

INTL 4260
Foreign Policy Decision Making
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Overview:

Understanding human decision making is central to the study of foreign policy. In this class, we will examine different conceptions of decision making (indeed, of human nature) to inform our study of state behavior. Increasingly, foreign policy analysis is influenced by the fields of cognitive science and behavioral economics. Rather than assume that governments routinely make rational choices, these approaches evaluate the degree to which elites and the public rely on decision heuristics and biases when making foreign policy decisions. Importantly, while heuristics and biases often produce good decisions, they can also lead us astray and/or vulnerable to political manipulation.

We are still the early stages in understanding how cognitive science can help us understand foreign policy. Because we don't have all the answers yet, there is an opportunity for us to think creatively in our class. This course, therefore, is divided into two main components. In the first, we will explore how cognitive concepts (often developed in other academic disciplines) might help us explain puzzling foreign policy decision making. In the second, we will develop the skills required to conduct research into foreign policy decision making. Working as teams, you will have an opportunity to craft and deploy live decision-making experiments - this includes developing a research question that applies cognitive principles to a foreign policy issue, draft a hypothesis, design an experiment, test your argument on a real-world randomized sample of adults, and analyze the resulting data.

Graded Components:

I want to emphasize that, COVID-19 notwithstanding, this semester we are offering a "no-compromise" class. This means that all of the assignments, exams, and reading material is exactly the same as if we were operating under normal circumstances.

- **Analytical Essays:** Select three (3) topics identified in the syllabus. The purpose of the (750-word) essays is to apply course concepts to contemporary foreign policy issues. These essays can also include conceptually motivated hypotheses as a first step toward crafting decision experiments. Essays are due on the Tuesday after we discuss the readings (100 points each).

- **Two in-class examinations (essay format):** The date of examinations will not be provided in advance (150 points each).
- **Foreign Policy Decision Making Research Project:** Working as teams you will complete a research project using an experiment motivated by class concepts. (team-graded assignment: 250 points).
- **Peer Evaluation:** Team members will evaluate individual members on the consistency and quality of their contribution to the research project (30 pts)
- **Research Presentation:** Each team will present the results of their project to the class (50 pts)
- **Activate a Qualtrics Account:** by the third week of class (20 pts). https://eits.uga.edu/web_and_applications/qualtrics/
- **Complete IRB Training (CITI certificate):** earn certification to conduct experiments on human subjects by the sixth week of class – You need only complete the certificate for **Social and Behavioral Research** - (50 points). <https://research.uga.edu/hrpp/citi-training/>

A timeline and detailed instructions for the research project will be provided in class, along with grading rubrics for all of the assignments.

Attendance Policy:

There is no formal attendance requirement. However, make-up exams are only possible if accompanied by a documented explanation for the absence as permitted by university policy.

Grading Scale

Total points = 900

A 100-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86- 83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 69-60; F 59 and below.

Class Format and Schedule

How to Attend:

COVID 19 requires that we modify the format by which course content is delivered. This semester we will use a synchronous format that permits online or in-person attendance. This means that we will meet live each week at the appointed class time. Students may each attend each session in-person or online via Zoom.

Our first session on January 13th will be conducted entirely online via Zoom. I will then distribute a schedule for in-person attendance that conforms with University requirements for classroom capacity.

Exams:

In a normal semester, exams are unannounced. However, for this semester I will inform the class of the exam 24 hours prior to the test. The test will take place *during the regularly scheduled class*. Students will take the tests through the ELC portal.

Zoom Protocol:

Students attending class via Zoom are asked to appear “in person” online. This facilitates active participation, class dialogue, and allows us to get to know each other. For some of us, this might require that we utilize Zoom’s virtual background – feel free to be as creative as you like in setting up your personal backdrop!

Please be logged-in prior to the beginning of class.

Masks/Face Coverings¹

All students attending class in-person must wear appropriate face coverings and maintain proper social distancing.

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

The UGA Student Honor Code states: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” A Culture of Honesty, the University’s policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be assessed here: <https://honesty.uga.edu>. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be referred to Judicial Affairs, as required by university policy.

All course work must be done on an individual basis, including exams, unless the syllabus clearly indicates that the assignment is team graded.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

- *If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.*
- *UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).*
- *If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes,*

¹ Please also see additional information regarding COVID-19 at the end of this document.

mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

- *Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.*

Please note that faculty and staff are obligated to report any knowledge of sexual assault and/or relationship violence to UGA's Equal Opportunity Office.

Readings and Essay Topics:

Please Note: Readings identified as “deep dives” are not required but they are helpful in understanding the content. In addition, they can serve as supporting material for the construction of decision experiments and will also help you in drafting your critical essays. Reading assignments may change. Please check the syllabus each week on ELC.

Essay topics often ask for the application of course concepts to real-world examples. In these instances please use examples that are not already discussed in the readings.

Check-in assignments are voluntary and strongly encouraged.

Week 1 Jan. 13-15:

Introduction to Course Mechanics & Our Brains

- Octavio Choi “A Introduction to Cognitive Neuroscience”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvBfAqk70LU>

Note: The purpose of this video is to simply provide for us an overview of brain architecture and how this affects human decision making. You do **not** need to memorize all of the names for each of the various components of the human brain. Focus instead on the discussion concerning hierarchical structure of the brain - through the discussion of “distributed processing” ending at 25 minutes. After that, the lecture provides a broader and **fascinating** summary of modern neuroscience that we won't discuss now but that you might enjoy for its own sake.

Week 2 Jan. 18-22 (note: MLK Jan. 18th no class)

Rational Decision Making, Elites and Publics

1a. Kahn Academy: Expected Utility Theory <https://www.khanacademy.org/math/statistics-probability/random-variables-stats-library/expected-value-lib/v/expected-value-profit-lottery-ticket>

1b. Fearon, J.D., 1995. Rationalist Explanations for War. *International organization*, 49(3), pp.379–414.

2. Putnam, R.D., 1988. Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games. *International organization*, 42(3), pp.427–460.

Essay Topic 1: Identify a conflict that is consistent with Fearon's explanation for war.

Week 3 Jan. 25-29

Taboos

Press, D.G., Sagan, S.D. & Valentino, B.A., 2013. Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons. *The American political science review*, 107(1), pp.188–206.

Assignment Due!

Qualtrics Account: Upload to ELC a PDF copy of the email indicating that you have successfully activated a Qualtrics account

Week 4 Feb. 1-5

Aversion to Losses

1. Jervis, R., 1992. Political Implications of Loss Aversion. *Political Psychology*, 13(2), pp.187–204.

2. Nincic, M., 1997. Loss Aversion and the Domestic Context of Military Intervention. *Political research quarterly*, 50(1), pp.97–120.

Deep Dive: Camerer, C., 2005. Three Cheers—Psychological, Theoretical, Empirical—for Loss Aversion. *JMR, Journal of marketing research*, 42(2), pp.129–133.

Essay Topic 2: Discuss and analyze an example(s) where a president or other political leader used loss aversion to cultivate political support for a foreign policy initiative)

Week 5 Feb. 8-12

Framing and Risk Taking

Berejikian, J. , & Zwald, Z. (2020). Why language matters: Shaping public risk tolerance during deterrence crises. *Contemporary Security Policy* , 41 (4), 507–540. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2020.1729496>

Deep Dive: Quattrone, G.A. & Tversky, A., 1988. Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice. *The American political science review*, 82(3), pp.719–736.)

Essay Topic 3: Identify examples of gains or loss framing by a president or other political leader that you believe was designed to manipulate public opinion by increasing the willingness to support a risky policy)

Week 6 Feb. 15-19 Instructional Break. Feb. 17 (no classes)
Fairness

Sanfey, Alan G., et al. "The neural basis of economic decision-making in the ultimatum game." *Science* 300.5626 (2003): 1755-1758.

Deep Dive: Ringius, Lasse, Asbjørn Torvanger, and Arild Underdal. "Burden sharing and fairness principles in international climate policy." *International Environmental Agreements* 2.1 (2002): 1-22.

Essay Topic 8: How do decision makers react when confronted with issues of fairness? Which topics in international politics do you think are most likely involve fairness? Describe a foreign policy experiment that would examine the role of fairness.

Note: Aspects of these readings will be challenging and unfamiliar. That's OK. I want you to focus on 1) The theoretical argument (regarding fairness and in-group bias), 2) the structure of the experiments, 3) the main conclusions. Also, instead of focusing on the names/labels of specific regions of the brain, just pay attention to what affected regions do - e.g. process negative emotions, calculate complex probabilities, etc.)

Assignment due:

- *Complete IRB certification. Upload to ELC copy of the CITI certification.*

Week 7 Feb. 22-26

Analogies as a Shortcut to Rationality

Houghton, D.P., 1996. The Role of Analogical Reasoning in Novel Foreign-Policy Situations. *British journal of political science*, 26(4), pp.523–552.

Deep Dive: Oppermann, K. & Spencer, A., 2013. Thinking Alike? Salience and metaphor analysis as cognitive approaches to foreign policy analysis. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 9(1), pp.39–56.

Essay Topic 4: Identify a popular analogy commonly used to explain a current foreign policy issue. Explain, per Houghton, how the analogy serves as a cognitive shortcut)

(Topical Proposals: Each team submits a 1-2 page summary of their research proposal)

Week 8 Mar. 1-5

Emotional Decision Making (fear/threat)

Gadarian, S.K., 2010. The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes. *The journal of politics*, 72(2), pp.469–483.

Deep Dive: Renshon, J. & Lerner, J., 2012. The role of emotions in foreign policy decision making. *Encyclopedia of peace psychology*, pp.313–317

Essay Topic 5a: Summarize Gadarian's explanation of how threat perceptions shape policy attitudes. Identify another foreign policy issue where the same mechanisms are at work.

Essay Topic 5b: Extend the logic Gadarian's conceptual framework to a new foreign policy issue, and propose an experiment designed to test your analysis

Week 9 Mar. 8-12 Instructional Break. Mar. 12 (no classes)

Personality

Gallagher, Maryann E., and Susan H. Allen. "Presidential personality: Not just a nuisance." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10.1 (2014): 1-21

Deep Dive: Thies, C.G., 2017. Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis in Latin America. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13(3), pp.662–681.

(Draft Questions: Each team submits draft of their experiment)

Week 10 Mar. 15-19

Gender and Sex Differences

Eichenberg, R.C., 2016. Gender Difference in American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force, 1982–2013. *International studies quarterly*. 60(1), pp.138–148.

Deep Dive #1: Cohn, C., 1987. Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12(4), pp.687–718.

Deep Dive #2: Zak, P.J. et al., 2005. The Neuroeconomics of Distrust: Sex Differences in Behavior and Physiology. *The American economic review*, 95(2), pp.360–363.

Essay Topic 6: Extend the logic from any of this week's readings to a new foreign policy issue, and propose an experiment designed to test your analysis.

(Extra Credit: Each student submit screen shot of how they randomized their questions and printout of simulation to show that it works)

Week 11 Mar. 22-26

Groupthink

Dina Badie; Groupthink, Iraq, and the War on Terror: Explaining US Policy Shift toward Iraq, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Volume 6, Issue 4, 1 October 2010, Pages 277–296.

Deep Dive: Janis, I. L. (1972). Victims of groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascos. Oxford, England: Houghton Mifflin.

Essay Topic 7: Extend the logic of groupthink to a new foreign policy issue and propose an experiment designed to test your analysis.

Week 12 Mar. 29 - Apr. 2

Polyheuristic Decision Making

Mintz, A. (2004). How do leaders make decisions? A polyheuristic perspective. *Journal of conflict resolution*, 48(1), 3-13.

Essay Topic 8: Is the polyheuristic theory of decision making a helpful tool for foreign policy analysis. Use examples/evidence to support your answer

Week 13 Apr. 5- 9 Instructional Break. April 8th (no classes)

In-group Bias

Emile Bruneau and Rebecca Saxe “Attitudes Toward the Outgroup are Predicted by Activity in the Precuneus in Arabs and Israelis” *Neuroimage* v.52 n4 2010

Deep Dive # 1: Grit Hein, et al. “Neural Responses to Ingroup and Outgroup Members’ Suffering Predict Individual Differences in Costly Helping” *Neuron* v.68 n.1 2010

Deep Dive # 2: Belle Derks and Michael Inzlicht “The Neuroscience of Stigma and Stereotype Threat” *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* v.11 n.2 2008)

Essay Topic 9: Design an experiment that uses outgroup bias to explain foreign policy attitudes.

Week 14 Apr 12-16

Topic: Class Pick! TBD

Week 15 Apr 19-23

Team Research Reports:

Week 16 Apr 26-20

Team Research Reports

May 3

Last Day – Extra Credit Quiz on Student Presentations

Final Research Report Write-up due:

Date TBD

Coronavirus Information for Students

Face Coverings:

As a reminder, the University of Georgia—along with all University System of Georgia (USG) institutions—requires all faculty, staff, students, and visitors to wear an appropriate face covering while inside campus facilities/buildings where six feet social distancing may not always be possible. Anyone not using a face covering when required will be asked to wear one or must leave the area. Reasonable accommodations may be made for those who are unable to wear a face covering for documented health reasons. Students seeking an accommodation related to face coverings should contact Disability Services at <https://drc.uga.edu/>.

DawgCheck:

Please perform a quick symptom check each weekday on DawgCheck—on the UGA app or website—whether you feel sick or not. It will help health providers monitor the health situation on campus: <https://dawgcheck.uga.edu/>

What do I do if I have symptoms?

Students showing symptoms should self-isolate and schedule an appointment with the University Health Center by calling 706-542-1162 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). Please DO NOT walk-in. For emergencies and after-hours care, see <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>.

What do I do if I test positive?

Any student with a positive COVID-19 test is **required** to report the test in DawgCheck and should self-isolate immediately. Students should not attend classes in-person until the isolation period is completed. Once you report the positive test through DawgCheck, UGA Student Care and Outreach will follow up with you.

What do I do if I am notified that I have been exposed?

Revised Guidelines for COVID-19 Quarantine Period

Effective Jan. 4, 2021, students who learn they have been directly exposed to COVID-19 but are not showing symptoms should self-quarantine for **10 days** (consistent with updated Department of Public Health (DPH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines). Those quarantining for 10 days must have been symptom-free throughout the monitoring period. Please correspond with your instructor via email, with a cc: to Student Care & Outreach at sco@uga.edu, to coordinate continuing your coursework while self-quarantined.

We strongly encourage students to voluntarily take a COVID-19 test within 48 hours of the end of the 10-day quarantine period (test to be administered between days 8 and 10). Students may obtain these tests at Legion Field (<https://clia.vetview.vet.uga.edu/>) or at the University Health Center by calling 706-542-1162 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). Please DO NOT walk-in the University Health Center without an appointment. For emergencies and after-hours care, see <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>

If the test is negative, the individual may return to campus, but MUST continue to closely monitor for any new COVID-19 symptoms through 14 days. [DawgCheck](#) is the best method for monitoring these symptoms. If new symptoms occur, the individual must not come to campus and must seek further testing/evaluation.

If the test is positive at the end of the 10-day period, the individual must begin a 10-day isolation period from the date of the test.

How do I participate in surveillance testing if I have NO symptoms?

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of the expanded surveillance testing that is being offered from **January 4 – 22: up to 1,500 free tests per day at Legion Field and pop-up locations**. Testing at Legion Field can be scheduled at <https://cia.vetview.vet.uga.edu/>. Walk-up appointments can usually be accommodated at Legion Field, and pop-up saliva testing does not require pre-registration. For planning purposes, precise sites and schedules for the pop-up clinics are published on the UHC's website and its social media as they are secured: <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/healthtopics/covid-surveillance-testing>.