THE BALANCE OF POWER: THEORY AND PRACTICE
Political Science 126/651
(Lecture Course)
Spring 2012

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Class: Mon. & Wed. 4:30-5:20, Davies Auditorium
Office Hours: Tue. 1:00-3:00, Rosenkranz 226 (book through my website)
TF Office Hours: TBD by each TF
Sections: Room and time TBD

COURSE OUTLINE AND OBJECTIVES
This lecture course explores the role of the balance of power in the theory and practice of international relations. We will briefly cover the development of different theoretical views on the balance of power and then spend the majority of the course going over the history of the international balance of power since the turn of the twentieth century. (There will be a bit on the nineteenth century, but not much.) The emphasis is both analytic and historical. We will also address what the balance of power can highlight on recent, post-Cold War events and trends. By the end of the course, students should be conversant in the theoretical aspects of balance-of-power scholarship and also have a broad picture of the historical development of the rise and fall of great powers in the last hundred years. The course meets three times a week: twice for a lecture plus once for a discussion section.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING
There are no pre-requisites for the course.

The course will consist in a series of lectures with pre-assigned readings. Students are expected to do all the readings and attend both weekly lectures plus the weekly discussion section.

Final grades will be assigned as follows:
• Participation in discussion section: 25%;
• Midterm exam: 25%;
• Final exam: 50%.

Note: In order to receive an overall passing grade, students must receive a passing grade in all four components of the final grade. In other words, failing one component of the course will lead to a failing grade in the overall course.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS
Participation: Students should do all the readings for each week in advance of the respective discussion section and come prepared to contribute to class discussion during the sections by bringing questions that stem from the readings.
Midterm Exam: The mid-term exam will cover the first half of the course and consist in two sections, each with equal weight on the exam grade. In the first section, you will be asked to answer eight out of ten ID questions in no more than a paragraph of 5-8 lines each. Topics will include concepts as well as historical events and figures. In the second section, you will have to write two out of three possible short essays. All essays will address topics from the lectures and readings.

Final Exam: The final exam will cover the entire course and consist in three sections, each with equal weight on the exam grade. In the first section, you will be asked to answer eight out of ten ID questions in no more than a paragraph of 5-8 lines each. Topics will include concepts as well as historical events and figures. Two thirds of the topics will be from the second half of the course, with the remaining IDs coming from the first half. In the second section, you will have to write two out of three possible short essays about topics from the second half of the course. In the third section, you will be asked to write one out of two possible long essays covering the entire course. All essays will address topics from the lectures and readings.

OTHER POLICIES
Policy on Plagiarism: All assignments are non-collaborative and should be entirely your own work. Plagiarism is unacceptable and will result in penalties up to and including a failing grade for the assignment (and therefore the course) and referral to the university for disciplinary action. If you haven’t done so yet, please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on academic honesty, including cheating, plagiarism, and document citation, at the following web location: http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/cheating-plagiarism-and-documentation. It is your responsibility to understand and abide by this policy. If you don’t, please ask.

Policy on Electronic Devices: I reserve the right to ban the use of electronic devices (other than pacemakers and ankle-bracelet monitors for those on parole) in the classroom if it appears that they are serving purposes other than taking lecture notes. All cell phones must be turned off during class and section.

While all these policies will be strictly enforced, I know that emergencies and illnesses might arise during the term. If that happens to be the case, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work out alternative arrangements for you to complete your work within a reasonable period of time. In emergency cases, you will need to present a “dean’s excuse” in order to be excused from late work or a series of absences from class sessions.

READINGS
The selected texts were chosen to represent the major theoretical positions on the balance of power and cover the historical evolution of balances of power in the international system. They provide a wide range of views and differ in both the evidence they provide and their persuasiveness. As a whole, the selection is designed to encourage critical evaluation of existing academic literature. In order to best achieve this goal, keep in mind the following questions when doing the readings: What is the argument the author is trying to make? Why does it matter? What are its strengths and weaknesses? How convincing is it? What are possible counter-arguments? Above all, how does the argument advance our understanding of international politics?
The following books are required for purchase and have been placed on reserve in the library:

- Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976);
- Richard Overy, *1939: Countdown to War* (London: Penguin, 2009);
- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966);

This book may be purchased but is also available through the Yale library as an ebook by following the link below:


All other readings are available in PDF format on the Classes*v2 server. The readings below for each session are listed in the order you should do them.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**

**Session 1.1 (Monday, January 09) -- Introduction: Organizational Session**

**Session 1.2 (Wednesday, January 11) -- Theories of the Balance of Power**


**Week 2**

***Note Friday Session***

**Session 2.1 (Friday, January 13) -- Theories of the Balance of Power (continued)**


**Session 2.2 (Wednesday, January 18) -- The Balance of Power in the Nineteenth Century**

Week 3

Session 3.1 (Monday, January 23) -- Multipolarity and the Causes of WWI


Session 3.2 (Wednesday, January 25) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWI


Week 4

Session 4.1 (Monday, January 30) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWI (continued)


Session 4.2 (Wednesday, February 01) -- The Balance of Power and the Causes of WWII (Europe)


Week 5

Session 5.1 (Monday, February 06) -- -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWII


Session 5.2 (Wednesday, February 08) -- The Balance of Power and the Causes of WWII (Asia)

Week 6

Session 6.1 (Monday, February 13) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWII (continued)


Session 6.2 (Wednesday, February 15) -- Midterm exam, covers all materials up to and including session 6.1

Week 7

Session 7.1 (Monday, February 20) -- Bipolarity and the Cold War


Session 7.2 (Wednesday, February 22) -- The Balance of Terror: Nuclear Weapons

- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), chapters 1-3;

Week 8

Session 8.1 (Monday, February 27) -- American Strategy during the Cold War

- George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” in *American Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985);

Session 8.2 (Wednesday, February 29) -- The Balance of Power and Peripheries

Week 9

Session 9.1 (Monday, March 19) -- The End of the Cold War


Session 9.2 (Wednesday, March 21) -- Unipolarity and the Post-Cold War


Week 10

Session 10.1 (Monday, March 26) -- Unipolarity in Practice I: The Basis of American Preponderance


Session 10.2 (Wednesday, March 28) -- Unipolarity in Practice II: The Strategies of American Preponderance

- William Clinton, A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement (The White House, February 1995);
Week 11
Session 11.1 (Monday, April 02) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity I: Small Wars


Session 11.2 (Wednesday, April 04) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity I: Occupation and Insurgency


Week 12
Session 12.1 (Monday, April 09) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity II: Nuclear Proliferation


Session 12.2 (Wednesday, April 11) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity III: Terrorism

- Richard Falkenrath, Robert Newman, and Bradley Thayer, America’s Achilles’ Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), selections;
Week 13

Session 13.1 (Monday, April 16) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity IV: The Rise of Peer Competitors


Session 13.2 (Wednesday, April 18) -- Conclusion: What Can We Learn from the Balance of Power?


Final Exam -- Thursday, May 03, 2:00pm.