

**PSCI 3107A**  
**The Causes of War**  
**Tuesday, Thursday 11:35 – 2:25**  
**Please confirm location on Carleton Central**

**Instructor:** Dr. Brian C. Schmidt  
**Office:** D690 Loeb  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday 9:30-11:00, Thursday 2:30-4:00  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

From its inception to the present day, the study of war has been a major preoccupation of the field of International Relations. One of the primary justifications for establishing a separate field of International Relations was that no other academic discipline made the study of war its central focus. There are a number of valid reasons for studying war, but perhaps most fundamentally is the fact that sovereign states frequently do engage in systematic, large-scale interstate warfare. The twentieth century, for example, has been described as the most murderous in recorded history with an estimated 187 million battle-related deaths. And while the character of war might be changing, the twenty-first century has so far not been a pacific one.

The fundamental objective of this course is to familiarize students with a number of different theoretical perspectives on the origins of large-scale inter-state war. Throughout the semester, we will attempt to answer the “why war” question. There literally is enough literature about war to fill a considerable portion of a college library. To help sort through the literature, the course will employ Kenneth Waltz’s levels of analysis framework for understanding the causes of war. Our investigation of the cause of war will focus on the role of individuals, domestic politics, and the international system.

**Course Texts**

There are two required texts for the course. All of the texts are available for purchase at the Carleton University Bookstore. The required texts as well as the other assigned readings have been placed on reserve in the library, both through course reserve and ARES (reserve readings are indicated on the syllabus with an **R**).

Students are expected to complete all of the assigned reading prior to attending class. Your ability to complete the course successfully is dependent on reading and understanding all of the assigned material.

1. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (Columbia University Press, 2001).
2. Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, *Causes of War* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

## Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined on the following basis:

- Short Quizzes 15%
- Paper assignment (June 4) 35%
- Final Exam (June 19 – 25) 50%

## Explanations

**Short Quizzes:** There will be approximately 3 – 5 unannounced short quizzes that will be administered at the start of class. The questions will be based on the assigned reading for that day. If you do not know the answer, submit a piece of paper with your name on it because you will at least receive some credit. You must be present to take a quiz -- there are no make-up quizzes and only those with a medical note or family emergency will be excused.

You do have the option of completing a short, two-page review of one of the videos that I will be showing in class. The review of the video should include an explicit attempt to connect the content of the video to the theme of the lecture and the assigned reading. The grade that you receive on your video review will be used to replace one of your quiz grades. If you select this option, the video you review is due one week after the video was shown in class.

## Paper Assignment Due on June 4:

The paper assignment (10-12 typed, double-spaced pages) requires you to select a specific theory of the cause of war (e.g. misperception, power transition theory, democratic peace, economic imperialism, diversionary war theory) and provide an in-depth description and analysis of the theory you selected. Your task is to provide a “state of the art” on the theory you selected. To complete this task you must find **three** academic articles, or book chapters, or books that actually utilize, discuss, explain, apply, critique, or attempt to build-on the theory you selected. The description and analysis of the theory you have chosen to review is to be facilitated by reading and reviewing the three sources that you have chosen to use in this assignment. In many ways, this assignment is a literature review of a specific theory of the cause of war. Thus you should clearly identify the sources that you are using, including the author’s name and the title of her article, chapter, or book that you are reviewing. You are encouraged to compare and contrast how the authors you have selected are employing the theory. The questions that you might attempt to answer include:

- What does the author say about the theory?
- What is the independent, causal variable?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the theory?
- How has the theory been used to explain specific cases (such as the outbreak of World War I)?
- Is the theory progressive or degenerating?
- Is the theory being amended or modified to account for new developments and/or puzzles?

- What are the intellectual origins of theory?
- How does the theory advance the field of International Relations?
- What contribution does the theory make to on-going debates about the cause of war?
- What level of analysis does the theory adhere to?
- What methods are applicable to the theory being discussed?
- How well does the theory help to explain or understand war?
- What type of evidence is used to assess the theory?
- Why did the author write her article or chapter?
- What do you think about theory that you have selected?

Examples of some of the theories that you may select:

Misperception  
 Prospect Theory  
 Diversionary War Theory  
 Power Transition Theory  
 Defensive Realism  
 Offensive Realism  
 Democratic Peace Theory  
 Just War Theory  
 Nationalism and War  
 Enduring rivalries  
 Feminist theories of war  
 Preventive War  
 Preemptive War  
 Alliances and war  
 Security dilemma, spiral model  
 Rationalist theories of war  
 Offense-Defense Theory  
 Balance of Power Theory

**Final Exam:** The final exam will test your knowledge of all the major theories, ideas, concepts, and wars that we have studied throughout the term. The exam is comprehensive and will include all of the material outlined in the syllabus. You are responsible for all of the material that has been assigned in the course outline, discussed in the lectures, and found in the various movies that we will be viewing. The exam will consist of short-answer, identification questions and essay questions. More information about the exam will be provided at the end of the semester. The exam will take place during the university-scheduled exam period (June 19 - 25).

### **Other Guidelines**

To obtain credit in this course, students must meet all of the course requirements: failure to complete all of the assignments will result in a failing grade for the course.

Late assignments will be downgraded one letter-grade category per day; for example, a B+ paper, one day late, will receive a B.

## **Course Schedule**

\*(R) on reserve in the library

### **May 5 Course Introduction**

Video: Deadly Game of Nations

### **May 7 Explaining and Understanding War**

Waltz, Preface, ch. 1.

Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, ch. 1

Jack Levy, "War and Peace" in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A.

Simmons eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002). (R)

### **May 12 Image I: Individuals as the Cause of War**

Waltz, chs. 2 and 3

Daniel Byman and Kenneth Polack "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesmen Back In," *International Security* (Vol. 25, No. 4, 2001): 107-46.(R)

Video: Inside the Mind of Adolf Hitler

### **May 14 Rational and Irrational Decision-making**

Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, chs. 5-6.

John Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed., ch. 10. (R)

Video: The Fog of War

### **May 19 Image II: Domestic Politics and War**

Waltz, ch. 4

Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, ch. 4.

### **May 21 Democracy and War/Dyadic Interactions**

Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, chs. 3, 4 (104-117)

Bruce Russett, "Why Democratic Peace?" in Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 82-115 (R).

Sebastian Rosato, "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory," *American Political Science Review* (Vol. 97, No. 4, Nov. 2003): 585-602. (R)

Video: Truth, War and Consequences

### **May 26 Imperialism and War**

Waltz, ch. 5

Levy and Thompson, ch. 4 (85-93)

V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939) chs. 5-7 (R)

Video: Blood and Oil

## **May 28 Realism and War**

Waltz: chs. 6 and 7

Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, ch. 2

Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," in Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb eds., *The Origins and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 39-52 (R) Also available in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 615-628. (R)

Video: Six Days of June: The War that Redefined the Middle East

## **June 2 Hegemonic Theories and Preventive War**

Levy and Thompson, ch. 2 (43-50).

Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), Introduction, ch. 1(R)

Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War," in Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb eds., *The Origins and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 15-37 (R) Also available in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 591-613. (R)

## **June 4 Security Dilemma and Defensive and Offensive Realism**

John J. Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). (R)

Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* (Vol. 50, No. 2, 1997): 171-201. (R)

## **June 9 World War I**

Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Cornell University Press, 2000), chs. 4-5. (R)

John Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed., ch. 1 (R)

Video: The Great War: Explosion and Stalemate

June 11

## The Iraq War

Robert Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* (Vol. 118, No. 3, 2003) (R)

John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "An Unnecessary War," *Foreign Policy* (January/February 2003) (R)

Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "What to do about Iraq," *The Weekly Standard* (January 21, 2002) (R)

Video: *The World According to Bush*

June 16

## Conclusion – Why War?

Waltz, ch. 7

Levy and Thompson, ch. 8

### Academic Accommodations

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

**For Religious Observance:** Students requesting accommodation for religious observances should apply in writing to their instructor for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event.

Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Instructors and students may contact an Equity Services Advisor for assistance ([www.carleton.ca/equity](http://www.carleton.ca/equity)).

**For Pregnancy:** Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. Then, make an appointment to discuss your needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

**Plagiarism:** The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

**Oral Examination:** At the discretion of the instructor, students may be required to pass a brief oral examination on research papers and essays.

**Submission and Return of Term Work:** Papers must be handed directly to the instructor and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day's date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to have your assignment returned by mail. Please note that assignments sent via fax or email will not be accepted. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

**Grading:** Assignments and exams will be graded with a percentage grade. To convert this to a letter grade or to the university 12-point system, please refer to the following table.

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

**Grades:** Final grades are derived from the completion of course assignments. Failure to write the final exam will result in the grade ABS. Deferred final exams are available ONLY if the student is in good standing in the course.

**Approval of final grades:** Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

**Connect Email Accounts:** All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via Connect. Important course and University information is also distributed via the Connect email system. It is the student's responsibility to monitor their Connect account.

**Carleton Political Science Society:** The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. Holding social events, debates, and panel discussions, CPSS aims to involve all political science students in the after-hours academic life at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through numerous opportunities which will complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, please email [carletonpss@gmail.com](mailto:carletonpss@gmail.com), visit our website at [poliscisociety.com](http://poliscisociety.com), or come to our office in Loeb D688.

**Official Course Outline:** The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.