

## Course Information

Course Number:	POLS 335
Course Title:	International Conflict
Section:	500
Time:	MWF 1:15 PM – 2:05 PM
Location:	ALLN 1016
Credit Hours:	3

## Instructor Details

Instructor:	James D. Kim
Office:	ALLN 3108
E-Mail:	jamesdkim@tamu.edu
Office Hours:	12:00 PM – 1:00 PM, Mondays and Wednesdays

## Course Description

This course is an advanced undergraduate seminar on the causes and patterns of international conflict. Premised on the recognition that there may be recognizable patterns of behavior that influence the conflict processes, our task is to evaluate the scholarly attempts to uncover these patterns and the underlying causes of war and its consequences. We begin with different approaches to studying conflict. We will primarily focus on *rationalist* theories of conflict. These theories assume that conflict processes are driven by the strategic decisions of rational actors. The class also covers a wide array of topics within the field of international conflict, including: how domestic politics and leaders affect war initiation, special topics in interstate conflict (nuclear weapons and military alliances), and political legacies of violent conflict.

The emphasis will be on developing your analytical capacity to examine and assess scholarly arguments. Please note that this is not a current events course. Current events will be addressed only when relevant to learning about and evaluating the theories and empirical investigations at hand. Because this class will focus almost exclusively on scholarly research, many of the class readings have technical components. This is reflective of much contemporary research in international relations and conflict processes. I do not expect you to have any previous knowledge of quantitative methods, such as statistics or game theory. In this class, we will mainly be analyzing the scholarly arguments made in these readings, which you will be able to do without delving into the technical details. That said, you are welcome to ask questions or discuss statistics and game theory components that will help you be a better consumer of political science research.

## Course Prerequisites

*None*

## Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Students can explain the important features and concepts of international conflicts such as sources of international conflicts, conflict process, domestic politics in international conflicts, and conflict termination/peace-building process. It will be assessed by exams.
- Students can develop a mastery of critical thinking skills and evaluate the strengths and weakness of existing studies from an observational and theoretical standpoint. Students will accomplish this goal by participating in class discussion.
- Students can identify a research question from current events and propose their own theories and research methods to study international conflict. It will be assessed by the group project.
- Two exams and one final group project will be the observable outcome resulting from these activities.

## Textbook and/or Resource Materials

No textbook required. All readings will be provided through Canvas. Class slides will be provided through Canvas after each class.

## Grading Policy

Grades are based on the following three items:

- Exams (25% each, 50% total) – Students will take two exams, each in Week 6 and Week 10. Exams will be a mixture of true-false, multiple-choice questions, short-answer, or essay questions. The content covered will be based on lectures, slides, and designated articles in the coursework by the instructor, and NOT cumulative.
- Current event analysis (40% total)– Being well-informed of current events is essential for a working knowledge of international conflict. Students will form small groups (4-5 students per group) for a current event analysis paper. The project can cover any recent event related to international conflict that occurred since 2023. This grade is divided into three assignments:
  - Topic proposal (5%): Each group is required to get the instructor’s approval for their topic by submitting a 1-paragraph overview of the event. Each team should submit their proposals via email by March 10, 5:00 pm.
  - Group presentation (10%): Each group will do a 10-15 minute presentation of their projects (overview of the event and plans for analysis) on either March 31, April 21, or April 28.
  - Final group paper (25%): Each group will write a 10-15 page current event analysis report. The project should discuss background of the event, related theories, its own analysis of the events' causes, processes, and consequences, and policy implications. Each team should submit their proposals via email by May 5, 5:00 pm. For this final group paper, the team will receive a single grade for this paper. To ensure equal work by team members, each member will evaluate the other members’ contributions to the project (sending the letter evaluations to me by e-mail on the day the paper is due). If the majority of your teammates do not give your effort an "A", you personally will receive 10% lower points than the total points on the paper (e.g., if the paper received 90 points out of 100, you would receive 81 points).

- Class attendance and participation (10%) – The majority of the class will be devoted to discussions of scholarly readings. Students are expected to have read the assigned material when we discuss it in class. I will ask many questions, and the class will be responsible for providing the answers. Students should feel free to ask questions and debate the topics at hand. There are no wrong questions, and you are strongly encouraged to participate even if you found the readings difficult or problematic. The participation grade evaluation will be based on the quantity/quality of questions and demonstration of knowledge of the course material. Attendance is not the same thing as participation, but if you are not in class you cannot participate. I will take attendance at each class meeting. The three lowest participation grades will be dropped. What it means is that students may miss up to three classes and still receive all of the points for participation. Below is a brief explanation of examples of class participation:
  - High-quality participation (100%): Make a meaningful contribution to class discussion (e.g., ask a question about the paper or lecture, answer to questions, or propose implications/limitations of the study)
  - Attended but no participation (90%)
  - No attendance (0%)
- Final grading scale will be A (100-89.5), B (89.4-79.5), C (79.4-69.5), D (69.4-59.5), and F (below 59.4).

### Late Work Policy

- Unexcused late submission will be penalized by one point deduction after each 24 hours from the established deadline. For example, if the initial deadline is Wednesday midnight, an assignment submitted on Thursday will get 1 point off from the final grade. An assignment submitted on Friday will get 2 points off from the final grade.
- Late work submitted by a student for an excused absence (see Student Rule 7) is not considered late work and is exempted from the late work policy.
- Missing an exam without a university excused absence (see Student Rule 7) means you will receive a grade of 0 on the exam.
- If a student has an excused absence on exam days, it must be notified to the instructor and you will have an opportunity to take the exam on alternate date/time.

### Course Schedule

The following list outlines the applicable course schedule and required readings. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the **reading list** and **dates of the assignments** as the semester evolves. When dates for exams and assignments are changed, prior written notification will be given to all students in the course via email and via the course Canvas page. The total number of assignments, type of assignments, or the percentage each assignment contributes to the overall grade (how assignments are graded) will **NOT** be changed.

#### Important dates:

- Exam 1: **February 24** & Exam 2: **April 5**
- Group presentations: **March 31, April 21, April 28**
- Group project topic due: **March 10** & Final group project due: **May 5**

**Week 1 – Introduction to the course (Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> – Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>)**

- Wednesday: Class Introductions and Syllabus
- Friday: No Class (instructor's *Junior Scholars in Quantitative Conflict and International Security Workshop* participation)

**Part I. Theories of International Conflict****Week 2 – Levels of Analysis in International Conflict (Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup> – Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: [Singer, J. David. "International Conflict Three Levels of Analysis." \*World Politics\* 12.3 \(1960\): 453-461.](#)
- Wednesday: [Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," \*International Organization\* 42:3 \(Summer 1988\), pp. 426-460.](#)
- Friday: No Class (instructor's *Texas Triangle Conference in International Relations 2023* participation)

**Week 3 – Theories of International Conflict (Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> – Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

- Monday: [Jervis, Robert. "Cooperation under the security dilemma." \*World politics\* 30.2 \(1978\): 167-214.](#)
- Wednesday & Friday: [Fearon, James D. "Rationalist explanations for war." \*International organization\* 49.3 \(1995\): 379-414.](#)

**Week 4 – Credible Signaling and Audience Costs (Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> – Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: [Fearon, James D. "Domestic political audiences and the escalation of international disputes." \*American political science review\* 88, no. 3 \(1994\): 577-592.](#)
- Wednesday: [Fearon, James D. "Signaling foreign policy interests: Tying hands versus sinking costs." \*Journal of conflict resolution\* 41.1 \(1997\): 68-90.](#)
- Friday: [Tomz, Michael. "Domestic audience costs in international relations: An experimental approach." \*International Organization\* 61.4 \(2007\): 821-840.](#)

**Week 5 – Measuring War and Peace (Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> – Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>)**

- Introducing the MID, PRIO, and UCDP Datasets
- Suggested readings: [Jones, Daniel M., Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer. " Militarized interstate disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, coding rules, and empirical patterns." \*Conflict Management and Peace Science\* 15.2 \(1996\): 163-213.](#)
- [Kreutz, Joakim. "How and when armed conflicts end: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset." \*Journal of Peace Research\* 47.2 \(2010\): 243-250.](#)
- Friday: No Class

**Week 6 – Exam I (Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> – Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: No Class (President's Day)
- Wednesday: Exam I Review
- **Friday: Exam I (Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>)**

**Part II. Linking Domestic Politics and International Conflict****Week 7 – Leaders and War (Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> – Mar. 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

- Monday: [Horowitz, Michael C., and Matthew Fuhrmann. "Studying leaders and military conflict: Conceptual framework and research agenda." \*Journal of Conflict Resolution\* 62.10 \(2018\): 2072-2086.](#)
- Wednesday: [Horowitz, Michael C., and Allan C. Stam. "How prior military experience influences the future militarized behavior of leaders." \*International Organization\* 68.3 \(2014\): 527-559.](#)
- Friday: [Croco, Sarah E. "The decider's dilemma: Leader culpability, war outcomes, and domestic punishment." \*American Political Science Review\* 105.3 \(2011\): 457-477.](#)

**Week 8 – Democracy and Conflict (Mar. 6<sup>th</sup> – Mar.10<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: [Maoz, Zeev, and Bruce Russett. 1993. "Normative and Structural Causes of the Democratic Peace." \*American Political Science Review\* 87\(3\):624-638.](#)
- Wednesday: [Brulé, David. "Congressional opposition, the economy, and US dispute initiation, 1946-2000." \*Journal of Conflict Resolution\* 50, no. 4 \(2006\): 463-483.](#)
- Friday: [Mattes, Michaela, and Jessica LP Weeks. "Hawks, doves, and peace: An experimental approach." \*American Journal of Political Science\* 63.1 \(2019\): 53-66.](#)
- **Group paper proposals are due on March 10, 5pm, via email.**

**Week 9 – Spring Break (Mar. 13<sup>th</sup> – Mar. 17<sup>st</sup>)****Week 10 – Dictatorship and Conflict (Mar. 20<sup>th</sup> – Mar. 24<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: No Class (instructor's *International Studies Association* participation)
- Wednesday: [Weeks, Jessica L. "Strongmen and straw men: Authoritarian regimes and the initiation of international conflict." \*American Political Science Review\* 106.2 \(2012\): 326-347.](#)
- Friday: [Peceny, Mark, Caroline C. Beer, and Shannon Sanchez-Terry. "Dictatorial peace?." \*American Political Science Review\* 96, no. 1 \(2002\): 15-26.](#)

**Part III. Special Issues in International Conflict****Week 11 – Nuclear Weapons (Mar. 27<sup>th</sup> – Mar. 31<sup>st</sup>)**

- Monday: [Sagan, Scott D. "Why do states build nuclear weapons?: Three models in search of a bomb." \*International security\* 21.3 \(1996\): 54-86.](#)
- Wednesday: [Lee, Kyung Suk, James D. Kim, Hwalmin Jin, and Matthew Fuhrmann. "Nuclear Weapons and Low-Level Military Conflict." \*International Studies Quarterly\* 66, no. 5 \(2023\).](#)
- Friday: Group presentations

**Week 12 – Exam II (Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup> – Apr. 7<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: Exam II review
- **Wednesday: Exam II (Apr. 5<sup>th</sup>)**
- Friday: No Class (Reading Day)

**Week 13 – Deterrence (Apr. 10<sup>th</sup> – Apr. 14<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: [Huth, Paul K. "Deterrence and international conflict: Empirical findings and theoretical debates." \*Annual Review of Political Science\* 2, no. 1 \(1999\): 25-48.](#)
- Wednesday & Friday: No Classes (instructor's *Midwest Political Science Association 2023 Annual Meeting* participation)

**Week 14 – Consequences of Wartime Violence (Apr. 17<sup>th</sup> – Apr. 21<sup>st</sup>)**

- Monday: [Walden, Jacob, and Yuri M. Zhukov. "Historical legacies of political violence." \*In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics\*. 2020.](#)
- Wednesday: [Blattman, Christopher. "From violence to voting: War and political participation in Uganda." \*American political Science review\* 103.2 \(2009\): 231-247.](#)
- Friday: Group presentations

**Week 15 – Alliances (Apr. 24<sup>th</sup> – Apr. 28<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: [Morrow, James D. "Arms versus Allies: Trade-offs in the Search for Security." \*International Organization\* 47.2 \(1993\): 207-233.](#)
- Wednesday: [Leeds, Brett Ashley. "Do alliances deter aggression? The influence of military alliances on the initiation of militarized interstate disputes." \*American Journal of Political Science\* 47.3 \(2003\): 427-439.](#)
- Friday: Group presentations

**Week 16 – Conclusion and Review (May. 1<sup>st</sup> – May. 5<sup>th</sup>)**

- Monday: Conclusion and Q&A session (Last day of class)
- No required readings.
- **Final group projects are due on May 5, 5pm, via email.** Each team member is required to email the instructor their effort grades for their teammates.

## University Policies

### Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

### Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

“The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

## Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

### **Texas A&M at College Station**

*You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at [aggiehonor.tamu.edu](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu).*

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

### **Texas A&M at College Station**

*Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit [disability.tamu.edu](http://disability.tamu.edu).*

## Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual

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harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

#### **Texas A&M at College Station**

*Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#).*

*Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s [Title IX webpage](#).*

## Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

#### **Texas A&M College Station**

*Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](#).*

## Campus-Specific Policies

#### Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to



provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to [howdy.tamu.edu](http://howdy.tamu.edu) and clicking on the "Directory Hold Information" link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.

## College and Department Policies

### Department Policies

**Diversity Statement:** The Department of Political Science supports the Texas A&M University commitment to diversity, and welcomes individuals from any racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and nationality. (See <http://diversity.tamu.edu/>). In the spirit of this vital commitment, in this course each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to all discussions. Everyone is expected to respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by fellow students and the instructors, and will engage in reasoned discussion that refrains from derogatory comments about other people, cultures, groups, or viewpoints.

- We will always treat each other with respect and utilize respectful language.

### Classroom Code of Conduct

The Department of Political Science at Texas A&M University is committed to fostering an environment of learning and scholarship that is open, respectful, and welcoming to all, regardless of race, religion, gender (identity), ability, age, socio-economic background, or sexual orientation.

#### ***Political Science Department Code of Conduct and Anti-harassment Policy:***

The Department of Political Science at Texas A&M University is committed to fostering an environment of learning and scholarship that is open, respectful, and welcoming to all, regardless of race, national origin, religion, gender (identity), ability, age, socio-economic background, or sexual orientation.

With this code of conduct, we want to reaffirm our commitment as a department to create a positive climate for all students, faculty, and staff. We are dedicated to providing a harassment-free experience for all members and guests of the department.

In particular, as outlined in this code of conduct, members of the political science department will not engage in harassment, hostile, or threatening behavior towards others. We will ensure and engage in civil and respectful discussions/discourse. Furthermore, we agree to be proactive in helping others to avoid harm in the case that any of these unwelcome behaviors are observed.

Whereas, we expect members of the political science department to adhere to the departmental Code of Conduct in general, respectful behavior by all participants is especially important in the classroom and other course-related interactions (virtual and in-person). An environment conducive to learning and scholarship requires free speech and an open mind, but must be free of harassment<sup>[1]</sup>, hostile, or threatening behaviors. Faculty, staff, and students ought to be proactive in helping others and speak up to avoid harm in the case that any of these unwelcome behaviors are observed.

**TAMU Student Rule 21** (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule21/>): Classroom behavior that seriously interferes with either (1) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (2) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program will not be tolerated. This may involve but is not limited to: name calling, talking or engaging in other rude/disruptive behavior in class, threatening others in any way, asking inappropriate/personal questions about other students or the professor, etc. An individual engaging in disruptive classroom behavior may be subject to disciplinary action.<sup>[2]</sup>

- If a student is being disruptive or disrespectful (rude, inappropriate, unprofessional, and/or harmful to others) either in the classroom, or during class-related communications outside of lecture (online or in-person), Dr. Taylor-Robinson or your TA will give one verbal warning.
- However, if behavior is viewed as seriously disruptive, no warning will be issued and action will be taken. This may involve immediate removal from class.
- If negative behavior persists following a verbal warning, Dr. Taylor-Robinson will request an in-person meeting with the student and Assistant Department Head to discuss and document a plan for changing behavior. This plan will be signed by the student and forwarded to the Head of the Department of Political Science.
- Further infractions will immediately involve the Department Head and the Academic Dean (per Rule 21)

#### **Baseline Code of Conduct:**

- Respect for all
- Have an open mind; challenge yourself
- Challenge ideas; never attack individuals
- Be present

#### **Additional Information about Class Conduct**

Topics covered in this course may reveal deep disagreements about important questions of policy and politics, yet I expect all students to engage in discussions of these topics in a manner that is consistent with the Student Code of Conduct, the Aggie Core Value of respect, and good manners. At a minimum, you should avoid interrupting someone who is speaking, and refrain from personal attacks or impugning someone's motives. I urge you to apply political *science* to these topics, and to think about how we can develop and test theory about, for example, why institutions operate the way they do, why society

works the way it does, and to understand why what often appear to be dysfunctional outcomes persist over time.

Discussion sections are venues for students to review and discuss course material with their classmates and their TA. Students should prepare for their discussion sections by attending the plenary lectures, reading assigned texts, and completing reading summary assignments. I expect everyone to participate actively and respectfully in discussion sections. In addition, each TA will provide additional guidance about his or her classroom rules and expectations and other matters. I expect students to comply with their teaching assistants' classroom policies.

[1] As defined in the Society for Political Methodology Code of Conduct, harassment includes but is not limited to “degrading verbal comments, discriminatory jokes and language, deliberate intimidation, stalking, harassing photography or recording, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.”

[2] You have an established right to free speech on this campus. However, as a student, you are also bound by the rules of this institution. This means acknowledging when your speech or behavior crosses a line to the point of being disruptive/uncivil and assuming the consequences of your actions.