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## Political Science 577

### Theories of Conflict

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**Mark Fey**  
Harkness Hall 109E  
Hours: Friday 1:30-3:00  
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**Hein Goemans**  
Harkness 320  
Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:00  
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#### **Thursday 14:00-16:40. Harkness 329**

This course examines the literature on conflict that has developed in the last decade. We will examine recent formal literature as well as the latest substantive (non-formal) literature on conflict. The course will help graduate students identify the broad direction of international conflict studies and will also permit graduate students to pursue topics or ideas of their own interest. To that end, we set aside two classes for “model building sessions” where students can explore approaches to formalize some of the ideas in the substantive literature, or explore extensions of the current formal literature. Much of the course revolves around the student led discussions, so we expect students to be prepared and fully participate. Students should have taken or be concurrently taking **PSC 584** or have an equivalent knowledge of complete and incomplete information game theory.

#### ***Course Requirements***

During the semester students are required to write two 5-page papers which comment on one (set) of readings. One 5-page paper must comment on non-formal readings, the other on a formal paper or book. The paper on non-formal work requires that the student can concisely identify the main themes of the work under scrutiny. To that end, the student should be able to summarize in five pages 1) the central question, 2) the central answer, 3) the competing explanations and 4) why the competing explanations are wrong. For further guidance, please refer to the last page on this syllabus. The paper on the non-formal work requires not only that students discuss the technical aspects of the work, but also make an effort to put this in the broader IR context and evolving research agenda. At the end of the semester a research paper is due. It is our hope that students will use the “model building sessions” to lay the basics for their research papers.

To guide the class, each student is required to lead the discussion on 3 assigned readings.

## ***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 severely, which means that your grade will suffer, and We will forward your case to the Chair of the College Board on Academic Honesty.

## ***Texts***

The following books should be in the bookstore, but can also be ordered from Amazon:

1. Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960
2. Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966
3. H. E. Goemans, *War and Punishment; the causes of war termination and the First World War*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
4. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight; why emerging democracies go to war*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005

Students will also get a photocopy of the following book manuscripts:

1. Fiona McGillivray and Alastair Smith, *Leader Specific Punishments: A Theory of Interstate Relations, Political Institutions and Leader Change*. Book ms
2. R. Harrison Wagner, *War and the State; Rethinking the Theory of International Politics*, forthcoming with the University of Michigan Press, July 2007.

Readings not included in one of the texts can be found through one of the online databases or on the library's course web page or from Prof. Goemans.

## Course Outline

Thursday, September 7

### 1. Introduction

It would be a good idea to start the readings for next week early!

Thursday September 14

### 2. Schelling

- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966
- Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960
  - Sandeep Baliga and Tomas Sjöström, Arms Races and Negotiations, *The Review of Economic Studies*, 2004, Vol. 71, No. 247, April: 351-369.

Thursday September 21

### 3. Informal Models of Conflict: War & Peace

- Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision Second Edition*, New York: Longman, 1999. Introduction: 1-12, Chapter 1: 13-54, Chapter 3: 143-185, Chapter 4: 217-236, Chapter 5: 255-313.
  - Jonathan Bendor and Thomas H. Hammond, Rethinking Allison's Models, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2, June 1992: 301-322
  - R. Harrison Wagner, Peace, War, and the Balance of Power, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (September 1994): 593-607
- Yukari

Thursday September 28

### 4. Informal Models of Conflict: War Termination

- H. E. Goemans, *War and Punishment; the causes of war termination and the First World War*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Thursday October 5

## 5. The Role of Leaders

- Fiona McGillivray and Alastair Smith, *Leader Specific Punishments: A Theory of Interstate Relations, Political Institutions and Leader Change*. Book ms.. Chapters to be assigned. **Sean**
- Scott Wolford, National Leaders and International Politics, unpublished manuscript, Emory University. **Jeremy**

Thursday October 12

## 6. The Role of International Organizations

- Charles Boehmer, Erik Gartzke and Timothy Nordstrom, Do International Organizations Promote Peace? *World Politics*, 57, (1), October 2004. **Jun**
- Alexander Thompson, Coercion Through IOs: The Security Council and the Logic of Information Transmission, *International Organization*, 60 (Winter) 2006: 1-34. **Vikram**
- Seth Weinberger, Institutional Signalling and the Origins of the Cold War, *Security Studies*, 12, no.4, Summer, 2003: 80-115. **Angelia**
- Erik Voeten, The Political Origins of the UN Security Council's Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force, *International Organization*, 59 (Summer) 2005: 527-557. **Navine**

Thursday October 19

## 7. Mediation and Audience Costs

- Andrew Kydd, When Can Mediators Build Trust? *American Political Science Review*, 100 (3), August 2006: 449-462. **Yukari**
- James D. Fearon, Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes, *American Political Science Review*, 88 (3) September 1994: 577-592.
- Kenneth A. Schultz, Looking for Audience Costs, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45 (1), February 2001: 32-60.
- Mike Tomz, Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach. Unpublished Manuscript, Stanford 2005. Available at <http://www.stanford.edu/~tomz/working/tomz-audcosts-2005-10-26a.pdf>

Thursday October 26

## 8. Students

- Brainstorming sessions.

Thursday November 2

## 9. Models of War: Incomplete Information

- Dagobert L. Brito and Michael D. Intriligator, Conflict, War, and Redistribution, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (December) 1985: 943-957. **Jun**
- James D. Fearon, Rationalist Explanations for War, *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer), 1995: 379-414. **Angelia**
- Mark Fey & Kris Ramsay, *Mechanism Design*. Manuscript, University of Rochester, Princeton University.
- Mark Fey & Kris Ramsay, *Mutual Optimism*. Manuscript, University of Rochester, Princeton University. **Yoji**

Thursday November 9

## 10. Models of War: Commitment

- James D. Fearon, Bargaining over Objects that Influence Future Bargaining Power, Paper prepared for the Annual APSA Meeting, Washington, D. C., August 1997. **Arndt**
- Michelle R. Garfinkel and Stergios Skaperdas, Conflict without Misperceptions or Incomplete Information, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 44, No. 6 (December 2000): 793-807. **Vikram**
- Robert Powell, War as a Commitment Problem, *International Organization* 60 (Winter) 2006: 169-203. **Jeremy**
- Donald Witmann, **TBA**.

Thursday November 16

## 11. Domestic Politics and War

- Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight; why emerging democracies go to war*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. **Arndt**

Thursday November 23

## Thanksgiving Recess

Thursday November 30

## 12. Domestic Politics: Risky Policies

- Kenneth A. Schultz, The Politics of Risking Peace: Do Hawks or Doves Deliver the Olive Branch?, *International Organization* 59 (Winter) 2005: 1-38. **Navine**
- George Downs and David M. Rocke. 1994. Conflict, Agency and Gambling for Resurrection: The Principal-Agent Problem Goes to War. **Sean** *American Journal of Political Science* 38(2):362-380.
- Hein Goemans & Mark Fey, *Optimal Gambles*, unpublished ms., University of Rochester.

Thursday December 7

## 13. Students

- Brainstorming session

## 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?