

Yale University  
Department of Political Science

Syllabus  
**THE BALANCE OF POWER: THEORY AND PRACTICE**  
(Lecture Course)  
Spring 2011

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Political Science 126/651

Class: Monday & Wednesdays 4:30-5:20 WLH 119  
Discussion Sections: room and time TBD  
Office Hours: Rosenkranz 226, Tue. 1:00-3:00

### **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 cover the development of different theoretical views on the balance of power as well as the history of the international balance of power since the turn of the twentieth century. The emphasis is analytic rather than 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 sections 20%;
- Midterm exam: 20%;
- Final exam: 60%.

### **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. In the second section, you will have to write two out of three possible short essays. In the third section, you will be asked to write one out of two possible long essays. 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://www.yale.edu/yalecollege/publications/uregs/appendix/cheating.html>. 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.

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 must be purchased for the course:

- Spencer C. Tucker, *The Great War, 1914-1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998);
- Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet War Effort 1941-1945* (London: Penguin, 1997).

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 10) -- Introduction: Organizational Session**

#### **Session 1.2 (Wednesday, January 12) -- Theories of the Balance of Power**

- John Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," in Dunne, Kurki, and Smith, editors, *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006);
- John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), chapters 2-3.

### Week 2

\*\*\*Note Friday Session\*\*\*

#### **Session 2.1 (Friday, January 14) -- Theories of the Balance of Power (continued)**

- Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18 (1988): 591-614;
- Jack Levy and William Thompson, "Hegemonic Threats and Great Power Balancing in Europe, 1495-2000," *Security Studies*, Vol. 14 (2005): 1-30;
- Daniel H. Nexon, "The Balance of Power in the Balance," *World Politics* Vol. 61 (2009): 330-359.

### **Session 2.2 (Wednesday, January 19) -- The Balance of Power in the Nineteenth Century**

- Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), chapters 4-6;
- Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Routledge, 1983), chapters 2-4.

### **Week 3**

#### **Session 3.1 (Monday, January 24) -- Multipolarity and the Causes of WWI**

- Immanuel Geiss, "The Outbreak of the First World War and German War Aims," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1 (1966): 75-91;
- Keir Lieber, "The New History of World War I and What It Means for International Relations Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 32 (2007): 155-191;
- Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984," *International Security*, Vol. 9 (1984): 108-146;
- Scott Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability," *International Security*, Vol. 11 (1986): 151-175.

#### **Session 3.2 (Wednesday, January 26) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWI**

- Spencer C. Tucker, *The Great War, 1914-1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), chapters 1-3.

### **Week 4**

#### **Session 4.1 (Monday, January 31) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWI (continued)**

- Spencer C. Tucker, *The Great War, 1914-1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), chapters 4-6.

#### **Session 4.2 (Wednesday, February 02) -- The Balance of Power and the Causes of WWII (Europe)**

- John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 155-165, 181-190, 267-272, 305-322, and 209-219;
- John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), chapters 3-4.

### **Week 5**

#### **Session 5.1 (Monday, February 07) -- The Balance of Power and the Causes of WWII (Asia)**

- John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 172-181, 219-224;
- Scott D. Sagan, "The Origins of the Pacific War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18 (1988): 893-922;
- Bruce M. Russett, *No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of the United States Entry into WWII* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1971), chapters 2-3.

#### **Session 5.2 (Wednesday, February 09) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWII**

- Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet War Effort 1941-1945* (London: Penguin, 1997), chapters 3-6.

## Week 6

### **Session 6.1 (Monday, February 14) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of WWII (continued)**

- Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet War Effort 1941-1945* (London: Penguin, 1997), chapters 7-9;
- Robert A. Pape, "Why Japan Surrendered," *International Security*, Vol. 18 (1993): 154-201.

### **Session 6.2 (Wednesday, February 16) -- Bipolarity and the Cold War**

- Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus*, Vol. 93 (1964): 881-909;
- John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, Vol. 10 (1986): 99-142.

## Week 7

### **Session 7.1 (Monday, February 21) -- Midterm exam, covers all materials up to and including session 6.1**

### **Session 7.2 (Wednesday, February 23) -- The Balance of Terror: Nuclear Weapons**

- Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 37 (1959): 211-34;
- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), chapters; 1-3;
- Robert Jervis, "Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn't Matter," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94 (1979/80): 617-633.

## Week 8

### **Session 8.1 (Monday, February 28) -- American Strategy during the Cold War**

- Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 21 (1996/97): 5-53;
- George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," in *American Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

### **Session 8.2 (Wednesday, March 02) -- The Balance of Power and Peripheries**

- Steven David, "Why the Third World Matters," *International Security*, Vol. 14 (1989): 50-85;
- Stephen Walt, "The Case for Finite Containment: Analyzing U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 14 (1989): 5-49;
- Stephen Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13 (1990): 1-51.

## Week 9

### **Session 9.1 (Monday, March 21) -- The End of the Cold War**

- John Lewis Gaddis, "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 17 (1992/93): 5-58;
- Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "The International Sources of Soviet Change," *International Security*, Vol. 16 (1991/92): 74-118;

- Rey Koslowski and Friedrich Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," *International Organization*, Vol. 48 (1994): 215-247;
- David A. Baldwin, "Security Studies and the End of the Cold War," *World Politics*, Vol. 48 (1995): 117-41.

### **Session 9.2 (Wednesday, March 23) -- Unipolarity and the Post-Cold War**

- William Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Vol. 24 (1999): 5-41;
- Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, Vol. 18 (1993): 44-79;
- Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70 (1990/91): 23-33.

## **Week 10**

### **Session 10.1 (Monday, March 28) -- Unipolarity in Practice I: The Basis of American Preponderance**

- Barry Posen, "Command of the Commons," *International Security*, Vol. 28 (2003): 5-46;
- Richard Betts, "The Political Support System for American Primacy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 81 (2005): 1-14;
- Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, "The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of US Primacy," *International Security*, Vol. 30 (2006): 7-44.

### **Session 10.2 (Wednesday, March 30) -- Unipolarity in Practice II: The Policies of American Preponderance**

- William Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (The White House, February 1995);
- Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, (January/February 2000), pp. 45-62;
- George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (The White House, September, 2002);
- Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), chapter 2.

## **Week 11**

### **Session 11.1 (Monday, April 04) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity I: Small Wars**

- Barry Posen, "The War for Kosovo: Serbia's Political-Military Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 24 (2000): 39-84;
- Daryl G. Press, "The Myth of Air Power in the Persian Gulf War and the Future of Warfare," *International Security*, Vol. 26 (2001): 5-44;
- James Fearon, "Iraq's Civil War," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2007): 2-16.

### **Session 11.2 (Wednesday, April 06) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity I: Occupation and Insurgency**

- David Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail," *International Security*, Vol. 29 (2004): 49-91;
- Richard Andres, Craig Wills, and Thomas Griffith, Jr., "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model," *International Security*, Vol. 30 (2005/06): 124-60;
- Stephen Biddle, "Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq," *International Security*, Vol. 30 (2005/06): 161-76;
- Seth Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," *International Security*, Vol. 32 (2008): 7-40;

- Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," *International Organization*, Vol. 63 (2009): 67-106.

## **Week 12**

### **Session 12.1 (Monday, April 11) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity II: Nuclear Proliferation**

- Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), selections;
- Barry Posen, "U.S. Security Policy in a Nuclear-Armed World, Or: What if Iraq Had Had Nuclear Weapons?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 6 (1997): 1-31;
- Charles Glaser and Steve Fetter, "National Missile Defense and the Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 26 (2001): 40-92.

### **Session 12.2 (Wednesday, April 13) -- 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;
- Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97 (2003): 343-361;
- John Mueller, "Is There Still a Terrorist Threat? The Myth of the Omnipotent Enemy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85 (September/October 2006).

## **Week 13**

### **Session 13.1 (Monday, April 18) -- Challenges to American Unipolarity IV: The Rise of Peer Competitors**

- Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), selections;
- Robert Pape, "Empire Falls," *National Interest*, No. 99 (2009): 21-34;
- Stephen Van Evera, "A Farewell to Geopolitics," in Leffler and Legro, editors, *To Lead the World: American Strategy after the Bush Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 11-35;
- Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, Vol. 30 (2005): 7-45.

### **Session 13.2 (Wednesday, April 20) -- Conclusion: What Can We Learn from the Balance of Power?**

- Richard Ned Lebow and Robert Kelly, "Thucydides and Hegemony: Athens and the United States," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 27 (2001): 593-609;
- Michael Williams "The 'Hobbesian Theory of International Relations: Three Traditions,'" in Jahn, editor, *Rereading the Classics in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

**Final Exam -- Thursday, May 05, 2:00pm.**