

PSC/IR 270

Mechanisms of International Relations

Fall 2014

Instructor: Phil Arena

Office: 326 Harkness Halll

Email: filarena99@gmail.com

URL: <http://filarena.weebly.com/>

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday

1:00-3:00pm

and by appointment

This course consists of two parts. First, we will explore the logic of several causal mechanisms that help us to better understand patterns of international cooperation (such as coordination and collaboration problems), discussing several empirical applications. Second, we will explore the logic of several causal mechanisms that help us to better understand patterns of international conflict (such as commitment and information problems), discussing several empirical applications. Game-theoretic and statistical models will appear throughout the course, but no prior background in either is assumed or required.

To construct theoretical arguments, we will utilize game theory. To evaluate general empirical claims, we will sometimes employ statistical analysis. No mathematical training beyond high school algebra is necessary, but be advised there will be technical material in this class.

The goal of this course is to give you a deep appreciation of some very general explanations for why the world is the way it is, which you'll find useful for understanding future developments in international relations. We will not focus on the details of particular cases, nor will we spend time debating how the world *should* be. That does not mean such questions are unimportant—they are. But they will not be the focus of this class.

Grading

Grades will be determined by two take home exams, collectively worth 50% of your final grade, 4 homework assignments (the lowest of which will be dropped), collectively worth 30% of your final grade, and two in-class presentations, collectively worth 20%.

The exams will be multiple choice, each containing 30 questions. Correct answers will be worth 4 points each. Thus, you need only answer 25 questions correctly in order to receive a 100. Many of the questions will require you to *apply* material from class, rather than simply regurgitate it. That is, you will not always find the answers to the questions in the lecture material, no matter how good your notes, but those of you who truly understood the material will be capable of seeing how the arguments presented in class imply an answer.

The homework assignments will require you to work with game-theoretic models presented in class or to interpret the results of some statistical analysis pertaining to those models. Though most of the questions will be technical, they will mostly involve plugging numbers into inequalities or interpreting tables and graphs. I will also provide tips sheets to help walk you through this. Where I expect most students to struggle is with the final part of each assignment, where you will be asked to evaluate a claim about international politics using the material presented in class. The more you engage with the technical material, the easier this part of the assignment will be. You may even notice that the more technical parts of the assignment tend to point you in the right direction when it comes to the last question.

For the in-class presentations, you will be asked to explain one of the mechanisms from that unit of the course—cooperation for your first presentation and conflict for the second—and provide an example. The examples may be drawn from current events (which you are advised to remain abreast of), your personal life or that of others, or popular works of fiction. I'm less interested in whether the example pertains to international politics than your ability to demonstrate a keen understanding of the course material.

The first exam must be turned in before 5:00 pm on Friday, October 24th. The second exam must be turned in before 5:00 pm on Friday, December 19th.

Letter grades are determined as follows:

<i>A</i> 92.50+	<i>B</i> 82.50 – 87.49	<i>C</i> 70.00 – 77.49
<i>A–</i> 90.00 – 92.49	<i>B–</i> 80.00 – 82.49	<i>D</i> 60.00 – 69.99
<i>B+</i> 87.50 – 89.99	<i>C+</i> 77.50 – 79.99	<i>F</i> 0.00 – 59.00

Course Policies

Lecture slides, exams, homework assignments, answer keys, and tips sheets will be distributed online. I will generally notify you when new material is posted, but it is nonetheless your responsibility to check regularly for updates.

Though I do not take attendance, note that the exams will be drawn entirely from lecture material, and you will often be unable to infer the answer from the slides alone.

Late exams and assignments will be penalized by 10 points for every day that they are late.

There will be **no extra credit** offered in this course.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of [academic integrity](#).

Accessibility Resources

Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with physical or learning disabilities.

You may find more information about resources made available by the university [here](#).

Class sequence

Cooperation

- 1: Mechanisms, Models, and Explanation
- 2: Coordination Problems
- 3: Collaboration Problems
- 4: Trust Problems
- 5: Norms and Institutions
- 6: Hegemony and Selective Incentives
- 7: Issue-Linkage and Reassurance
- Student presentations

Conflict

- 8: Commitment Problems
- 9: Information Problems
- 10: Manipulating Incentives
- 11: Manipulating Beliefs
- Student presentations