

## RESEARCH SEMINAR ON THE CAUSES OF WAR

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Rutgers University

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Poli Sci 419

Wednesday 8:30am – 11:30am

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Although the frequency of interstate wars and great power wars in particular have been declining over time, leading to many optimistic forecasts about the continued decline of warfare, events of the last two years have not been reassuring. In addition to the wars in Ukraine and in Gaza, and the ongoing possibility that each might escalate, there are a number of other “hot spots” that could conceivably trigger a wider war. These include military attacks against US forces and US allies by Iranian proxies in the Middle East, the continued expansion of North Korea’s nuclear weapons arsenal coupled with the unpredictable behavior of Kim Jong Un, and repeated statements by Chinese leader Xi Jinping that China will incorporate Taiwan into China by diplomacy if possible but by force if necessary. These and other concerns have led some to accept philosopher George Santayana’s argument that “only the dead have seen the end of war.”

The centrality of war in human history, the number and intensity of contemporary conflicts, and the fact that we cannot reduce the frequency and seriousness of war unless we first understand its causes make it imperative that we analyze how wars might arise and escalate. Will a likely (but not certain) power transition between the United States and China result in war, as so many transitions between leading powers have done in the past? Could an acceleration of the Iranian nuclear program lead to a preventive strike by Israel or the United States, leading to a major war? Could ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan, or between India and China, escalate to war?

This seminar is designed to help you think about such questions – not by directly examining contemporary international conflicts, but instead by familiarizing you with theories about how wars start and with an exploration of the origins of a number of wars in the past. Although the contexts of possible future crises and wars will differ from those of past wars, the knowledge generated in this class will give you the conceptual tools and historical perspective to make sense of future conflicts and crises. This is not just abstract theory. An acute great power crisis, raising fears of a nuclear war, is quite likely to occur in your lifetime.

This course is guided by a concern for both theory and history, rather than by contemporary policy. In the first half of the semester we survey the leading theories of the causes of war, using the “levels-of-analysis” framework to categorize these theories and organize our survey. We begin with the “system” level and focus on realist theories based on state power and interest, giving particular attention to balance of power theory, power transition theory, and preventive war. We also examine the “Prisoner’s dilemma” model, deterrence and spiral models, and the “bargaining model of war.” Each of these theories assumes that states’ foreign policies are reasonably rational responses to their external environments and designed to maximize the national interest. Other theories suggest that the causes of war derive from factors internal to the state, including a country’s ideology or religion, nationalism, the domestic political interests of decision-makers, the economic interests of private groups, or bureaucratic politics. We examine these “societal” and “governmental” level theories, along with “leader-centric” theories that emphasize the role of the world views, personalities, and idiosyncrasies of political leaders. We illustrate each of the main theoretical arguments with examples from a wide range of historical cases. Among the questions the levels-of-analysis framework leads us to ask is whether the outbreak of war is generally due more to states’ external competition for power and security, to their internal political dynamics, or the psychological make-up of political leaders.

Understanding theories of war is only part of our task. We also want to understand why particular wars occur. Some wars have changed the course of history – for the states involved and sometimes for the entire international system – and for this reason alone it is important to understand why they occurred. In addition, with so many theories, we need to have a way of deciding which theories are better than others, in terms of explaining how the world works. History provides an answer, a way of “testing” our theories of war to see which theories are most consistent with historical reality, and of modifying our theories to make them better.

With these considerations in mind, the second half of the seminar focuses on student research projects on the causes of particular wars. Each student picks an interstate war of their choice – American or non-American, Western or non-Western, past or present, with the ultimate aim of explaining the causes (origins) of that war. The process will involve three interrelated components. The first paper assignment will summarize the leading alternative interpretations of the causes of the war, as advanced by historians. Students will continue working on the project throughout the term, with the aim of formulating their own interpretation of the causes of the war. The last four or five weeks of the term involve student oral presentations. Each student gives a short presentation of their causal interpretation to the class, elaborates on and defends their arguments in response to questions from the class and from the professor, and then incorporates feedback from their first paper and their presentation into a final research paper. To provide background information for other students, and facilitate student questions and discussion, I will assign an article-length piece as background reading for each presentation.

At this point it looks like we will fall short of the 17 student cap on the class. That will give us plenty of time during the last four or five class sessions for 10-12 minute presentations by each student followed by a half hour of questions and answers. If more than one student selects the same war, we will convert individual presentations into panel presentations and discussions – but each student still presents their own interpretation and writes their own research paper.

If the class is much larger than 12 we will not have enough time for individual presentations and question and answer sessions for everyone in the class, unless there is some duplication of cases. With a larger number of students, I will provide a list of about eight or so wars and ask students to pick from the list. With two or more students examining a given war, oral presentations would take the form of panel presentations.

To repeat: the primary aim of the paper is to explain the outbreak of the war. It is not to identify who is to blame or who is “responsible” for the war. That is a slightly different question – not unimportant, just different. A familiarity with leading theories of the causes of war will help guide students in formulating their interpretation of the conditions, processes, and personalities contributing to the outbreak of war. We restrict our projects to interstate wars in order to maintain the close connection between theory and history. Theories of interstate war differ in many respects from theories of civil war, and one semester does not provide enough time for an intensive focus on both.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

This seminar aims to develop skills in critical thinking and writing as well as to generate substantive knowledge about issues of war and peace. Through reading, class discussions, two papers, and an oral presentation, students will learn to construct logically coherent causal arguments, consider alternative interpretations of the phenomenon in question, and understand the kinds of evidence needed to discriminate among competing arguments. They will also gain experience in organizing a massive amount of information to summarize what happened and in constructing a causal explanation for why it happened. Students will also learn to write with revision based on critical feedback – from the professor on the first paper, and from the professor and the class on the oral presentation.

Our emphasis on causal argumentation, alternative interpretations, critical thinking, and empirical evidence is particularly important at a time of political polarization and “information silos,” where communications technology exacerbates the human tendency to select incoming information that confirms their preexisting beliefs (confirmation bias). One can construct alternative causal explanations for all social phenomena. This does not mean, however, that these explanations are equally valid. A major aim of both empirical social science and historiography is to utilize evidence to adjudicate among competing causal arguments, to make a judgment as to whether one explanation is better than others.

Substantively, students should emerge from the course with an understanding of the leading theories of causes of war between nation-states, some familiarity with the causes of the wars students select as their research projects, and a much deeper understanding of “their” war. In the process, students will develop a sense of whether there are general patterns leading to interstate war (as social scientists tend to argue) or whether each war is unique (as historians tend to argue). In studying why states go to war they will gain a better appreciation of why states make other kinds of foreign policy decisions. I expect that students will gain an appreciation of the complexity of the processes leading to most wars. Finally, students will develop the theoretical background and analytic skills for assessing how contemporary international disputes are to escalate to war.

## Readings

There are four sets of required reading for the seminar:

- 1) Theoretical reading for part I of the course. (folder #01)
- 2) Sample papers from previous classes. (folders #02 & 03)
- 3) Background reading for student presentations in part II of the course. (folder #04)
- 4) Reading for your specific research project (suggested list, by email)

All required readings in sets 1-3 except for the one required book are available on the class Canvas site. Go to <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>, log in, go to Causes of War, to Files in the left column, and then to the relevant folder.

As for readings for your research project, once you have selected a war I will email you suggestions as to where you might start your research, along with a list of sources that I or previous students have found helpful in the past. The length of this list will vary by war. For longer lists you will have to be selective, while adding additional sources you come across that might be particularly useful (e.g., if many other sources cite them); for shorter lists you will have to expand. I have also included, in folders labeled “pdf’s,” article-length studies of a number of particular wars. If yours is included please feel free to use them. These are things for which I happen to have pdf’s. They are not necessarily the most important sources on the war.

The above-mentioned pdf’s do not include books, which are essential for the analysis of most wars because of their greater historical detail. Many of these books are available online at Rutgers library. If not, then you will need to check out a copy at the library or, if unavailable there, get it from other libraries through Rutgers EZBorrow, UBorrow, or interlibrary loan. You can access EZBorrow and UBorrow at <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/find-borrow/interlibrary-loan-borrow-other-libraries> (see bottom of page).

**Required Book** (available at Rutgers Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 732 246-8448, 100 Somerset St, New Brunswick), on the internet, and on reserve at Alexander Library):  
 Jack S. Levy & William R. Thompson, *Causes of War*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

**Articles and Book Chapters** (available in folder #01 on Canvas)

- Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications." *World Politics* 24 (Spring 1972): 40-79.
- Robert J. Art, "The Four Functions of Force." In Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, eds., *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2007. Pp. 141-48.
- Geoffrey Blainey, "The Abacus of Power." In Blainey, *The Causes of War*. New York: Free Press, 1988. Pp. 108-124.
- Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Book I, chap. 1.
- Alexander L. George, "A Provisional Theory of Crisis Management." In Alexander L. George, ed., *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management*. Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1991. Chap. 4.
- Joe D. Hagan, "Does Decision Making Matter? Systematic Assumptions vs. Historical Reality in International Relations Theory." *International Studies Review*, 3, 2 (Summer 2001), 5-46.
- Robert Jervis, "Deterrence, the Spiral Model, and the Intentions of the Adversary." In Ralph K. White, *Psychology and the Prevention of Nuclear War*. New York: New York University Press, 1986. Pp. 107-30.
- Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18, 4 (Spring, 1988): 675-700.
- Jack S. Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems." *World Politics*, 36, 1 (October 1983): 76-99.
- Jack S. Levy, "Preventive War: Concept and Propositions." *International Interactions* 37, 1 (March 2011): 87-96.
- John J. Mearsheimer, "Anarchy and the Struggle for Power." In Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, eds., *International Politics*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005. Pp. 50-60.
- Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. New York: Knopf, 1985. Chap. 1.
- Bruce Russett, *The Prisoners of Insecurity*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1983. Chap. 5-6.
- Randall L. Schweller, "The Balance of Power in World Politics." In William R. Thompson, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory*, 4 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Vol. 1, pp. 143-57.
- Ronald L. Tammen, et al. *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2000. Chap. 1.

Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning." In Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, eds., *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*. Tenth ed. Boston: Longman, 2011. Pp.127-134.

Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959. Chap. 1.

You should read the above-mentioned theoretical readings in the order listed in the course outline below. The theoretical reading will familiarize you with the leading theories of the causes of war. These readings will serve as the basis of class discussion for the first five weeks of the term. It is also essential for your two papers and oral presentation for the class. An understanding of the leading theories will help you identify and make sense of the alternative historical interpretations of the historical case you are studying, which is the focus of your first paper for the course. A theoretical understanding also helps you to organize your research paper on the causes of your war and to interpret the massive amount of historical information on your case. If you are familiar with theories of balance of power, conflict spirals, diversionary behavior, decision-making, etc., you will be quicker to identify those patterns from your historical readings and to interpret the connections among historical events.

The background historical reading for part II of the course (folder #04) will usually consist of one article per war. The aim here is to provide enough historical background so that students in the class can better understand each oral presentation and ask informed questions about the presentation. This reading will also allow the presenter to shorten their discussion of the historical chronology and focus on their arguments about the causes of the war.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

There is one interrelated set of formal requirements for the course, centered around your research project on the causes of a particular war and involving three specific tasks:

- 1) a 2-3 page (single space) paper summarizing alternative interpretations of your historical case, including a preliminary bibliography of sources.
- 2) an oral presentation to the class, summarizing your provisional interpretation of the causes of your war, followed by responses to questions from the class.
- 3) a 11-15 page research paper on your war.

The papers should be single space with an extra space between paragraphs. Any citation style is acceptable as long as you are consistent, but please include a list of references of sources used at the end of your paper, regardless of citation style. Please use footnotes rather than endnotes, and include your name, title, and page numbers on your papers. The book by Levy and Thompson and the articles by Jervis (1983) or by Levy (1983) provide examples of two different citation styles.

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

“alternative interpretations” paper	15%
oral presentation and discussion	20%
research paper	50%
contributions to class discussion	15%

Note the last item in the above list. My evaluation of your contributions (quality and quantity) to class discussion, during both our survey of theoretical approaches and in the discussions of presentations by other members of the seminar, will be important in the evaluation of grades for the class. This provides a strong incentive to do the readings and to come to class prepared to talk about them. I will ask questions about certain theoretical concepts or about historical examples of them. I encourage you to ask your own questions about things you do not understand. You can also ask questions as a way to get feedback on arguments you were thinking of making in one of your papers or in your presentation. You are free to criticize arguments made by other students, but such comments should always be made politely, and never personalized. I will especially encourage such criticisms during student presentation. For those who tend to be shy in class and hesitate to speak out, it might help to jot down a few questions before you come to class. To help ensure that entry to the discussion is easy, and that no one dominates, I will call on people who raise their hands.

I expect you to attend every meeting of the seminar, and arrive in a timely manner, unless you are ill (in which case, please stay away and send me an email). It is particularly inexcusable for students to be absent during other students' presentations.

There is no mid-term or final examination. Your mastery of the readings is indirectly tested by your performance on the papers and presentation. Our discussions for the first six or seven weeks will center directly on the readings. In addition, the better you know the theories, the more easily you will be able to identify alternative interpretations of your war, and the sharper your analysis of the causes of the war in your research paper. Some of the questions raised in response to your oral presentation could take the form “to what extent does your case support (or not) such-and-such theory of the causes of war?” This gives you a strong incentive to complete all required readings prior to class meetings.

Please submit your papers as attachments under the “Assignments” tab on Canvas. Papers should be in an MS Word or pdf format. For those who prefer other processing programs, please convert your papers to a Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF format before submitting. Please do not submit your papers in an .odt or other format. Your paper will be automatically run through the “Turnitin” program, which detects any substantial passages in a paper that match passages in the expansive “Turnitin” data base.

Let me add one comment on writing style. I have found that students often use direct quotations too frequently. That may be proper in a literature or poetry class, or perhaps one on the law, where you quote a passage and interpret it. In most history and social science, however, it is generally preferable to save quotations for (1) statements of the actors whose behavior you are trying to explain (e.g., quotes from political leaders); or (2) secondary sources that really nail it, that perfectly and succinctly capture an argument you are trying to make (or criticize). For everything else it is better to paraphrase, with appropriate citation. When we discuss sample papers in weeks six and eight of the term, I will point out what I regard as the proper use and over-use of quotations.

**Paper #1: Alternative historical interpretations** of your historical case.

2-3 pages, single space, with extra space between paragraphs, including a preliminary bibliography of sources consulted or (separate section) intended to consult.

Due: Wednesday, March 6, 11:59pm, at the “Assignments” tab on the course’s Canvas site.

Historians often vary in their interpretations of particular historical events or episodes. Wars are no exception. One thing that motivates professional historians and political scientists is the aim of demonstrating that an existing interpretation is wrong or incomplete, suggesting a new interpretation, and supporting the latter with historical evidence. If one agrees with the conventional wisdom about what happened and why in a particular historical episode, then there is not much point to doing yet another study. This norm is if anything more pronounced in political science. Scholars aim to demonstrate not only that one’s interpretation is consistent with the historical evidence, but also to demonstrate that it fits the evidence better than do the interpretations of other scholars. By focusing in paper #1 on the alternative historical interpretations of your war, you are situating your paper in the broader literature and setting up your final research paper. I am generally looking for three to five alternative interpretations for a particular crisis or war.

Sometimes it is fairly easy to identify alternative interpretations of a particular war. For the U.S. decision for war against Iraq in 2003, some argue that it was “all about oil.” Others emphasize the ideological aim of overthrowing an evil dictator and promoting democracy in Iraq and in the region; or misperceptions associated with the belief that Iraq had an ongoing nuclear weapons program; or the role of neoconservatives; or the world view and personality of U.S. President George W. Bush.

Alternative interpretations are sometimes reflected in the title of books and articles. The subtitle of Herbert Bass’s book on *American Entry into World War I* (1964), for example, is *Submarines, Sentiment, or Security*. This reflects ongoing debates about whether American decision to enter the war was motivated primarily by German submarine threat to U.S. commerce, by the US ideological commitment to liberal democracy or historical ties to Britain, or by US concerns about the European balance of power.



To take another example, in 2008 Norrin Ripsman and I published an article on British (and French) appeasement of Nazi Germany entitled “Wishful Thinking or Buying Time?” The first part of the title reflected the conventional wisdom that British appeasement policy resulted from Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s erroneous belief that appeasement would work to resolve the 1938 Munich crisis and satisfy Hitler’s aggressive ambitions. The second part of the title signaled our own argument that British appeasement policy aimed to satisfy Hitler in the short term in order to buy time to allow Britain to build up armaments for the inevitable future war.

Identifying alternative interpretations is often complicated by the fact that it is usually possible to identify one or two variations of each alternative interpretation. You have to use your own judgment as to whether a given variation is important enough to qualify as a separate alternative interpretation, or just a variant within a larger interpretation. The more you understand theories of war and the history of your case, the easier it is to make these judgments.

If alternative explanations do not “emerge” from debates among historians, you can suggest some yourself based on your understanding of theories of war and peace. One approach would be to adopt a levels-of-analysis framework, which we discuss the first couple of days of class. This might lead to the identification of an international system level (or realist) interpretation, a domestic politics interpretation, and an individual-level interpretation. In some cases you might want to add a bureaucratic politics interpretation. Others might want to suggest two domestic interpretations – for example, one based on the diversionary theory of war, and another based on the pressure from powerful domestic economic interests.

My primary reason for assigning this first paper is to help you write a better second paper. As I said earlier, your analysis of a war (or anything else) is better if you are clear about whom you are arguing against. In my experience, one thing that separates many excellent research papers (paper #2) from merely good papers is that an excellent paper often includes a discussion of why the student’s interpretation is better than the leading alternative explanations. You can incorporate a condensed and revised version of paper #1 into your final research paper.

Paper #1 need not follow any rigid format. I have posted on our Canvas site (folder #2) some sample papers from past classes that illustrate different approaches to the first paper. I have set aside a day in class (February 21) to talk about the alternative interpretations paper. We will read a few sample papers from past classes and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. I will put these “sample papers” in folder #02 on Canvas once students have selected their historical cases. You might note that each of the sample papers lists at least five or six sources in its reference list. I have no specific number in mind, and books “count” more than articles, but 5-6 is a useful rule of thumb for a minimum. If there are sources you plan to read but have not yet had the opportunity, you can list them in a “plan to consult” list at the end of your references.

**Paper # 2: Research Paper**

11-15 pages, single space, extra space between paragraphs, footnotes rather than endnotes; includes list of references cited. Additional pages for any maps.

Due: May 6, 12 noon, at the “Assignments” tab on the course Canvas site.

The paper should focus on the causes of the war that you selected for investigation. I will provide, in folder #1 on my Canvas site, additional guidelines about the paper, and we will talk more about it on and off throughout the course. In addition, I have set aside our March 19 class meeting to talk about the paper and the oral presentation. However, it would be useful for me to say a few things here. This is a major project that requires a major commitment on your part, and you should take this seminar only if the paper is something that you would enjoy doing and/or think you could learn from doing.

The paper must be more than a historical chronology of the events leading to the outbreak of war. It must provide a theoretically-informed, causal interpretation of the outbreak of the war. That is, you should use some of the theoretical concepts from the first part of the course to help explain the outbreak of your war. The paper must include an evaluation of the relative importance of different causal factors at different levels of analysis in the processes leading to the outbreak and escalation of the war. I do not want a “laundry list” of ten or twenty causes of the war. You need to prioritize among the many causes, and identify primary and secondary causes of the war. You also need to support your interpretation with historical evidence. This requires extensive research and extensive citations. In your first paper – on alternative interpretations of your war – you should include a list of sources that you have consulted or plan to consult. If I know enough about your case to know that something critical is missing, I will let you know. If I recommend additional sources that you have omitted – and I often do – it would be prudent to follow up on my suggestions.

Among the various theoretical questions we will attempt to answer in our historical cases are the following: What is the relative importance of causal factors from different levels of analysis on each state’s behavior? Stated differently, what is the relative importance of strategic, ideological, economic, and domestic political motivations in political leaders’ decisions? Did states escalate a crisis or go to war primarily to increase their power and security, to promote certain principles of justice or forms of socio-political organization, to increase their wealth, or to consolidate the domestic positions of key elites? How important were conflicts of interests over tangible issues, like territorial disputes, as opposed to concerns over power, reputation, and internal politics? How influential were private economic interests or the military? Did individual leaders make a difference, or would policy choices likely have been similar if someone else was in power? Did political leaders have reasonably accurate perceptions of the intentions and capabilities of their adversaries and third states, or were there substantial misperceptions? Questions like these are likely to come up during the discussion period following student presentations, and students should do their best to incorporate answers to these questions into the conclusions of their final research paper.

To give you a sense of what my expectations are on the papers, I will post a few sample research papers from previous undergraduate research seminars in folder #03 of my Canvas site. We will talk about these papers in class on March 20.

**The Oral Presentation** (10-12 minutes, followed by discussion, followed by up to 30 minutes of questions and answers)

Your oral presentation is based on your research paper but comes before the paper. It serves (informally) as a first draft of your research paper. The question-and-answer period following your presentation, along with email comments from the professor, will provide feedback on your argument and suggestions as to how you might fine-tune your argument and improve your paper. Thus the discussion following your presentation is as important as the presentation itself.

You should spend no more than four or five minutes tracing the historical events leading to the war (which the students in the class will have a decent sense of given their background reading). You should focus the bulk of your remarks on summarizing your causal argument as to what caused the war, differentiating between primary and secondary causes, suggesting the path through which each cause contributed to the outbreak of the war, and providing some evidence to back up your argument. You might also note, building on paper #1, how your interpretation fits into the existing literature on the war. You will have more opportunity to elaborate on your interpretation and supporting evidence in the discussion session. So be selective in your presentation and remain within the 10-12 minute time limit.

In the question and answer session, other students and I will raise questions relating to the theoretical coherence of your argument, the strength and validity of your supporting evidence, how your interpretation fits with various theories surveyed in the first part of the course, how your interpretation differs from other interpretations of the war, and other topics. Some of these questions will be relevant for your final paper. This gets back to the presentation-as-first-draft theme. With this in mind, I strongly recommend that after your presentation you take the time to write down all the useful ideas and any responses that come to mind while things are still fresh, so that you can deal with those questions in your final research paper. Or, even better, make a deal with a friend in the class for them to take notes on the questions pertaining to your paper, and you on theirs.

I have no objections to several students researching the same historical case. In that event, the presentations will take the form of a panel. This would require some coordination on presenting the history leading up to the war, as I would like to minimize overlap. However, there is no need to coordinate on your causal interpretations. Your interpretation is your own. I would expect some differences, which would stimulate debate.

It is worth noting that the more focused and coherent your presentation on the causes of your war, the more useful feedback you will get. This provides an additional incentive to do as much research on your case as possible before your presentation. Know your case.

### **Selecting a Paper Topic**

A few of you might already have a good sense of diplomatic/international history, and be able to narrow down a choice for your research topic fairly quickly. Maybe a particular war might be of interest because of national background. Many of you, however, may need a little more guidance. Let me offer a few suggestions. For one thing, I have included a partial list of interstate wars in folder #00 in Canvas. You are by no means restricted to this list.

If a particular war strikes your possible interest, I think that you can get a good sense of most of these wars from Wikipedia and similar sources on the internet. You could also look at the bibliographies of a number (but far from all) wars in Folder #06. Each bibliography opens with a paragraph suggesting a few good places to start in learning more about the war in question. I have uploaded some journal articles and book chapters on some wars in other “pdf” folders on Canvas. With regard to Wikipedia, I should note that it and other online encyclopedias generally focus more on the history of particular wars than on scholarly debates about the causes of the war. Those sources will be useful in helping you decide what you might want to study, but not very good at all in helping you analyze the war for the purposes of your two papers.

However you proceed, one thing to keep in mind is that this class focuses on the causes of the war, not how the war is fought, how it ended, or what its consequences were. Consequently, I suggest that – for the purposes of this class, at least – that you stop reading when they start fighting. An exception, of course, is if a war expands through the intervention of outside states, like American intervention in World War I. For that, you would need some understanding of the course of the war to explain the American decision to intervene.

Although we can make some exceptions, we will generally do the presentations in chronological order. However, please do not shy away from one of the early cases just because that would mean you have to be one of the first ones to present. For one thing, my expectations are lower for the early presentations, given the more restricted time to do background research and less familiarity with how things will work. In addition, one significant advantage to presenting early is that you receive early feedback and have more time to do more research and fine-tune the final research paper before it is due, and before the end-of-semester crunch. In this sense, presenting last can be a disadvantage. Your presentation might be a little better, but you will have less be less able to respond to feedback.

You should move as quickly as possible to select a war to serve as the topic of your research paper for the class. The sooner you select a topic, the sooner you can move ahead with your reading, and the sooner I can set up a schedule of presentations, select the background reading, and provide suggestions as to sources for your projects. (Depending on which cases you pick, I may have many or few suggestions.) With paper #1 due March 6, I would like you to select your topic by the fourth week of class (February 7), if possible. Email me with your topic at any time. I will respond with some suggested sources, more for some wars than for others. There is no penalty for a late selection of papers, but the later you select your topic, the less time you will have to work on the paper.

Selecting a topic early is also important so that you can begin collecting research materials. As I noted earlier, although all journals and many books are available in digitized form from Rutgers library, and other books are available in hard copy at Alexander Library, for other books you may have to go through EZ Borrow, UBorrow, or Interlibrary Loan. These are reasonably good systems, but they do not work overnight, so please do not put off your collection of research materials until the last minute.

**NOTE #1:** Please silence your cell phones before class begins. If you need to have your cell phone on for medical or family reasons, please provide a note from your dean. You are free to use a laptop computer, iPad, or other device to take notes, to look at the syllabus or reading material online, or to look up other factual material relating to the course, but not for any other purpose. Texting or emailing or surfing the web is not permitted and will hurt your class participation grade.

**NOTE #2: ABSENCES.** Attendance is required at all sessions, unless you are ill.

**NOTE #3: RUTGERS DISABILITY POLICY.** See <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>.

**NOTE #4: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.** The University, the Dept. of Political Science, and I each take academic integrity seriously. The University imposes heavy penalties for plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. If the meanings of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty are not clear, please see the Rutgers policy on academic integrity: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>. Please pay particular attention to the section on “Levels of Violations and Sanctions.” Remember that your written work for the class goes through the “Turnitin” program on Canvas, which picks up plagiarism. One additional note, based on recent experience. If you use someone’s exact words, it is necessary but not sufficient to cite the source. You must also put exact words in quotation marks.

**NOTE #5: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

Finally, a word about the use of generative artificial intelligence. I share the belief of many educators, especially in the social sciences and the humanities, that although (1) programs such as ChatGPT and Google's Bard are excellent at providing certain kinds of information, (2) they do little to help develop critical thinking, and that (3) developing skills in critical thinking is a leading goal of education. I hope the way I have structured the class and its assignments encourages, rewards, and measures students' ability to engage in critical thinking about causal questions in the social sciences, and in international relations in particular. I have no problem with the use of AI for improving sentence structure and grammar (e.g., with Grammarly), but all content must be your own. You cannot use generative artificial intelligence to write your class papers. If you want to use AI for any purpose, you must include a statement on the bottom of your title page that explains how you use generative AI and for what purpose.

**NOTE #6: EMAIL**

The professor will occasionally communicate to the class via email. It is the student's responsibility to check email. It would be prudent to check the day before class each week.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Number indicates the week of the term, beginning January 17; letters represent multiple topics each week. All reading except the Levy & Thompson book is on Canvas (chap 1 of the book, for week 1, is on Canvas).

### PART I: THEORIES OF WAR AND PEACE

1. **Course Introduction** (January 17)  
focus, aims, organization, requirements  
Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, chap. 1  
Note: pp. 5-11 is relevant for section 1a below, 14-20 for section 1c.  
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- 1a. **What Is War?**  
Clausewitz, *On War*, Book I, chap. 1
- 1b. **The Politics of Force**  
Robert J. Art, "The Four Functions of Force"
- 1c. **Classifying the Causes of War: The Levels of Analysis Framework**  
Waltz, "Introduction" to *Man, the State, and War* (chap. 1)  
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2. **The System Level: Realist Theories** (January 24)
- 2a. **Realist International Theory**  
Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*,  
6<sup>th</sup> ed. Chap. 1.  
John Mearsheimer, "Anarchy and the Struggle for Power"  
Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, chap. 2
- 2b. **Balance of Power Theory**  
Randall L. Schweller, "The Balance of Power in World Politics"  
Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning"
- 2c. **Power Transition Theory**  
Ronald L. Tammen, et al. *Power Transitions*, Chap 1
- 2d. **Preventive War**  
Levy, "Preventive War: Concepts and Propositions"  
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3. **Dyadic-Level Theories** (January 31)  
Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, chap. 3
- 3a. **The Prisoner's Dilemma Model**  
Bruce Russett, *The Prisoners of Insecurity*, chap. 5-6.
- 3b. **Deterrence and the Spiral Model**  
Robert Jervis, "Deterrence, the Spiral Model, and the Intentions of the Adversary"
- 3c. **Why Can't They Settle? The Bargaining Model of War**  
Blainey, "The Abacus of Power"
- 3d. **Crisis Management**  
Alexander L. George, "A Provisional Theory of Crisis Management"  
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4. **Economic and Societal Theories** (February 7)  
Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, pp. 70-77 & chap. 4.
- \*\* Selection of paper topic due (February 7)  
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- 5a. **The Decision-Making Approach** (February 14)  
Joe Hagan, "Does Decision Making Matter? Systematic Assumptions vs. Historical Reality in International Relations Theory"
- 5b. **Psychology of Decision-making**  
Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, chap. 5  
Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception"  
Levy, "Misperceptions and the Causes of War," pp. 82-93 only.
- 5c. **Politics of Decision-Making**  
Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, chap. 6  
Allison and Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics"  
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6. **Paper #1: Guidelines and Discussion of Sample Papers #1** (February 21)  
Reading: 3 sample papers (folder #2)  
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7. **Theoretical Summary** (February 28)
- \*\* March 6, PAPER #1 DUE ("Assignments tab" on Canvas, by 11:55pm)  
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(Spring break, March 9-17)

8. **Paper #2: Guidelines and Discussion of Sample Papers** (March 20)  
 Reading: "Guide for Research Papers" (folder #1)  
 3 sample papers (folder #3)

## **PART II: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

9. March 27 – April 24 ??  
 Schedule of presentations to be posted, along with  
 required background readings (folder #4).

### **DEADLINES**

February 7	selection of paper topic; confirm by email
March 6, 11:59pm	paper #1 – Alternative Interpretations (Canvas/Assignments)
May 6, 12 noon	paper #2 – Research Paper (Canvas/Assignments)