



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Department of Political Science

THE POLITICS OF UNIPOLARITY

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Political Science 20303
Class: SS #108, T Th 10:30-11:50
Office Hours: Pick #307, W 10:00-1:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has enjoyed a preponderance of power in the international system. With 30% of the world's GDP; a military one order of magnitude greater than any other; a defense budget close to half of global defense expenditures; a blue-water navy superior to all others combined; a chance at nuclear superiority over its erstwhile foe, Russia; and a defense R&D budget that is almost twice the total defense expenditures of its most obvious future competitor, China; the United States has unprecedented relative power. Although several other states would likely be able to avoid defeat in case of a U.S. attack, none comes anywhere near its surplus of usable, globally-deployable power. The United States thus has incomparable freedom projecting its power around the world. It has no peer competitors, and none are likely to emerge in the near future.

A number of important questions both for the study and practice of international relations result from this situation: Is our world unipolar? How long is this situation likely to last? Will it end? If so, how? How peaceful is a unipolar world likely to be? How do nuclear weapons change the workings of unipolarity? What should American grand strategy in a unipolar world be? Is an American empire desirable? Is it a possibility? What, if any, are the constraints on American power? What are the challenges to American power? Are peer competitors rising?

The primary purpose of the course is to **address each of these important issues**, encouraging students to form their own views on the politics of unipolarity. Readings will encompass both theoretical (systemic theory, deterrence theory, foreign-policy theory, etc.) and empirical aspects (macro power trends, conflict since the end of the Cold War, U.S. strategy and foreign policy, etc.) of unipolarity.

Additionally, the course is structured with a secondary purpose: to **develop your writing skills** through drafting multiple revisions of one research paper, incorporating feedback from me. By the end of the course, I hope you will have written the best paper of your college career to date.

REQUIREMENTS, GRADING, AND DEADLINES

Basic knowledge of IR theory is helpful, but not required.

The course is oriented around the readings and discussions. Students are expected to do all the reading, attend all sessions, participate in the discussions, write three short response papers, and develop a research paper during the quarter.

The two weekly 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 short (20-minute) lecture on the topic, laying out the main arguments in the readings, to be followed by a general examination and discussion of the core ideas.

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

- Classroom participation: 25%;
- Response papers (3 x 1 page): 15%;
- Paper outline (2 pages): 10%;
- First draft of paper (5-10 pages): 15%;
- Final draft of paper (15-20 pages): 35%.

Each student should post on chalk a 1-page reaction to the readings for each of three different sessions. These response papers should be posted the evening before the class meeting in which we will address these readings, by 8:00 PM.

Each student should also email or meet with me by the end of week 3 (April 17th) so we can settle on a topic for the final paper. The topic must be approved by me.

Here's a summary of deadlines for turning in assignments:

- Response papers: 8:00pm of day before class in which readings will be discussed;
- Paper outline: beginning of second session of week 5 (April 30th, 10:30am);
- First draft of paper: beginning of second session of week 8 (May 21st, 10:30am);
- Final draft of paper: 4:00pm on Tuesday of exam week (June 9th).

Drafts due at the beginning of class can be handed directly to me. The final paper should be placed in my mailbox, outside Pick 307. You can also email all of the drafts to me by their respective deadlines.

All deadlines are strict. Papers received late will be dropped one letter grade for each 24 hours past the deadline. To receive an overall passing grade, students must pass each and all components / assignments of the course.

All assignments are non-collaborative and should be entirely your own work. Ideas drawn from other sources should be properly cited. 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. You are expected to understand the University's policy on cheating, plagiarism, and documentation. If you don't, please ask.

While these policies will be strictly enforced, I know that emergencies and illnesses might arise during the quarter. 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 doctor's note or a note from your college advisor in order to be excused from late work or a series of absences from class sessions.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: Since the course will be conducted in a seminar format, students will take responsibility for leading much of the discussion. All students should be prepared to contribute to class discussion by informally bringing questions that stem from the readings. If you're shy or otherwise do not enjoy speaking in public, I'd suggest writing a few questions before class and then asking them during the session or even emailing them to me. If you do not speak in class and do not email me any questions and comments before each session, your participation grade will not be above a B even if you attend all sessions.

Response Papers: These short statements should include an analysis of strengths or weaknesses of arguments made by the authors for the relevant session; 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.) You do not have to discuss all of the readings assigned for the session; you can discuss just one or two, or you can pick a broader range and compare them to each other (or to readings for other sessions). You are welcome to choose any three sessions in which to write reaction papers, though spacing things out over the quarter might be best.

Paper outline: This should be a 2-pager, including an abstract of your argument, an outline of the paper sections (including number of pages to be devoted to each section and a synopsis of their contents), and a working bibliography. The purpose is to help you develop a research project. The key to succeeding in such a project is to make your subject very focused. You want to pick an issue-area, state a clear argument, and have an idea of how you're going to go about showing that your argument is valid.

First draft of paper: Based on your paper outline, you should develop a 5-10 pages rough draft, which must contain five key elements: (i) a clear statement of the research question, (ii) a summary of your argument, (iii) a hook, showing why the question and argument are important, (iv) a systematized exposition of alternative arguments, and (v) a layout of the strategy you're going to follow in order to demonstrate how your argument is superior to the available alternatives.

Final draft of paper: Expanding on your first draft, your final paper should fully implement the research strategy delineated in your first draft and, basically, prove your point. In other words, it should be a finished research product, resembling, in shorter form, a paper published in a scholarly journal.

Each assignment should be printed in letter-size paper, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins all around, using a size 12 standard font such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman.

READINGS

The following books are required and available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore. They have also been placed on 24-hour reserve at the Regenstein Library:

- Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003);
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008);

- G. John Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002);
- Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005);
- Christopher Layne and Bradley Thayer, *American Empire: A Debate* (New York: Routledge, 2006);
- Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).

Other readings assigned for each session are available through the course website @ Chalk.

The readings below for each session are listed in the order you should do them so as to get a sense of how each discussion evolved.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1(1) [Mar. 31, 09] -- Organizational Meeting and Introduction

PART I: UNIPOLARITY, THEORY, AND STRATEGY

Week 1(2) [Apr. 02, 09] -- Is The World Unipolar? The Basis of American Preponderance

- Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, Vol. 18 (1993): 44-79;
- Barry Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security* Vol. 28, No. 1 (2003): 5-46;
- Richard K. Betts, "The Political Support System for American Primacy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (2005): 1-14.

Week 2(1) [Apr. 07, 09] -- Is Unipolarity Durable? Yes!

- William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999): 5-41;
- G. John Ikenberry, "Democracy, Institutions, and American Restraint," in Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled*, pp. 213-238;
- Thomas Risse, "U.S. Power in a Liberal Security Community," in Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled*, pp. 260-283;
- William C. Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War," *World Politics*, Vol. 61 (2008): 28-57.

Week 2(2) [Apr. 09, 09] -- Is Unipolarity Durable? No!

- Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security* Vol. 21, No. 4 (1997): 49-88;

- Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* Vol. 25, No. 1 (2000): 5-41;
- Robert Jervis, "Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective," *World Politics*, Vol. 61 (2008): 188-213.

Week 3(1) [Apr. 14, 09] -- Is Unipolarity Peaceful?

- Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World," *World Politics*, Vol. 61 (2008): 86-120;
- Jack Snyder, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, "Free Hand Abroad, Divide and Rule at Home," *World Politics*, Vol. 61 (2008): 155-187;
- Nuno P. Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," dissertation chapter, University of Chicago, 2009.

Week 3(2) [Apr. 16, 09] -- Unipolarity in a Nuclear World

- Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), selections;
- Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, "The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of US Primacy," *International Security*, Vol. 30 (2006): 7-44;
- Robert Jervis, "Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn't Matter," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94 (1979/80): 617-633.

Week 4(1) [Apr. 21, 09] -- Unipolarity and Grand Strategy I

- Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), chapters 1-3;
- William Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (The White House, February 1995), skim;
- George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (The White House, September, 2002), skim.

Week 4(2) [Apr. 23, 09] -- Unipolarity and Grand Strategy II

- Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), chapters 4-6;
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 7.

Week 5(1) [Apr. 28, 09] -- Unipolarity and Empire

- Christopher Layne and Bradley Thayer, *American Empire: A Debate* (New York: Routledge, 2006), read entire book;
- Stephen Rosen, "An Empire, If You Can Keep It," *The National Interest* (2003);
- Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, "What's at Stake in the American Empire Debate," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (2007): 253-271.

PART II: CONSTRAINTS ON AMERICAN UNIPOLARITY

Week 5(2) [Apr. 30, 09] -- The Balancing Constraint

- Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States' Unipolar Moment" *International Security* Vol. 31, No. 2 (2006);
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 2.

Week 6(1) [May 05, 09] -- The Soft-Balancing Constraint

- Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2005);
- T. V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2005);
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 3;
- Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2005): 109-139.

Week 6(2) [May 07, 09] -- The Institutional Constraint

- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "International Relations Theory and the Case against Unilateralism," *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 3, No. 3 (2005);
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 5.

Week 7(1) [May 12, 09] -- The Legitimacy Constraint

- Martha Finnemore, "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be," *World Politics*, Vol. 61 (2008): 58-85;
- Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 6.

PART III: CHALLENGES TO AMERICAN UNIPOLARITY

Week 7(2) [May 14, 09] -- The Challenge of Small Wars

- Barry Posen, "The War for Kosovo: Serbia's Political-Military Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 24 (2000): 39-84;
- 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.

Week 8(1) [May 19, 09] -- The Challenges of Small Wars (continued)

- Seth Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency," *International Security*, Vol. 32 (2008): 7-40;
- David Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail," *International Security*, Vol. 29 (2004): 49-91;
- James Fearon, "Iraq's Civil War," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2007): 2-16.

Week 8(2) [May 21, 09] -- The Challenge of Nuclear Proliferation

- 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.

Week 9(1) [May 26, 09] -- The Challenge of Non-State Actors

- 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);
- Norman Podhoretz, "World War IV: How It Started, What It Means, and Why We Have to Win," *Commentary*, September 2004: 17-54, skim;
- Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Podhoretz' Complaint," *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, No. 7 (2008).

PART IV: THE END OF AMERICAN UNIPOLARITY?

Week 9(2) [May 28, 09] -- The Rise of Peer Competitors I: China

- 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;
- Thomas 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).

Week 10(1) [Jun. 02, 09] -- The Rise of Peer Competitors II: Europe

- Charles A. Kupchan, "Hollow Hegemony or Stable Multipolarity?," in Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled*, pp. 68-97;
- Barry R. Posen, "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity," *Security Studies*, Vol., 15, No. 2 (2006).

Week 10(2) [Jun. 02, 09] -- Conclusions

- Richard Ned Lebow and Robert Kelly, "Thucydides and Hegemony: Athens and the United States," *Review of International Studies* No. 27 (2001);

Plus, read one of the following books:

- Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005);
- Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).