INTL 4220: International Conflict

Course Instructor Information:	*Course Meeting Information*:
Aleksandr Kuznetcov Email: akuz@uga.edu Office hours: Wednesday, 1:00 - 3:00 PM Candler Hall B01	Spring 2025 Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:30 - 12:20 PM Caldwell Hall 107

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to theories of international conflict. Political scientists developed a plethora of theories that aim to explain causes of war, its effects, and various phenomena associated with conflicts. In this course, we will learn what exactly constitutes war and how we can distinguish wars from other types of disputes. Students will be exposed to the theories of international conflict that attempt to provide comprehensive explanations for wars, as well as concrete factors that may increase the likelihood of conflict. This includes studying different levels of analysis – from international (is the world order anarchic or hierarchic?) to individual (do leaders' backgrounds determine their belligerence?). The course also covers the consequences of wars and examines whether they bring about the outcomes desired by initiators and how they affect various fields of social relationship. We will study the ideas developed by scholars and the arguments they utilize and then summarize them, provide criticism, and place them into a broader context.

Course Objectives

The course includes assignments that require critical thinking, and students will learn to evaluate theories, arguments, findings, and empirical analyses found in the assigned readings. The course will also help students begin conceptualizing their own ideas.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- understand major theories of international conflict;
- describe the characteristics of different types of conflict;
- identify causes and consequences of war at different levels of analysis;
- analyze and provide reasoned critiques of ideas developed by scholarship on international conflict.

Course Materials

There is only one textbook required for this course:

Stephen L. Quackenbush (2015). *International conflict: Logic and evidence*. CQ Press.

You can purchase it online (a used copy of the book will work perfectly) or access the online version for free via UGA library. All other required readings will be posted on ELC and/or are available via UGA Library or other resources.

Course Requirements

- **Participation** (20% of the final grade)

Students will be required to participate in class discussions each week. The quality of each class depends on how well the students prepare for it. Students are expected to do all the readings, analyze them, share their thoughts about the assigned material, and debate the topics with colleagues. A good contribution is not limited only to thoughtful critiques of the ideas presented in the assigned readings but also includes questions to the class, as long as it helps move the discussion forward. Direct engagement in discussions will help us find what we

may otherwise miss when doing readings. Students should be familiar with contemporary international political events and are encouraged to integrate materials from outside the course in the discussion.

- **Reading presentation** (20%)

Students will sign up for certain topics to present an assigned reading in class and facilitate discussion of relevant topics by providing discussion questions to the class. It will require students to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, and major contributions of a reading. Good presentations shall not simply focus on empirical and methodological aspects of the readings but must be insightful and helpful in understanding what the actual contribution of the reading is. Presentations must be delivered in a clear and coherent manner, include visual elements and data that allow for a better understanding of the discussed theories, and contain discussion questions to facilitate participation by their classmates. Along with the ability to work with and understand class material and assigned readings, students must demonstrate their skills in giving a college-level presentation, which includes, but not limited to, respectful and decent delivery of presented material. More details about the requirements for the presentations will be provided in class as the course progresses.

- **Final paper** (20%)

Students must write a final paper that will fall within one of the topics covered in class. Students will need to summarize theories and findings of relevant literature and examine the explanatory power of specific theoretical frameworks. The goal is not to simply provide a formal review of the readings but to evaluate its' strengths, weaknesses, and implications. The reviewed literature cannot be limited only to the readings provided in the syllabus – students will need to do their research and find other relevant studies in the field (no less than 15 academic articles). Students must consult the instructor with respect to specific topics they choose before they begin working on a paper.

Format: font - 12 Times New Roman, double-spaced, 10-12 pages

- **Midterm exam** (20%)

Students will have one midterm exam. It will be a combination of multiple choice, identification questions, and/or short essays. The exam will be administered in class via ELC and will be closed-note. Students are allowed to bring a sheet of paper (letter size, 8.5 in x 11 in) with their notes on it (on both sides). However, students will still need to be able to understand all the concepts covered in class in order to properly answer all the questions on the exam.

- **Final exam** (20%)

Final exam will be held in class via ELC and will be closed-note. Students are allowed to bring a sheet of paper (letter size, 8.5 in x 11 in) with their notes on it (on both sides). It will be a non-comprehensive exam except for some major topics (to be announced in class). It will be a combination of multiple choice, identification questions, and/or short essays.

Grading Scale

93 to 100: A	73 to 77: C
90 to 93: A-	70 to 73: C-
87 to 90: B+	67 to 70: D+
83 to 87: B	63 to 67: D
80 to 83: B-	60 to 63: D-
77 to 80: C+	Below 60: F

Course policy and useful information

- **Academic Honesty Policy**

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy ("A Culture of Honesty") and the Student Honor Code ("I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others."). All academic work must meet the standards of "A Culture of Honesty" found at https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/. These standards include, but not limited to, policies that cover plagiarism and unauthorized assistance (including assistance from AI software). Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

- **Students with Disabilities.**

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor and may register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting the Disability Resource Center.

- **Make-up procedures for assignments**

Failure to complete any course assignment on time will result in a failing grade (0). Make-up options may only be offered in case of documented emergencies and require prior approval of the instructor.

- **UGA Well-being Resources**

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

• Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
• Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
• University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
• Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
• Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
• Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting https://well-being.uga.edu.

Class schedule and readings list

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Week 01 – Are humans inherently aggressive?

Monday, Jan 6: Introduction to the course

Wednesday, Jan 8: Introduction to international conflicts

Friday, Jan 10: Cashman, G. (2013). *What causes war?: an introduction to theories of international conflict.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. - Ch. 2 (pp 14-48)

Week 02 – Defining war and science

Monday, Jan 13: Quackenbush Ch. 1-2

Wednesday, Jan 15: Understanding academic research

Friday, Jan 17: Vasquez, J. A. (2009). *The war puzzle revisited*. Cambridge University Press. – Ch. 2 (pp 52-87).

Week 03 – Common assumptions about war

Monday, Jan 20: Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No Classes

Wednesday, Jan 22: Quackenbush Ch. 3

Friday, Jan 24: Fearon, J. D. (1995). Rationalist explanations for war. International organization, 49(3), 379-414.

Week 04 – World order and war. Systemic theories of conflict

Monday, Jan 27: Cashman, G. (2013). *What causes war?: an introduction to theories of international conflict.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. – Ch. 10 and Ch. 12 (pp 371-388; 461-475)
Nye, J. S., Welch, D. A. (2016). Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History. United Kingdom: Pearson Education. – pp 65-74 (*Focus on the discussion of liberalism*)

Wednesday, Jan 29: Systemic theories of conflict (continued)

Friday, Jan 31: Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). The tragedy of great power politics. WW Norton & Company. - Ch. 2.

Week 05 – Power, polarity, and war

Monday, Feb 3: Quackenbush Ch. 5

Wednesday, Feb 5: Jervis, R. (1978). Cooperation under the security dilemma. World politics, 30(2), 167-214.

Friday, Feb 7: Thompson, William R. (1986) Polarity, the Long Cycle, and Global Power Warfare. Journal of Conflict Resolution 30(4):587-615.

Week 06 – Territory and war

Monday, Feb 10: Quackenbush Ch. 4

Wednesday, Feb 12: Bremer, S. A. (1992). Dangerous dyads: Conditions affecting the likelihood of interstate war, 1816-1965. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 36(2), 309-341.

Friday, Feb 14: Hensel, P. R., McLaughlin Mitchell, S., Sowers, T. E., & Thyne, C. L. (2008). Bones of contention: Comparing territorial, maritime, and river issues. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 52(1), 117-143.

Week 07 – Alliances and war

Monday, Feb 17: Quackenbush Ch. 6

Wednesday, Feb 19: Walt, S. M. (1987). The origins of alliance. Cornell University Press. Ch. 2 (+skim Ch.5)

Friday, Feb 21: Kenwick, M. R., Vasquez, J. A., & Powers, M. A. (2015). Do alliances really deter?. The Journal of Politics, 77(4), 943-954.

Week 08 – Regimes and war

Monday, Feb 24: Quackenbush Ch. 7

Wednesday, Feb 26: Weeks, J. L. (2012). Strongmen and straw men: Authoritarian regimes and the initiation of international conflict. American Political Science Review, 106(2), 326-347.

Friday, Feb 28: **MIDTERM EXAM**

SPRING BREAK – No Classes
Monday, Mar 3 – Friday, Mar 7

Week 09 – Deterrence and war

Monday, Mar 10: Review of the exam and the final papers assignment

Wednesday, Mar 12: Quackenbush Ch. 8

Friday, Mar 14: McManus, R. W. (2018). Making it personal: The role of leader-specific signals in extended deterrence. The Journal of Politics, 80(3), 982-995.

Week 10 – Militarized disputes, crises, and war

Monday, Mar 17: Quackenbush Ch. 9

Wednesday, Mar 19: Kroenig, M. (2013). Nuclear superiority and the balance of resolve: Explaining nuclear crisis outcomes. International Organization, 67(1), 141-171.

Friday, Mar 21: McManus, R. W. (2021). Crazy like a fox? are leaders with reputations for madness more successful at international coercion?. British Journal of Political Science, 51(1), 275-293.

Week 11 – Individuals and war

Monday, Mar 24: Cashman, G. (2013). *What causes war?: an introduction to theories of international conflict.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. - Ch. 3 (pp 49-114)

Wednesday, Mar 26: Individuals and war (continued)

Friday, Mar 28: Horowitz, M. C., & Stam, A. C. (2014). How prior military experience influences the future militarized behavior of leaders. International Organization, 68(3), 527-559.

Week 12 – Rivalry and war

Monday, Mar 31: Quackenbush Ch. 13

Wednesday, Apr 2: Morey, D.S. (2011). When War Brings Peace: A Dynamic Model of the Rivalry Process. American Journal of Political Science, 55: 263-275.

Friday, Apr 4: Findley, Michael G., James A. Piazza, and Joseph K. Young. (2012) Games Rivals Play: Terrorism in Rivalries. Journal of Politics 74(1):235-248.

Week 13 – Expansion, duration, and outcomes of war

Monday, Apr 7: Quackenbush Ch. 11

Wednesday, Apr 9: Vasquez, J. A. (2009). *The war puzzle revisited*. Cambridge University Press. – Ch. 7 (pp 245-284).

Friday, Apr 11: Reiter, D., & Stam, A. C. (1998). Democracy, war initiation, and victory. *American Political Science Review*, *92*(2), 377-389.

Week 14 – Consequences of war

Monday, Apr 14: Quackenbush Ch. 12

Wednesday, Apr 16: Hazlett, C. (2020). Angry or weary? How violence impacts attitudes toward peace among Darfurian refugees. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *64*(5), 844-870.

Friday, Apr 18: Wallace, G. (2012). Regulating conflict: Historical legacies and state commitment to the laws of war. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *8*(2), 151-172.

Week 15 – Other issues of war

Monday, Apr 21: Cunningham, D. E., & Lemke, D. (2013). Combining civil and interstate wars. International Organization, 67(3), 609-627.

Wednesday, Apr 23: Maschmeyer, L. (2021). The subversive trilemma: Why cyber operations fall short of expectations. International Security, 46(2), 51-90.

Friday, Apr 25: Other issues of war (continued)

Sunday, Apr 27: **FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE**

Week 16 – Review of the final exam

Monday, Apr 28: Review of the final exam

Week 17 – Final exam

Monday, May 5, 12:00 - 3:00 pm: **FINAL EXAM**