

# Poli 142P: Crisis Areas in World Politics

Summer Session I 2017

**Instructor:** Brandon Merrell, [bmerrell@ucsd.edu](mailto:bmerrell@ucsd.edu)  
**Lectures:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00–1:50 in WLH 2209  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 2:30–4:00pm (and by appointment) in SSB 341  
**Online Content:** <http://TritonEd.ucsd.edu>

**Description:** This course examines the strategic behavior of military and political officials during international crises. How and why do leaders use military force or issue military threats? Under what conditions do their threats succeed? In what circumstances do leaders choose to accept or reject potential settlements?

The course proceeds in two sections. We begin by developing the analytic tools that are necessary to analyze strategic behavior in security crises. This includes a conceptual framework for identifying relevant actors, understanding the motives of state leaders, and evaluating the international and domestic political pressures that politicians face.

In the second segment of the class, we move from stylized *crisis theories* to a series of specific *crisis issues*. As we explore each issue, we will consider historic crises and ask whether the behavior of key actors conformed with our theoretic expectations. Finally, we will apply our knowledge to emerging and ongoing events with a goal of identifying the issues at stake and determining how—or whether—those conflicts may eventually be resolved.

Your objective is not to become an expert on any particular historical event, but rather to acquire the skills you need to understand and analyze *any* international crisis you may encounter. By the end of the term, you will be expected to:

- understand how countries use and threaten violence as a tool of diplomacy;
- identify how leaders weigh domestic and foreign policy goals;
- analyze political behavior in historic crises; and
- evaluate and critique contemporary crisis decision making.

**Prerequisites:** This is an advanced undergraduate course. Although no previous upper-division coursework in international relations is necessary, the reading load is not light and the content is moderately technical. Finally, I expect students to participate during class as we move back and forth between analytic stylization and historical narratives. Be prepared to ask and answer questions!

**Rules and Requirements:** The course requirements consist of participation (15%), quizzes (15%), a midterm exam (30%, July 17<sup>th</sup>), and a research paper (40%, due August 4<sup>th</sup>). The exam includes identification, short-answer, and essay questions. You must earn a passing grade on both the midterm and the research paper to pass the overall course. I use the following grading scale: “A-” = [90-93.3), “A” = [93.3-96.6), “A+” = [96.6-100], with other letter grades following analogous intervals.

**Quizzes:** At the beginning of each class, students will answer a series of short questions on material from the previous lecture and/or the assigned readings. I will drop your lowest quiz score when calculating your overall grade.

**Research Paper:** Select one of the following books to read during the term. Each book addresses a different historical or ongoing security crisis. Your assignment is to write a 12-15 page paper in which you examine the crisis using the bargaining framework we developed in the class. Who are the relevant actors? What are their interests? Based on the historical evidence presented in the book, do the actors appear to behave in ways that match our bargaining expectations? Why or why not? The complete guidelines and prompt for the research paper are available on TritonEd.

Papers must be submitted on the day of the final exam in both hard-copy and also to TurnItIn.com via TritonEd. Papers must be typed, 1.5-spaced, and printed single-sided with 1-inch margins. I am happy to read drafts of the paper throughout the term.

- Christopher Clark, 2014. *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914.*
- H.R. McMaster, 1997. *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*
- Nathan Thrall, 2017. *The Only Language They Understand: Forcing Compromise in Israel and Palestine.*
- Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, 2017. *Hard Target: Sanctions, Inducements, and the Case of North Korea.*

**Academic Dishonesty:** All work must be completed by the individual to whom it is assigned. Students are not permitted to use unauthorized assistance of any kind. Any student who is caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office for administrative sanction.

**Late Assignments and Missed Exams:** Make-up assignments are only offered under valid and documented circumstances. If you know you will miss an exam for a legitimate reason, notify me at least a week in advance. Email is perfectly acceptable. If you cannot contact me in advance, you must do so as soon as possible. I will work with you to resolve reasonable problems, but it is your responsibility to arrange with me to take a makeup exam. All make-up work must be submitted 48 hours prior to the grade submission deadline.

**Attendance:** Class attendance is not mandatory but will probably improve your performance on assignments. Information we cover in class either may not be in the readings or may not be in easily interpretable form. Some material is also easier to learn when you hear someone explain it and/or when you have an opportunity to discuss it with others.

**Grades and Appeals:** You will be graded solely on your academic performance. This includes clarity of thought, knowledge of the material, composition, spelling, and grammar. Students can appeal grades that they believe are incorrect. Grade appeals will consist of a single typed page that identifies the problem and presents a reasoned argument that the grade fits the appeal criteria.

**Disability:** Students who will request accommodations should register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (University Center 202; 858.534.4382) and provide me with documentation outlining appropriate accommodations. I am happy to meet with you during my office hours to discuss your needs.

## Readings and Course Schedule:

### Part I: Theories of Diplomacy and War

#### Meeting #1: Introduction and Overview (Monday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>)

##### Topics:

- What is political science and why is it useful?
- Why do we need "theories"?
- Rationality, actors, and interests.
- Reading scientific papers and case studies.

##### Readings:

- Jeffrey Frieden, 1999. "Actors and Preferences in International Relations," in David Lake and Robert Powell, eds., *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, pp. 39-76.
- Kevin A. Clarke and David M. Primo, 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach." *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 741-753.
- Frank Lovett, 2006. "Rational Choice Theory and Explanation." *Rationality and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 237-272.

#### Meeting #2: Signaling in International Crises (Wednesday, July 5<sup>th</sup>)

##### Topics:

- Anarchy in the international system.
- Game theory and strategic games.
- Why do actors send signals?
- What makes a signal credible?
- How to write a research paper.

##### Readings:

- James D. Morrow, 1999. "The Strategic Setting of Choices," in David Lake and Robert Powell, eds., *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, pp. 77-114.
- Thomas Schelling, 1960. *The Strategy of Conflict*, Chapter 2.

#### Meeting #3: Unitary Explanations for War (Monday, July 10<sup>th</sup>)

##### Topics:

- Prior theories of war.
- Mutual optimism.
- Commitment problems and issue indivisibility.

##### Readings:

- James D. Fearon, 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 379-414.
- R. Harrison Wagner, 2000. "Bargaining and War." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 469-484.

#### **Meeting #4: Leaders and Audiences (Wednesday, July 12<sup>th</sup>)**

##### **Topics:**

- Progress check on research papers.
- Gambling, diversionary war, and rallying effects.
- Domestic constraints and audience costs.

##### **Readings:**

- Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans, 2011. *Leaders and International Conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.
- Branislav Slantchev, 2006. "Politicians, the Media, and Domestic Audience Costs." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, pp. 445-477.
- Brandon Merrell. "Leaders, Audiences, and the Use of Force."

#### **Meeting #5: Midterm Exam (Monday, July 17<sup>th</sup>)**

##### **Readings for the Exam:**

- Ned Lebow, 2000. "The Cuban Missile Crisis." *CIAO Case Study*.
- Kevin Woods, James Lacey, and Williamson Murray, 2006. "Saddam's Delusions: The View from the Inside." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 3, pp. 2-26.
- Richard Russell, 2000. "The 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis: The United States and China at the Precipice of War?"

## **Part II: Contemporary Crisis Issues**

#### **Meeting #6: Agents and Allies (Wednesday, July 19<sup>th</sup>)**

##### **Topics:**

- Principal-agent relationships in international conflict.
- International alliances and war.
- Discussion of the Danish case.

##### **Readings:**

- Eli Berman and David Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Transnational Threats through Local Agents*. Chapter 1.
- Brandon Merrell. "Occupied Denmark: Armed Resistance and Agency Slippage in a Model Protectorate," in Eli Berman and David Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Transnational Threats through Local Agents*.
- James Morrow, 2000. "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 63-83.

**Meeting #7: Transnational Terrorism (Monday, July 24<sup>th</sup>)**

**Topics:**

- Defining terrorism.
- Terrorism as a bargaining strategy.
- Discussion of the LTTE case.
- Peer discussion of research papers.

**Readings:**

- David Lake, 2002. "Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-first Century." *Dialog-IO*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 15-29.
- Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, 2006. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 49-80.
- Robert Pape, 2005. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, pp. 139-154.

**Meeting #8: Nuclear Proliferation (Wednesday, July 26<sup>th</sup>)**

**Topics:**

- Central issues in nuclear proliferation.
- Why do states proliferate?
- Discussion of Iranian and North Korean proliferation.

**Readings:**

- Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, 2009. "Winning with the Bomb." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 22, pp. 278-301.
- Rupal Mehta. "Windows of Opportunity: Leadership Change, Positive Inducements, and Nuclear Reversal."

**No Class (Monday, July 31<sup>st</sup>)**

**Meeting #9: Civil and Ethnic Wars (Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

**Topics:**

- Additional complexities in civil war.
- When can third parties help?
- Discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian and Syrian cases.

**Readings:**

- David Lake and Donald Rothchild, 1996. "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict." *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 41-75.
- Barbara Walter, 2009. "Bargaining Failures and Civil War." *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12, pp. 243-61.

**Meeting #10: Research Paper Due (Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>)**