RPOS 789 – International Security and Conflict

Professor: Bryan R. Early  
Class Times: Wednesdays, 9:00-10:30AM  
Room: Milne 300A  
Email: bearly@albany.edu  
Office Hours: Uptown, Humanities Building B16 – Tuesdays, 10:15-11:15 AM  
Downtown, Milne Hall 300A – Thursdays, 10:30 AM-11:30 AM

Course Description

This class will provide an introductory primer on major topics of interest in the subfields of security studies and international conflict. The course will address topics such as security strategy, the uses of force in international politics, the causes of international conflict, how they are fought, and how they conclude.

Expectations

This is a reading intensive class and the seminars will be devoted to critically discussing the readings. Students are expected to attend every session having read the assigned reading and prepared to discuss the readings. This course will have ten meetings.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should:

- Understand the various types and uses of force in international relations
- Understand the principle reasons why international military conflicts are fought, how they are fought, and how they end
- Be able to understand the United States’ national security strategy and the security strategies pursued by foreign countries
- Possess a fundamental understanding of military strategy, national security strategy, and grand strategy
- Have a fluent working knowledge of the major perspectives and concepts in the subfields of security studies and international conflict

Grading

Participation – 35%: Students will be heavily evaluated by the quality of their contributions to class discussions. Each student is expected to come to class with three questions from the readings that we will draw on during the seminar discussions.

Critical Summaries – 35%: Students are required to write seven two-page critical summaries of the week’s readings. These summaries should distill the key contributions of each of the works and/or perspectives read for a given class and also provide critical commentary on them.
Research Question / Puzzle Assignment – 30%: Each student is responsible for developing a novel research question or puzzle related to the subject matter of the class. The research question assignment will require students to present a brief review of the relevant literature, provide a novel research question or puzzle, and explain why pursuing it is substantively and theoretically valuable.

Required Books


Course Schedule

Week 1: (8/26) – Administrative Meeting

Week 2: (9/2) – Introduction to Security Studies Perspectives

Week 3: (9/9) – National Interests and Strategy

National Interests

Strategy

Grand Strategy

Week 4: (9/16) – Power

On Power in General

Diplomatic Power

Economic Power

Military Power

Week 5: (9/23) – No Class

Week 6: (9/30) – Rational Choice, Strategic Interaction, and Game Theory

Week 7: (10/7) – Coercion, Compellence, and Deterrence
- Lawrence Freedman and Srinath Raghavan. 2013. “Chapter 14: Coercion.” In SSI.

Week 8 (10/14): Coercive Diplomacy

**Week 9: (10/21) – Rationalist Frameworks for Understanding International Conflict**


**Week 10: (10/28) – Alternative Perspectives for Understanding International Conflict**


Week 12: (11/11) – The Correlates of War

Week 13: (11/18) – Atrocities, International Law, and International Conflict

Atrocities and War Crimes

Laws of War

Week 14: (11/25) – No Class

Week 15: (12/2) – How International Conflicts End

Week 16: (12/9) – Present Puzzles