PSC 76400: Security Studies  
Political Science Program, CUNY Graduate Center  
Prof. Peter Liberman  
Fall 2014 Syllabus

Meets: Thursday 4:15-6:15, Room 3308  
Graduate Center Office: 5206, tel. (212) 817-8693 (no messages)  
Office hours: Thursday 3:00-4:00 pm or by appointment  
Email: liberman@qc.cuny.edu [note: that’s not .gc, but .qc for Queens College]

Course Description and Learning Goals

This course examines contemporary theory-testing research in security studies. Topics examined include the sources of peace and war, coercion, strategy, arms races, alliances, and international institutions designed to control arms and conflict. The focus is on states, but we will also examine insurgencies and terrorism insofar as these have international reach. The works studied represent diverse methodologies and theoretical approaches; each week’s readings address a common question (or a set of related questions) using different theories and methods. The course also will provide a helpful overview of the international security subfield, making it useful preparation for the IR First Exam.

The course has the following learning goals:

• To familiarize students with a wide range of leading theories on international security issues.
• To expose students to multiple methodological approaches employed in contemporary international relations research.
• To enhance students’ ability to critically analyze political science research, especially in the field of international security.
• To enhance students theoretical reasoning and their writing, verbal communication, critical thinking, and methodological skills.
• To prepare students to answer International Security questions on the PhD First Exam in International Relations.

Overview of Topics and Sessions

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<td>1. Overview and introduction</td>
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<td>2. Security studies and disasters</td>
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<td>3. Alliances</td>
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<td>4. Sources of military doctrine</td>
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<td>10/2</td>
<td>5. Nuclear proliferation</td>
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<td>6. Nuclear peace?</td>
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<td>9. Causes of war</td>
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<td>10. Realisms</td>
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Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown

1. Careful reading of all the required assignments before the class meetings and active contribution to class discussion. (25%)
2. 20-page literature review (50% of grade) on a security studies topic chosen by student, after consultation with instructor. The review should go beyond the required readings. The review should identify a central research question, discuss major contributions, identify theoretical and/or empirical flaws, limitations, or unanswered questions, and suggest ways paths for future research to improve these shortcomings. Topic must be chosen by 10/2, students must meet to discuss with instructor by 11/6, paper due 12/11.
3. Final exam, 2 hours in length (25%). Timed in-class essay, drawing on course readings. Students will be given a set of questions and will choose one to answer. Useful for all students for reviewing and mastering subject material, and also useful preparation for the PhD First Exam.

General Questions for Reading and Discussion

The course will pay special attention to hypothesis-testing methods in security studies. In preparing for course discussion you should address the following questions:

1. Arrow diagram the hypotheses tested. How sound are the deductions?
2. What, if any, are the boundary conditions of the hypothesized effects?
3. Does the author select appropriate alternative explanations?
4. Is the selection of historical cases or quantitative data sets appropriate? Why or why not?
5. What other cases or comparisons might have helped test the hypotheses? If you wanted to conduct a challenging test for the theory, what approach would you take?
6. Do the author’s measures accurately reflect the variables used in the theory?
7. Does the author use evidence fairly or selectively?

Course Readings

The reading assignments for each week are specified below, under “Agenda.” Some of these reading assignments may be changed, with at least 2 weeks advance notice, to accommodate students’ interests. Additional suggested readings are provided at the end of the syllabus, divided by issue area.

In order to cover more ground, most of the course readings are articles from peer-reviewed journals rather than books. Some readings not available in book form or online will
also be placed on Blackboard (marked “BB” on the syllabus). Most of the articles are available through the library’s full-text online journal databases, and can be easily accessed from the library website (http://library.gc.cuny.edu). Some articles in the syllabus have URLs, but these change from time to time and may no longer work. Google Scholar is an efficient way to obtain the readings, especially if you have logged in and set Mina Rees to be a preferred library. (It is also a very useful research tool to identify influential articles and works that have cited them.) In tracking down readings and doing research, students are encouraged to tap the expertise of Mina Rees librarians, particularly Stephen Klein, the Political Science subject librarian (sklein@gc.cuny.edu; 212-817-7074), as well as to speak to me.

To those of you unfamiliar with Blackboard, you access it by first going to the CUNY Portal (at www.cuny.edu). Click on "Portal Log-in" on left. If you don't already have a CUNY Portal Username and Password, you can obtain them here using your GC User ID and password. Once you've logged in to the portal, click on the "Blackboard” button on the left side under “Applications/Resources.” When your Blackboard page opens, click on “International Security” from the list of courses on the right hand side.

We will be reading substantial portions of the below texts, so they are recommended for purchase, and I have requested that they be placed on short-term reserve at the Mina Rees Library.


Agenda

1. Introduction: What is security studies, and how should it be studied? Discussion of student and professor interests and background.

2. Security studies and disasters
3. Alliances


4. Sources of military doctrine


5. Causes of nuclear proliferation


6. Nuclear peace?

7. Military coercion

8. Credibility and reputation

9. Causes of war

10. Realism

11. Institutions and norms


12. Public Opinion on War and Peace


• Liberman, “Mistaken and Redirected Retribution in U.S. Public Support for War Against Iraq,” unpub ms. BB


13. Military occupation, insurgency, regime change


14. Terrorism


15. Final Exam

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

*Suggested on the nature and importance of security studies*

• Pinar Bilgin, "The ‘Western-Centrism’of Security Studies:‘Blind Spot’or Constitutive Practice?," *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 6 (2010).
• Miller, "The Hegemonic Illusion? Traditional Strategic Studies in Context."

*Notorious security blunders*

• Jeffrey Record, *Japan's Decision for War in 1941: Some Enduring Lessons* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2009).

*Suggested introductions to methods*


**Realism**

**Alliances**
• Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks."
• Levy and Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?"
• Walt, "Alliance Formation."

Coercion, signaling, and credibility
• Press, *Calculating Credibility*.

Threat perceptions

Conventional deterrence:
• John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Cornell, 1983).

War Termination:


**Offense-defense theory**


**Nuclear deterrence**


**War- and peace-prone states**

- Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*.

**War-and peace-prone leaders**


**Are democracies tougher? Smarter?**


Public opinion on war and peace
• Drezner, "Realist Tradition."

International norms and force


Sources of military doctrine


• Murray, "Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition before the First World War."


• Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations."


Nuclear proliferation


**International Institutions and Transnational Actors (see also alliances)**


• Russett and Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*, chap. 5.


**Military Occupation, Insurgency, Nation-building**


• Downes and Monten, "Forced to Be Free?: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization."


• Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad."


• Lyall, "Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents? Reassessing Democracy's Impact on War Outcomes and Duration."


• Douglas Porch, "The Dangerous Myths and Dubious Promise of Coin," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 2 (2011).


### Terrorism


• Michael Doran, “The Pragmatic Fanaticism of al Qaeda,” *Political Science Quarterly* (Fall 2002), 171-90.

• Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad."
http://journals.cambridge.org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/abstract_S0020818309990233


• Tessler and Robbins, "What Leads."

Unipolarity and U.S. grand strategy


