Political Science 717 - Fall 2018
Comparative Foreign Policy
Mondays 5:50 PM-8:35 PM in Gambrell 130

Contact Information

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Office: Gambrell Hall 312
Office hours: T 3:00 PM—5:00 PM and by appointment

About the Course

This course introduces students to the study of foreign policy. This field is large and diverse, so no course could cover everything. Keeping this limitation in mind, I have designed this course as a survey of literature addressing two broad questions. First: what influences states’ foreign policy? Second: how does international exposure—including but not limited to explicit foreign policy actions— influence foreign policy preferences and subsequent actions? This latter question in particular leads to a blurring of lines between general IR and foreign policy analysis; and these central questions invite theorizing and empirical testing. Accordingly, the course material emphasizes social science methods, paying less attention to the traditional, narrative-driven style of foreign policy analysis. We will begin the semester with theoretical readings that lay the groundwork for conceptualization of research questions. However, for the most part, we will read studies that develop and/or test empirically theories explaining the causes and consequences of state actions.

As a graduate seminar, the course is demanding: it requires significant investments of time for reading, thinking, and synthesizing; and it requires a commitment to embrace different ideas and arguments for the purpose of understanding them. The primary “learning outcome” is development of the ability to synthesize prior work towards the end of developing new research questions. This skill to identify and pursue next steps is arguably the single most important for those who seek careers in academia.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation

Like any graduate seminar, this course depends heavily on student-led discussion and analysis. I expect each student to come to class prepared to take part in the discussion of the assigned readings each week. Discussion will focus on the theoretical arguments being made in the readings, the empirical evidence that is marshaled to test these arguments, weaknesses or shortcomings of the work so far, and potential directions for future research. Given that the point of this class is to share and synthesize ideas, frequent silence during seminar will harm a student’s grade.

Readings

Mastery of the readings is an important requirement for a good grade in the course. Expect to read a substantial body of material each week. Complete the required readings before coming to the class for which they are assigned. A good strategy is to keep a reading log or notebook in which you both describe
the main arguments, evidence, research design, etc. of each article, while also recording your questions and making connections with other readings. As you read, consider the following (keeping in mind not all will apply to every reading):

- What is the research question or puzzle?
- How does this reading synthesize prior studies?
- What is the argument: what are the cause(s) and effect(s) and what logic links them?
- What hypotheses are being tested?
- What research design is used?
- How are theoretical concepts operationalized?
- What evidence is provided in support of the argument or to test the hypotheses?
- To what degree does the researcher answer the research question?
- Where does the study fit into the theoretical landscape of IR/foreign policy?

All required readings are available through online archives (e.g., JSTOR) or the course Blackboard page. Any changes to the schedule listed below will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard at least one week in advance.

Discussion Leaders and Short Papers

Each student will serve once as discussion leader for the class. The discussion leader should read the material particularly closely and develop a series of questions to facilitate discussion. I would like these (3-5) questions posted to the Blackboard discussion board by 11:59 PM on the Sunday immediately preceding the class meeting. Discussion leaders will also write a short paper (500-1,000 words each), to be submitted via Blackboard by 2 PM on the day of the class meeting. These papers should synthesize the readings, critically evaluate strengths and weaknesses (in both the theoretical and empirical contribution, where applicable), and point to ideas for future research stemming from the readings, for example, identifying a related question that has been left unanswered, or proposing an extension of the readings to a new question or research area. Alternatively, given that course readings often present general theories (or what we might call pre-theories or theoretical frameworks), students can apply these frameworks to more specific research questions of their own.

The short papers should not be mere summaries of the readings!

Course Paper

Each student will write a seminar paper to be turned in during finals week via Blackboard. There are two options for course papers.

1. **Complete research paper**: This paper includes all components of a research paper: literature review, theory, research design, and analysis – along with an introduction and conclusion. The paper must be an original contribution to the IR/foreign policy literature, although primarily empirical papers are allowed. This option should be chosen only if data is available via existing sources; ambitious coding projects are discouraged.

2. **Analytical essay**: This paper eschews original empirical research in favor of engaging and synthesizing prior work addressing a given research question towards the end of identifying worthwhile avenues for future research. Journals such as *Annual Review of Political Science* and *International Studies Review* publish these kinds of essays. As stated by *International Studies Review*, the goal of analytical essays is to “integrate scholarship, clarify debates, provide new perspectives on research, and identify new directions for the field.” Keep in mind that analytical essays are not mere summaries of prior studies.
All papers will be graded on substantive merit as well as on spelling, grammar, and style. Students will also
give a short (8-10 minute) presentation of their paper during the final class meeting. Additional information
about paper requirements and deadlines will be made available in class and on Blackboard.

Grading

Grades are tabulated as a weighted sum of: participation in seminar (including as discussion leaders) (20%), short papers (20%), and the course paper (60%). Final grades are recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% or above</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 to 89.99</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 to 84.99</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 79.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 to 74.99</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 69.99</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 to 64.99</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 60</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grades as calculated are final. There will be no extra credit. Additionally, I do not raise grades due to job or scholarship requirements, or simply because a student was close to receiving a higher grade. I will typically not respond to emails asking for this type of preferential treatment. Of course, I am willing to double-check for errors in grade calculations. Finally, I typically do not accept late assignments without (1) a credible excuse for delay and (2) advance notice that an extension is needed.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be treated as such. USC has severe penalties for cases of plagiarism. Should I determine that plagiarism has occurred, I will determine whether the seriousness of the situation warrants (1) a penalty to the assignment, up to assigning a score of 0 for the work, (2) a penalty to the course, up to assigning an ‘F,’ or (3) a more severe penalty in accordance with the approved university procedure.

Accommodating Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to participate fully in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.
Schedule

Section 1: Introduction

Week 1 (August 27): Course introduction
No required reading

Week 2 (September 3): Labor Day – class canceled
No required reading

Week 3 (September 10): Definitions and approaches

Required


Supplemental

Notes to guide reading

*Look beyond what is and is not foreign policy to the practical issue of how we can create interesting and useful theories. Also keep in mind that we will tend not focus on the “isms” for the rest of the semester, and that movement away from the Great Debates over isms does not mean that we no longer care about theory.*

**Week 4 (September 17): Levels of analysis**

**Required**


**Supplemental**


Notes to guide reading

*This week essentially continues our discussion of how one designs theories and analyses of foreign policy, while leading into subsequent weeks during which we focus on various levels of analysis. Consider how one’s theoretical interest necessarily informs one’s choice of level of analysis, and vice-versa.*

**Section 2: Sources of Foreign Policy**

**Week 5 (September 24): Systemic and multilateral sources**

**Required**


Supplemental


Notes to guide reading

*This week contains materials that could be considered among the “least foreign policy” of those we will read this semester. Keep in mind that what is or is not foreign policy can depend in large part on framing/how we interpret the implications of findings.*

Week 6 (October 1): State institutions

Required


Supplemental


Notes to guide reading

*While in future weeks we will read a lot about domestic interests and citizen attitudes, this week's readings highlight the fact that foreign policy behavior depends in large part on how those preferences are channeled into policy by political institutions.*

Week 7 (October 8): Elites and interest groups

**Required**


**Supplemental**


Notes to guide reading

The readings this week consolidate a lot of material; in later weeks, we will expand on some of the themes we cover this week.

**Week 8 (October 15): Public opinion pt 1: what shapes foreign policy attitudes?**

**Required**


**Supplemental**


Notes to guide reading

As we read last week, elites are one source of the public’s views, but the readings this week demonstrate that individual attitudes depend on a multitude of factors.
Week 9 (October 22): Public opinion pt 2: how does public opinion influence policy?

note: paper topic statement (abstract format) due at 4 PM

Required


Supplemental


Notes to guide reading

The question of how public opinion influences policy is difficult given that, as we have seen in previous weeks, there are numerous factors underlying public opinion.

Week 10 (October 29): The media

Required


Supplemental


Notes to guide reading

The role of media in foreign policy is intertwined with the roles of elites and the public. Each of these factors likely affects the others; and thus causation is difficult to identify. This material is best considered along with what we have covered over the previous three weeks.

Week 11 (November 5): Political economy

Required


Supplemental


Notes to guide reading

These readings bring us full circle back to a focus on largely structural, multilateral, and even systemic factors underlying foreign policy. However, this week includes more focus on market structures, and involves methods and approaches taken from the field of economics.

Section 3: Foreign Policy Issues and Tools (primarily recent contributions)

Week 12 (November 12): Security policy and armed conflict

Required

Supplemental


Notes to guide reading

*Just about everything we read over the next three weeks could have fit somewhere in the previous nine. Security policy is a massive topic, so I have narrowed our focus primarily to (some) factors underlying the decision to use force.*

Week 13 (November 19): Trade policy and economic sanctions

Required


Supplemental

Notes to guide reading

Trade (along with other economic ties) is both an issue states must address when designing foreign policy (with a lot of second-image-reversed implications), and, at least for some, a means of influencing other states. Also, when reading about sanctions as a policy tool, consider that “effectiveness” could mean a lot of different things, not simply target acquiescence to the sender’s demand.

Week 14 (November 26): Human rights, democracy, and development–promotion via carrots and sticks

Required


Supplemental


**Notes to guide reading**

*This is another week with a lot of material. Keep in mind that state motivation is particularly important if we want to understand the effectiveness (or more generally the consequences) of a given policy.*

**Week 15 (December 3): Research Presentations**

No required reading

*Final paper due on December 12, 2018 at 5 PM*