument of War.” Working paper.
  - Min, Eric. 2014. Dissertation prospectus abstract. (Just skim.)
  - Min, Eric. 2014. “Negotiation in War.” First full draft of dissertation prospectus. (Just skim.)
- Howard, Lisa Morjé and Alexandra Stark. 2017/18. “How Civil Wars End: The International System, Norms, and the Role of External Actors.” *International Security* 42(3): 127-171.
- Holmes, Marcus and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2017. “The Psychological Logic of Peace Summits: How Empathy Shapes Outcomes of Diplomatic Negotiations.” *International Studies Quarterly* 61(1): 107-122.

**May 7 (Week 6): Delving into domestic politics**

There is so much to think about when it comes to domestic politics and their relationship with international relations, but far too little time (and too few slots for readings to assign) to address it all. In what is easily the most fragmented set of readings thus far, we will touch on three aspects of domestic politics: the democratic advantage in war, the effects of domestic politics on signaling interest in peace, and additional work on audience costs.

- (C) Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. 1999. "An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 93(4): 791-807.
- (C) Tomz, Michael R. and Jessica L. P. Weeks. 2013. "Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 107(4): 89-865.
- Reiter, Dan and Allan C. Stam. 1998. "Democracy, War Initiation, and Victory." *American Political Science Review* 92(2): 377-389.
- Schultz, Kenneth A. 2005. "The Politics of Risking Peace: Do Hawks or Doves Deliver the Olive Branch?" *International Organization* 59(1): 1-38.
- Mattes, Michaela and Jessica L. P. Weeks. 2019. "Hawks, Doves, and Peace: An Experimental Approach." *American Journal of Political Science* 63(1): 53-66.
- Kreps, Sarah E., Elizabeth N. Saunders, and Kenneth A. Schultz. 2018. "The Ratification Premium: Hawks, Doves, and Arms Control." *World Politics* 70(4): 479-514.
- Allee, Todd L. and Paul K. Huth. 2006. "Legitimizing Dispute Settlement: International Legal Rulings as Domestic Political Cover." *American Political Science Review* 100(2): 219-234.
- Kertzer, Joshua D. and Ryan Brutger. 2015. "Decomposing Audience Costs: Bringing the Audience Back into Audience Cost Theory." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(1): 234-249.

**May 14 (Week 7): Covert versus overt interactions**

As inconvenient as it is for us as researchers, some of the most important interstate interactions take place behind closed doors. On some level, this is completely natural: Governments have plenty of things they want to hide from the public. Yet on another level, covert activity does not seem a particularly effective way to convey credibility or commitment to a cause. We will consider when and why actors prefer transparency over secrecy. In addition, we will identify approaches to study something that is purposefully meant to be unobserved.

- Finel, Bernard I. and Kristin M. Lord. 1999. “The Surprising Logic of Transparency.” *International Studies Quarterly* 43(2): 315-339.
- Stasavage, David. 2004. “Open-Door or Closed-Door? Transparency in Domestic and International Bargaining.” *International Organization* 58(4): 667-703.
- Carson, Austin. 2016. “Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation in the Korean War.” *International Organization* 70(1): 103-131.
- Carnegie, Allison and Austin Carson. 2018. “The Spotlight’s Harsh Glare: Rethinking Publicity and International Order.” *International Organization* 72(3): 627-657.
- McManus, Rose W. and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2017. “The Logic of ‘Offstage’ Signaling: Domestic Politics, Regime Type, and Major Power-Protégé Relations.” *International Organization* 71(4): 701-733.

**May 21 (Week 8): Worrying about reputation and status**

States and leaders harbor concerns about their reputation and status, and both concepts (with emphasis on the former) have motivated a great deal of IR research. Indeed, the topic of reputation has occasionally emerged in previous weeks' readings. We will explore these topics directly through an array of scholarship that addresses how actors create, act upon, and care about status and reputation in the course of their interactions with others—particularly in the realm of conflict.

- (C) Renshon, Jonathan. 2016. "Status Deficits and War." *International Organization* 70(3): 513-530.
- Walter, Barbara F. 2006. "Building Reputation: Why Governments Fight Some Separatists but Not Others." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 313-330.
- Tingley, Dustin H. and Barbara F. Walter. 2011. "The Effect of Repeated Play on Reputation Building: An Experimental Approach." *International Organization* 65(2): 343-365.
- Barnhart, Joslyn. 2017. "Humiliation and Third-Party Aggression." *World Politics* 69(3): 532-568.
- Press, Daryl. 2004/05. "The Credibility of Power: Assessing Threats during the 'Appeasement' Crises of the 1930s." *International Security* 29(3): 136-169.
- Mercer, Jonathan. 2017. "The Illusion of International Prestige." *International Security* 41(4): 133-168.

**Friday, May 24 (End of Week 8): Proposal discussion**

By this date, you must have spoken to me in a one-on-one meeting about your research proposal.

**May 28 (Week 9): Alliances**

*Note:* This week's topic and readings were collectively determined by the instructor and students during the quarter. They are likely to vary in subsequent courses.

Alliances are a foundation of international affairs. Despite that clear fact, research on alliances has produced either unclear or mixed insights about their origins, mechanisms, and impacts. Scholarly rancor was especially heated two or three decades ago. This week's readings give an overview of where much of the recent literature has headed, both in terms of new theoretical arguments and empirical approaches.

- *Note:* You are not required to read the following, but I will summarize the Walt reading in class. The two *APSR* articles are gripping academic drama.
  - Walt, Stephen. 1987. *The Origin of Alliances*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
  - Vazquez, John A. 1997. "The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition." *American Political Science Review* 91(4): 899-912.
  - Waltz, Kenneth N. 1997. "Evaluating Theories." *American Political Science Review* 91(4): 913-917.
- (C) Fang, Songying, Jesse C. Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds. 2014. "To Concede or to Resist? The Restraining Effect of Military Alliances." *International Organization* 68(4): 775-804.
- Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2003. "Alliance Reliability in Times of War: Explaining State Decisions to Violate Treaties." *International Organization* 57(4): 801-827.
- Poast, Paul. 2012. "Does Issue Linkage Work? Evidence from European Alliance Negotiations, 1860 to 1945." *International Organization* 66(2): 277-310.
- Fordham, Benjamin and Paul Poast. 2016. "All Alliances Are Multilateral: Rethinking Alliance Formation." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60(5): 840-865.
- Fuhrmann, Matthew and Todd S. Sechser. 2014. "Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 919-935.
- Kuo, Raymond. "Secrecy among Friends: Covert Military Alliances and Portfolio Consistency." Forthcoming, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

**June 4 (Week 10): Emerging approaches to study strategic interaction**

*Note:* This week's topic and readings were collectively determined by the instructor and students during the quarter. They are likely to vary in subsequent courses.

The advancement of research obviously relies on novel ideas, but thinking alone can only go so far. Some ideas cannot be easily tested, and some ideas may only emerge when we are inspired by new pieces of information. In the final "free-for-all" seminar, we will take a tour of several recent works that analyze strategic interactions by harnessing both novel methodological tools and untapped sources of data. We will conclude by thinking about the future of the field.

- Abadie, Alberto, Alexis Diamond, and Jens Hainmueller. 2016. "Comparative Politics and the Synthetic Control Method." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(2): 495-510.
- Pauly, Reid B.C. 2018. "Would U.S. Leaders Push the Button? Wargames and the Sources of Nuclear Restraint." *International Security* 43(2): 151-192.
- Camber Warren, T. 2010. "The geometry of security: Modeling interstate alliances as evolving networks." *Journal of Peace Research* 47(6): 697-709.
- Bell, Mark S. and Kai Quek. 2018. "Authoritarian Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace." *International Organization* 72(1): 227-242.
- Min, Eric. 2018. "Endogenizing the Costs of Conflict: A Text-Based Application to the Korean War." Working paper.
  - *Note:* This paper is going to change substantially in the future, so focus more on the overall approach than the theoretical argument.
- Horowitz, Michael, Brandon M. Stewart, Dustin Tingley, Michael Bishop, Laura Resnick, Margaret Roberts, Welton Chang, Barbara Mellers, and Phil Tetlock. "What Makes Foreign Policy Teams Tick: Explaining Variation in Group Performance at Geopolitical Forecasting." Forthcoming, *Journal of Politics*.

**Friday, June 14: Final Paper Due**

Your research proposal is due via e-mail ([eric.min@ucla.edu](mailto:eric.min@ucla.edu)) by 5:00 PM.