

INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT
Political Science 378

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MWF 8-8:50 a.m.
346 MARB
Office hrs. MWF 1-2 p.m.

Course Objectives:

“In war there is not victory, but only varying degrees of defeat”
Kenneth N. Waltz

Are wars like natural disasters and largely beyond the ability of man to control? Realists focus on the anarchic nature of the international system and conclude that war is inevitable. Woodrow Wilson fought the first world war hoping to end all war by bringing about a change in the nature of the state. George Bush’s neoconservative ideology motivated him to fight wars in order to remake the world in America’s democratic image and believed this would reduce the future incidence of war. Some social scientists and many people of faith believe that war is a social condition and with careful study it can eventually be eradicated. However, Robert McNamara believes that war is the result of human nature and therefore will continue unless we can change human nature, something that will not happen anytime soon.

We will seek to deepen our understanding of war through a theoretical analysis of the causes of war by focusing attention on war as an outcome of the nature of the international system, war a result of the nature of the state, and war as a product of human nature. Our analysis of the complex causes of war will ultimately result in a deeper understanding of war, but to assume we will discover a solution to international conflict would be utopian.

Required Reading:

John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W.W. Norton, 2001).

Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House, 2005).

Miriam Pemberton & William D. Hartung, eds. *Lessons from Iraq: Avoiding the Next War* (Paradigm Publishers, 2008)

Steven Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Cornell, 1999).

Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (Columbia, 1959).

Requirements:

One midterm and a final exam will constitute 35% of your final grade. A 10-page research paper will comprise 25% of your final grade. A group presentation and 5-page paper will count for 20% and two 2-page “personal essays” will count for 20% of your final grade.

The midterm and final exams will be essay exams and the final will be comprehensive. The first personal essay will be based on questions posed in the documentary “The Fog of War.” The second personal essay will be on the film “To End War.” Each personal essay should be “reflective” and no more than two pages in length. The group report should not exceed five pages. The research paper should be a theoretical analysis of some aspect of international conflict. I encourage you to consult with me about a topic early in the semester.

Important Due Dates: First Personal Essay, **January 12**; Second Personal Essay, **March 30**; Group Report, **March 9**; Research Paper, **April 13**; Midterm, **February 20**; Final, **April 22, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.**

Group Presentation and Report:

Students will be organized into small groups and together will prepare a 20 minute class presentation and write a five page report using the essays in *Lessons from Iraq: Avoiding the Next War* as the foundation. These short essays are *only* a foundation to help you get started and you will have to do additional research for your presentation and report. How you divided the group work is up to each group, but everyone must participate in all aspects of the project—research, writing, and presentation. Be creative (but not silly) and make your presentation interesting for the class; PowerPoint, handouts, etc. or other visual aids are all helpful.

I will grade your presentation and report, and ask each of you to give me a confidential evaluation of others’ efforts in your group. The class will also provide an evaluation.

Warning: You will be exposed to depictions and images of violence. If, for personal reasons, you object to viewing images of man’s inhumanity to man or listening to the associated language, consult with me prior to the scheduled event.

The schedule is subject to change due to circumstances beyond my control.

Schedule:

January 5. Introduction and “The Fog of War” documentary.

January 7-9. “The Fog of War” documentary & discussion (*Personal Reflection Essay due Jan. 12*).

January 12-14. Causes of War: Man. Waltz, chs. 1-3

January 16-21. Causes of War: The State. Waltz, chs. 4-5. (No Class Jan. 17).

January 23-26. Causes of War: The System. Waltz, chs. 6-8.

January 28-30. Classical and Neorealist Explanations of War. Mearsheimer, chs. 1-2.

February 2-4. The “Power” Equations and War. Mearsheimer, chs. 3-4.

February 6-9. States, Strategies, and War. Mearsheimer, chs. 5-7.

February 11-13. Balancing Power and Causes of War. Mearsheimer, chs. 8-9.

February 16 (No Class)

February 17 (Tu.). The Post Cold War and Back to the Future? Mearsheimer, ch.10.

February 18. Catch up and Review

February 20. **MIDTERM** (in Testing Center)

February 23-March 6. “Lessons from the Iraq War” presentations. (*Group Report due March 9*)

March 9-11. Misperception and the Causes of War. Van Evera, chs. 1-3.

March 13-16. Power Shifts, Resources, and War. Van Evera, chs. 4-5.

March 18-20. The “Security Dilemma” and War. Van Evera, chs. 6-7 & 9

March 23-27. “To End All War” & discussion. (*Personal Reflection Essay due March 30*).

March 30-April 1. The Strategy of Suicide Terrorism. Pape, chs. 1-5.

April 3-6. Social Origins of Suicide Terrorism. Pape, chs. 6-8.

April 8-10. Individual Motivation of Suicide Terrorism. Pape, chs. 9-12.

April 13. Conclude and Review. *Research Paper Due in Class.*

Final: Wednesday, April 22, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.