Summary

This is a seminar devoted to examining prominent research in political science about tools of international statecraft. The course is designed specifically for graduate students intending to write a dissertation or thesis in the field of international security; all others should see the instructor before enrolling.

Objectives

1. Evaluate recent social science research about the use and effectiveness of instruments of diplomacy, statecraft, and foreign policy.

2. Build a cache of potential research proposals upon which to draw when selecting a dissertation or thesis topic.

3. Prepare for the comprehensive examination in international relations by gaining familiarity with a broad class of international security literature.

General Requirements

1. Complete the Readings. The course will succeed only if students read all assigned readings prior to class meetings. Required books will be available at the University of Virginia Bookstore; all other readings can be accessed via Collab. For those who wish to follow up on specific interests later, supplementary books and articles (denoted by +) are listed below the required readings.

2. Contribute to Class Discussion. Discussion constitutes the entirety of each seminar meeting; students must come prepared to offer critical thoughts on each of the readings.
3. Write Six Research Proposals. Six times during the semester, students must prepare a one-page research proposal related to the week’s topic. (Each student may choose four off-weeks.) Proposals should describe one puzzle raised by the readings or during class discussions and propose a brief research plan for resolving it. Proposals must be uploaded to Collab in PDF format not later than 24 hours before each class meeting.

4. Present A Research Proposal. In the last class session, students will briefly present one of their six research proposals, and answer questions from the class.

5. Writing Assignment. Students must complete one of the following writing assignments:

(a) Final Exam. Students who have not taken comprehensive examinations may choose this option. The final examination mimics the format of the department’s exams: students will choose one essay question to answer in a two-hour period. The use of books and notes will be prohibited.

(b) Write a Review Essay. Students who have already taken comprehensive examinations will prepare a review essay evaluating one week’s readings. Essays must be no longer than 3,500 words and must be uploaded to Collab in PDF format not later than 24 hours before the class in which the readings are to be discussed. A good review essay will contain the following elements:

- **Critique the theoretical argument.** Essays should not just summarize the material. What are the independent, independent, and intervening variables? Is the causal logic plausible? Are there reasons the argument might be problematic?

- **Assess the empirical evidence.** Are the cases chosen appropriately? Are the variables operationalized well? Might alternative tests be equally valid? If the author’s data are available, can you replicate the results? How robust (or fragile) are they?

- **Discuss related literature.** How does this literature compare and contrast with other work on the subject? What are the origins of this research agenda? How far has the literature come? Has it made progress?

- **Add value.** This is the most important and difficult element of the paper. Can you suggest new hypotheses, data sources, or research strategies? Are there alternative explanations that need to be considered? Can the research design be improved? Suggest how we might move forward.


**Assignments and Evaluation**

There are three main components to the final semester grade.
• Participation 30%
• Research Proposals and Presentation 40%
• Writing Assignment 30%

Professionalism, Ethics, and Other Policies

1. In-Class Distractions. Please remember to turn off your phones before class. Texting during class is distracting for the instructor, those around you, and most importantly, you.

2. Late Arrivals. Please be prompt so that class may begin and end on time.

3. Academic Integrity. Cheating and plagiarism are taken very seriously in this course. All assignments must be solely the original work of the student. Quoting or paraphrasing another author without attribution on any written assignment is considered plagiarism. Avoid plagiarism by using footnotes (with page numbers) whenever you quote, paraphrase, or otherwise borrow someone else’s ideas. Citing others’ work is a standard scholarly practice, and there is no punishment for having too many citations. If you are unsure whether you are committing plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask the instructor for guidance (before you submit your work). Violators risk failing the course and being reported to the Honor Committee.

4. Group Collaboration. Colleagues are essential to one’s intellectual growth, and I urge students to collaborate with classmates. Sharing written summaries, reading draft papers, and commenting on others’ work are all acceptable forms of collaboration. On the other hand, writing portions of a classmate’s paper or copying a paragraph from a book or website without attribution are very serious violations.

5. Late Assignments. Late assignments will not be accepted for any reason. To ensure that illness, computer failures, or other unanticipated events do not cause you to miss an assignment deadline, it is recommended that you begin the assignments well in advance of the deadline. Further, you should back up your work off-site using the University’s Home Directory or Box services, Google Drive, Dropbox, or another free cloud backup service.

Books and Readings

The following books are required and available at the University of Virginia Bookstore. All other readings can be accessed on Collab.


Students should also become familiar with the following book if they are not already:


**Schedule**

Readings denoted by “•” are required; those denoted by “+” are supplementary.

1. **August 27: Organizational Meeting**

2. **September 3: When Does Deterrence Work? A Debate**


3. September 10: Democracies, Signals, and Credibility

4. September 17: The Utility of Air Power


5. September 24: Nuclear Coercion


6. **October 1: Are Reputations Worth Building?**


7. October 8: Democracies and Military Effectiveness


**8. October 15: Keeping the Peace**


10. **October 29: Fighting Against Non-State Actors**


* November 5: No Class

11. November 12: Terrorism and Counterterrorism


12. November 19: War and the Public


13. December 3: Research Presentations

• Students this week will choose one of their research proposals to present. Audience members will play the role of a National Science Foundation grant committee evaluating grant proposals for funding. Presentations will last 10 minutes, with 10–15 minutes of questions from the audience.