The bargaining model of war is the main theoretical tool in the study of international conflict these days. But the model brackets, i.e., ignores, the question of what gets put in the bargaining table in the first place, and what leaders and states choose not to contest. In this course, we examine the issues states fight over from both a historical as well as contemporary perspective. The course will involve some basic new analytical tools such as GIS (Geographical Information Systems) and some very basic data analysis.

Each student is expected to write a short paper for one session of their choice—picked in coordination with me—not to exceed 1500 words. This paper should provide an independent commentary on some aspect of that week’s readings. It is neither desirable nor necessary that you try to be comprehensive. Rather, you should select issues or angles that interest you, and develop your own thoughts about them. The paper must be circulated to the class via e-mail no later than Tuesday evening at 8:00 p.m. These papers will form the background against which we will discuss the readings in class.

In addition, each student is required to write a 20–25 page research paper, which focuses in depth on one of the discussed emerging research agendas. (Or, in exceptional cases, on an emerging research agenda of the student’s choosing.) This paper is due at the end of the first week of December. In the last sessions we will try to organize some time to discuss drafts and/or outlines of these papers.

I will call on students and expect each student to be prepared to begin the discussion of each reading with a short description of the central question, central argument and competing explanations. If discussion does not arise naturally, I will assign students responsibility for leading a discussion of particular works.
Course Requirements

Participation in the seminar comprises 25% of your grade. The short paper counts for another 25% of your grade, while the final paper counts for 50%.

I understand that students sometimes are faced with urgent situations, either of a personal or academic nature – e.g., a reading is not available or cannot be found – and in those cases, of course I welcome e-mails. Otherwise, I strongly prefer students show up for office hours, because dealing with 20 individual e-mails, and going back and forth, swallows enormous amounts of my time and concentration.

Books

The following books will be required reading this semester. I recommend you buy your books through Amazon.


Academic Integrity

Be familiar with the University’s policies on academic integrity and disciplinary action (http://www.rochester.edu/living/urhere/handbook/discipline2.html#XII). Violators of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with promptly, which means that your grade will suffer, and I will forward your case to the Chair of the College Board on Academic Honesty, on which I served.
Course Outline

Thursday September 3

Class Cancelled–APSA Convention

Thursday September 10

1. The State of the Discipline

Thursday September 17

2. A Historical Overview

Thursday September 24

3. Nationalism?
Thursday October 1

4. Nationalism, Ethnicity, Civilizations?


Thursday October 8

5. Religion?


Thursday October 15

6. Loot?


Thursday October 22

7. Leader’s Survival?

Thursday October 29

8. Territory?


Thursday, November 5


Thursday, November 12

10. Factors that restrain conflict? – Progress?
Thursday November 19

11. Factors that restrain conflict? – Regime Type?


Thursday November 26

12. Thanksgiving Recess

Thursday December 3

13. Student Presentations

- You!

Thursday December 10

14. Student Presentations

- You!

Other readings of potential interest

15. Who fights and why?

- Dave Grossman, On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society, Back Bay Books; Revised edition (June 22, 2009)
Questions to consider in formulating and evaluating social science research

1. **What is the central question?**
   - Why is it important (theoretically, substantively)?
   - What is being explained (what is the dependent variable and how does it vary)?
   - How does this phenomenon present a puzzle?

2. **What is the central answer?**
   - What is doing the explaining (what are the independent variables and how do they vary)?
   - What are the hypotheses, i.e., what is the relationship between independent and dependent variables, what kind of change in the independent variable causes what kind of change in the dependent variable?
   - What are the causal mechanisms, i.e., why are the independent and dependent variables so related?
   - How do the independent variables relate to each other?
   - What assumptions does your theory make?
   - Is the theory falsifiable in concept?
   - What does this explanation add to our understanding of the question?

3. **What are the possible alternative explanations?**
   - What assumptions are you making about the direction of causality?
   - What other explanations might there be for the phenomenon of study, and to what degree do they conflict with the central answer?
   - Could the hypothesized relationships have occurred by chance?

4. **Why are the possible alternative explanations wrong?**
   - What is the logical structure of the alternative explanations (compare 2)?
   - What is the empirical evidence?

5. **What is the relationship between the theory and the evidence?**
   - What does the research design allow to vary, i.e., in this design are the explanations variables or constants?
   - What does your research design hold constant, i.e., does it help to rule out the alternative competing explanations?
   - How are the theoretical constructs represented empirically, i.e., how do you know it when you see it (measurement)?

6. **How do the empirical conclusions relate to the theory?**
   - How confident are you about the theory in light of the evidence?
   - How widely do the conclusions generalize, i.e., what might be the limitations of the study?
   - What does the provisionally accepted or revised theory say about questions of broader importance?