

Yale University
Department of Political Science

THE BALANCE OF POWER: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Global Affairs S287
Political Science S126
Summer 2017
Session A
Syllabus
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Class: Mon. & Wed. 1:00-4:15PM, Rosenkranz Hall #102
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Book here: <https://calendly.com/npmonteiro/office-hours-10-minute-slot/>

COURSE OUTLINE AND OBJECTIVES

This course explores the evolution of the international balance of power since the outset of the twentieth century. Specifically, we will cover the causes and conduct of World Wars I and II and the Cold War, as well as the evolution of international politics since the demise of the Soviet Union. We will frame this historical overview using different theoretical views on the role played by the balance of power in international relations. The emphasis is therefore both analytic and historical. By the end of the course, students should have a broad picture of the rise and fall of great powers in the last hundred years as well as of the challenges facing the contemporary United States.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

There are no pre-requisites for this course. The course will consist in a series of seminar sessions with pre-assigned readings. Students are expected to do all the readings prior to each session, as well as attend and participate in all sessions. The sessions will focus on (i) laying out the main arguments of the assigned readings and (ii) critically discussing them. I will open up the session with a lecture on the topic of the day, to be followed by a general examination and discussion of the week's readings.

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

- Participation in discussions: 20%;
- Five short (4-page) response papers: 80%.

Note: In order to receive an overall passing grade, students must receive a passing grade in all three 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. As should be obvious, participation does not mean just attendance. Please be an active participant in the section discussion.

Response Papers: Each student will post a 4-page reaction to the readings for five different sessions, preferably one per week. Your response papers should be posted on the Classes*V2 by 8:00pm the day before the class meeting in which we will discuss these readings. (So, Sunday evening for Monday classes and Tuesday evening for Wednesday classes.) Short papers received after these deadlines but before the relevant meeting begins will be dropped one full letter grade. Short papers will not be accepted after the relevant meeting starts. Each of the five short papers will be worth 16% of the final course grade. These short statements should include an analysis of strengths or weaknesses of arguments made by the authors for the relevant week; questions with which you were left by the readings; or points of confusion that should be clarified. (You should *not* summarize the readings; assume that everybody else has done the reading as well and understands the basic arguments.) You do not have to discuss all of the readings assigned for the session; you may discuss just one or two pieces, or you can pick a broader range and compare them to each other (or to readings for earlier sessions). Likewise, within each reading you select to engage, you do not have to discuss the whole piece. You may do so, but you may equally well focus on a section, a paragraph, or even a sentence that piqued your interest. You are welcome to choose any five sessions in which to write your reaction papers, as long as you submit one paper each week.

COURSE POLICIES

Policy on Plagiarism: Please note the following:

- You need to cite all sources used for papers, including drafts of papers, and repeat the reference each time you use the source in your written work;
- You need to place quotation marks around any cited or cut-and-pasted materials, IN ADDITION TO footnoting or otherwise marking the source;
- If you do not quote directly – that is, if you paraphrase – you still need to mark your source each time you use borrowed material; otherwise you have plagiarized;
- It is also advisable that you list all sources consulted for the draft or paper in the closing materials, such as a bibliography or roster of sources consulted;
- You may not submit the same paper, or substantially the same paper, in more than one course;
- If topics for two courses coincide, you need written permission from both instructors before either combining work on two papers or revising an earlier paper for submission to a new course.

It is the policy of Yale College that all cases of academic dishonesty be reported to the chair of the Executive Committee. Please make sure to consult the relevant section of the Yale College regulations available [here](#).

Policy on Electronic Devices: All cell phones must be turned off during class. I reserve the right to ban the use of electronic devices including laptops in the classroom if it appears that they are serving purposes other than taking notes.

READINGS

The selected texts were chosen to represent the major theoretical positions on the balance of power and cover its historical evolution 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?

All readings are available in PDF format on the course website on the Canvas server, under the “Files” tab in folders created for each session. Below, the readings for each session are listed in the order you should do them.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session 1.1 (May 29) -- The Balance of Power in Theory I

- John Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, editors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 71-88;
- Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Saddleback, NJ: McGraw-Hill, 1979), chapters 5-6.

Session 1.2 (May 31) -- The Balance of Power in Theory II

- John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), chapters 2-3.

Session 2.1 (June 05) -- The Balance of Power and the Causes of World War I

- Jack Snyder, “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984,” *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1984): 108-146.
- Scott Sagan, “1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability,” *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1986): 151-175;

Session 2.2 (June 07) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of World War I

- Spencer C. Tucker, *The Great War, 1914-1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), chapters 2 and 4.

Session 3.1 (June 12) -- The Balance of Power and the Causes of World War II

- John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 155-165, 181-190, 209-219, 267-272, and 305-322;

- John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), chapters 3-4.
- David Reynolds, “1940: Fulcrum of the Twentieth Century?” *International Affairs*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (1990): 325-350.

Session 3.2 (June 14) -- The Balance of Power and the Conduct of World War II

- John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 172-181, 219-224;
- Scott D. Sagan, “The Origins of the Pacific War,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (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 4.1 (June 19) -- The Balance of Power and the Cold War

- George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” in *American Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985);
- John Lewis Gaddis, “The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System,” *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1986): 99-142;
- Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), chapters 2 & 5.

Session 4.2 (June 21) -- The Balance of Power and 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, No. 4 (1979/80): 617–633.

Session 5.1 (June 26) -- The Balance of Power in the Post-Cold War

- William Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999): 5-41;
- Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chapters 4-5.

Session 5.2 (June 28) -- The Rise of China and the Future of the Balance of Power

- Barry Posen, “Command of the Commons,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2003): 5-46;

- Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1996/97): 5-53;
- Thomas J. Christensen, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2006): 81-126.