Introduction

The study of international conflict has traditionally been dominated by the study of the international system. This tradition is still alive and well in news coverage; you may well have seen or read news coverage of the civil war in Syria that refers to the “balance of power” in the Middle East, for example.

However, over the last twenty years or so most international relations scholars have begun to accept that international behavior is just as intertwined with domestic politics as it is with the international balance of power. When presidents or prime ministers conduct foreign policy, they face just as much pressure (or more) from their domestic rivals as they do their international adversaries. The most pertinent source of domestic pressure, at least in democracies, is ordinary voters. Since voters can punish their leaders for poor foreign policy, democratic leaders must keep voters’ prospective reactions in mind when dealing with their foreign rivals.

The process by which voters learn about foreign affairs, by contrast, is less well-understood. In this course, we will cover and discuss an emerging body of political science research that incorporates public opinion, media behavior, and international conflict. For better or worse, most of what we know about the relationship between public opinion and war is drawn from the United States, as is most academic literature on public opinion and the mass media. That in mind, most (but not all!) of the syllabus for this course relates to the American experience as well.

Course Objectives

My goals for this course include the following:

1. That you learn how to evaluate and assess empirical research questions in political science.
2. That you improve your ability to discuss complicated subject matter with your peers.
3. That you appreciate the extent to which domestic politics influences international politics (and vice versa).
4. That you are able to apply theoretical models from international relations to “real world” crises and wars.

Course Pre-requisites

While it is not a formal requirement in the course catalog, I strongly recommend that students have taken POLSCI 160 (Introduction to World Politics) before taking this course. This class
builds directly on the theoretical explanations for war that you will have seen in that course. We will discuss theories of war in Week 2 of the course. A basic familiarity with quantitative social science will also be helpful to you.

Books & Reading Schedule

Many of our readings will be taken from professional research articles, and will be available in .pdf format through the course CTools site. I have asked you to purchase three books, which should be available from campus bookstores as well as the typical online vendors.


Grading

Your mastery of the material for this course will be measured as follows:

- Participation / Attendance: 45%
- Discussion Questions (x4): 25%
- Final Exam: 30%

Discussion & Participation

It is important that you attend class and participate actively and regularly. This class is a seminar, not a lecture, which means that most of our discussions in class will be driven by your own interpretation of the material. You are expected to have completed all assigned readings for a given class, and to be prepared to comment intelligently on them. Periodic moments of reflective silence are OK, but I do reserve the right to cold call as a means of jump-starting discussion. Frequent, active participation by students will be essential to getting full credit for participation. Note that your grade for participation constitutes nearly half of your entire grade for the course—in other words, I am serious about everyone being prepared to discuss the material each week.

Each week, a group of 6 to 7 students will be required to turn in a 2 to 3 page reaction paper to that week’s assigned reading, which will identify one or more key questions that the readings posed for you as well as potential answers. Each student will write four times over the course of the semester. These papers will be due by 9 AM of that day’s class, through the CTools drop box. These papers will help us find points of discussion during each week’s meetings. We will decide who is going to write in which weeks during our class meeting on January 22nd, and the first papers will be due on January 29th.
Finally, your participation grade will include both your in-class contributions as well as a number of short, one-off assignments I will ask you to complete occasionally throughout the term. These assignments will often ask you to gather data on your own relevant to a given week’s topic, such as examples of military affairs coverage in the news, or basic polling data available through the University of Michigan’s various research centers.

Exams
The final exam will be distributed during our last class meeting on Tuesday, April 23rd, and will be due **Friday, April 25th**. You will return the exams via CTools; we will not meet again during the official final exam period. The exam will ask you to consider a few broad questions that cover the entire scope of the course.

Attendance
You are required to attend class each week, but you are each allowed one no-questions-asked absence for the semester. Please note that you need to notify me before class if you do not expect to attend. Any excused absences related to medical issues, family losses, or similar situations require documentation; documentation will be required within one week of the absence that you believe ought to be excused.

Although the University does not officially recognize religious holidays, I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate religious obligations. If a religious obligations will prevent you from completing an assignment or attending class, I will need at least one week’s notice of such.

Academic Honesty and Conduct
I will not tolerate academic dishonesty or plagiarism in any form: this includes failures to appropriately credit or cite the use of others’ ideas or data, cheating on an exam or quiz, or any other violation of the University of Michigan’s standards of student conduct. Academic dishonesty is grounds for automatic failure in the course, if not more severe sanctions depending on the nature of the violation. Guidelines regarding academic honesty can be found at [http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/). Additional resources on academic integrity and plagiarism are available at [http://www.lib.umich.edu/shapiro-undergraduate-library/understanding-plagiarism-and-academic-integrity](http://www.lib.umich.edu/shapiro-undergraduate-library/understanding-plagiarism-and-academic-integrity).

Late Work and Grade Grievances
All assignments will be due on a specific day and time. Any work returned after this time will suffer a **one letter grade deduction** for each day, or portion thereof, that it is late.\(^1\)

Other Course Issues
If you believe you need an accommodation for any manner of disability, please let me know as soon as possible and I will do everything I can to work with you and the Office of Services for Students

\(^1\) Airport parking rules apply here.
with Disabilities to make the necessary arrangements. Any information you provide is private and confidential.

While I intend to allow students to use their laptop computers or tablets in class for the purposes of taking notes and referring to .pdf versions of the assigned readings, please bear in mind that this policy is subject to change if students abuse this privilege by checking personal email, Facebook, Twitter, and so on during class. Please be considerate of both my time and your colleagues, since poor computer habits are a distraction to other students in the classroom as well.

**CTools & E-Mail**

I will make sure that all course materials and announcements (syllabus, reading schedule, handouts, study guides, etc) will be on CTools, so check there first to see if I have already answered your question. Otherwise, please contact me via e-mail with any question you might have. I will do my best to respond promptly – please allow me 24 hours during the week, and until Sunday night on weekends.

**Class Schedule & Reading List**

**Part 1: Building Blocks**

**January 15** Introduction & Class Overview

**January 22** Public Consent and War

**January 29** What’s an Opinion? What’s Public Opinion?

**February 4** The Cold War Consensus
Part 2: Bringing in the Media

February 11  What do People Know About Foreign Policy?

February 18  How do Opinions Change?

February 25  The Tools of the Trade: Framing and Priming

March 4  No Class - Spring Break

March 11  What Drives the Media?
Zaller, J.R. Nd. A Theory of Media Politics. pp. 6 - 53
Part 3: Implications for Foreign Policy

March 18  Who Leads? Who Follows?

March 25  The Influence of the Media

April 2  A Strong Test: Casualties and Public Opinion
Part 4: New Frontiers

April 9  Experimental Research


April 16  Emotional Appeals and Affective Intelligence


April 23  Elite Dominance of the Foreign Policy Debate


