

PSCI 3107A
The Causes of War
Monday 2:35 p.m. – 5:25 p.m.
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Dr. Brian C. Schmidt
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I. 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 several 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 several different theoretical perspectives on the origins of large-scale inter-state war. Throughout the semester, we will attempt to answer the question “why war”? There literally is enough literature about the cause of war to fill a considerable portion of a 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.

In addition to examining theories that focus on the cause of war, we will also examine a few specific case studies such as World War I and the Iraq War. The research paper that you are responsible for will result in you becoming an expert in a specific war of your choosing. We will also review a number of videos to illustrate some of the major themes of the course and to consider additional cases.

II. Course Format

This class will be “face to face” meeting on Mondays from 2:35pm to 5:25pm. I will be presenting a formal lecture on the assigned material. There will be opportunities for discussion and asking questions. On the dates when a video has been assigned, we will end class early to

give you the opportunity to watch and respond to the video. I will be utilizing PowerPoint slides, and these will be posted on Brightspace.

III. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Explain the different theoretical explanations of the cause of war
- Differentiate the competing explanations of war based on Waltz's three-images
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the competing theories of war
- Demonstrate how the different theories can be used to explain a particular war
- Critique and defend the different theories of war
- Recognize historical facts and interpretations of the cause of specific wars.

IV. Course Texts

Course Texts

There are two required texts for the course. The course 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. All of the articles and book chapters can be accessed on-line through the Carleton University library website (<http://catalogue.library.carleton.ca>) and through ARES, which can be found on the Brightspace site for this course.

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

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

V. Evaluation at a Glance

Your final grade will be determined on the following basis:

- Video reflections 15%
- Research Paper Proposal (**October 16**) 15%
- Research Paper (**December 4**) 35%
- Final Exam (scheduled during the formal exam period, December 10-22) 35%

VI. Evaluation in Detail

Video Reflections: You are responsible for submitting three different video reflections. Each of the videos can be accessed via the links provided on Brightspace, library reserves on ARES, YouTube, and your own ingenuity. No matter what videos you select to review, they are due within 48 hours of their assigned date. For example, if you chose to review *The Mind of Adolf Hitler* (September 25), the assignment would be due on September 27 11:59pm. Each reflection should be between 300-500 words. When reflecting on the video, the main objective is to link the video to the course material.

- *What did the movie tell you about TOPIC X [that we just discussed]? How was the movie portrayal same/different from how it was discussed in class?*
- *What concept/event/person/etc. did the movie clarify for you? What did it raise questions about?*
- *Based on the course material and the video, list and define three relevant terms/concepts.*

Paper proposal: You are required to turn in a 3-4 page paper proposal that clearly indicates the specific war that you have selected to research. You should identify the main combatants and attempt to ascertain the main issues that led to the war – what was this war all about? You should provide some of the background information concerning your war (a brief historical description of the conflict). A provisional bibliography of books and articles that you will be consulting should be included in your proposal.

The paper proposal is due on **October 16, 2023**. Students must have their paper proposal and war accepted before they can turn-in a final paper. If your proposal is not accepted, you will have seven days to re-submit a new proposal. After that time, a penalty of one letter-grade per day will be imposed (B+ to B).

Research Paper: You are required to write a 12 - 15 page research paper, in which you describe a war of your choice, review contending explanations of this war's origins, and relate these explanations to the theories covered in the course. You must select and utilize two different theories of war and apply them to the war you have chosen to research. **The paper is due on December 4, 2023.** In order to receive credit for taking the course, you must submit a research paper; if you do not submit a research paper you will automatically fail the course. A more detailed description of the paper assignment is attached to this syllabus.

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 covered in the course 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 (**December 10 – 22**).

VII. Other Guidelines

- To obtain credit in this course, students must complete all of the course requirements. Failure to complete all the assignments will automatically 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.

VIII. Course Schedule

Week 1 (September 11) Course Introduction

Video: The Deadly Game of Nations by Gwynne Dyer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFidgrRy6qM&pp=ygUWZGVhZGx5IGdhdWUgb2YgdmF0aW9ucw%3D%3D>

Week 2 (September 18) Explaining and Understanding War

Waltz, Preface, ch. 1.

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

Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York: Penguin, 1986), Book I, chs. 1-3)

Jack Levy, "War and Peace" in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002).

Week 3 (September 25) 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.

Video: Inside the Mind of Adolf Hitler

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8DTUOmueRU&t=55s&pp=ygUfSW5zaWRlIHRob2ZSBtaW5kIG9mIEFkb2xmIGhpdGxlcg%3D%3D>

Week 4 (October 2) Rational and Irrational Decision-making

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

John G. Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, 10th ed. (Thomson Wadsworth, 2008) ch. 10.

Jack Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems," *World Politics* (Vol. 36, No. 1, Oct.1983), pp.76-99.

Video: The Fog of War <https://youtu.be/KqJGoyZBa4g>

Week 5 (October 9) No class/holiday

Week 6 (October 16) Image II: Domestic Politics and War

Waltz, chs. 4-5.

Levy and Thompson, ch. 4.

Week 7 (October 23) No class/reading week

Week 8 (October 30) Democracy and War/Dyadic Interactions

Levy and Thompson, 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.

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

Week 9 (November 6) Realism and War

Waltz: chs. 6 and 7.

Marc Trachtenberg, "Realism: A Historian's View," *Security Studies* 13, 1 (Autumn 2003): 156-194.

Week 10 (November 13) Structural Realism and War

Levy and Thompson, 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: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 39-52. Also available in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 615-628.

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): 71-88.

Video: Six Days in June

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSKchepSHxw&t=25s&pp=ygUQC2l4IGRheXMgaW4ganVuZQ%3D%3D>

Week 11 (November 20) Dynamic Differentials Theory and WW I

Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), chs. 1, 4.
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. Also available in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 591-613.

Video: The First World War 1914-1918

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMCEK7pJvZg&list=PLAL84qjNOq_bniVYjC6I9IHHYepbG-uLM

Week 12 (November 27)

Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China

Graham Allison, "Thucydides Trap"

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>

David Kang and Xinru Ma, "Power Transitions: Thucydides Didn't Live in East Asia," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol 41, 1 (2018): 137-154.

Ronald L. Tammen, Jacek Kugler, Douglas Lemke et al., *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century*. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2000, ch. 1 (pp. 3-43).

Video: John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Era of Great Power Conflict"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6MWNrTc3A&ab_channel=HiddenForces

Week 13 (December 4)

The Iraq War: Preventive or Pre-emptive?

Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, 10th ed. ch. 9.

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

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

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

Jack S. Levy, "Preventive War and the Bush Doctrine," in Stanley A. Renshon and Peter Suedfeld eds., *Understanding the Bush Doctrine: Psychology and Strategy in an Age of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2007): 175-200.

Video: The World According to Bush <https://youtu.be/58Bxb0qaIRA>

Week 13 (December 8)

Conclusion – Why War?

Waltz, ch. 8.

Levy and Thompson, ch. 8.

Research Paper Assignment

The writing assignment asks you to choose and study a war that you find interesting. Since the course focuses on theories of inter-state war, you are strongly encouraged to select an international war rather than an intra-state war. If you are unsure of which war to study, please come and see me early in the semester. After you have selected a war, your paper should do the following three things:

- Describe the essential facts of the case that you have selected. Who fought whom? When? Where? Over what? What were the main circumstances that led to the outbreak of the war you have selected? What were the immediate conditions? What were the underlying causes? If you select a protracted war, you should focus on a specific phase of the war; the origins of the conflict.
- Select, discuss, and elaborate two different theories of the cause of war. What do these theories focus on to explain the outbreak of war? What variable does the theory isolate? What is the theoretical argument being made to explain war? You must identify the authors of the theories that you are using. Who are the authors associated with each theoretical interpretation? Be sure that you identify at least two distinct theoretical interpretations of the war's origins, and the chief author(s) associated with each of them. You need to select two contrasting theories of war and apply them to your specific case.
- Apply the two theories to the war that you have selected to research. How well do the theories that you have selected help to explain your war? This part of the assignment requires you to be familiar with some of the historical literature on your war. You need to review the historical literature on the origins of your chosen war. What are the major contending interpretations of the outbreak of the war? Who are the authors associated with each interpretation? Consider to what extent the interpretations identified in the literature that you have been reading correspond to the different theoretical perspectives covered in the course. Does your war confirm, or disconfirm, or otherwise speak to claims, hypotheses, propositions, theories or accounts of the cause of war that you have encountered during the semester? How do the theories that you have selected help to explain your war? Is one theory more relevant or superior to the other? You need to apply the theories that you have selected to your specific case and assess how well the historical details of the war can be explained by each of the two different theories. In your evaluation, please be sure that you make reference to specific authors.

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
Marxist theories of imperialism
Enduring rivalries
Feminist theories of war
Preventive War, Pre-emptive War
Alliances and war
Security dilemma, spiral model
Rationalist theories of war
Offense-Defence Theory
Balance of Power Theory

Further instructions and details:

While I will be looking to see that you have covered each of the three things listed above, there is a great deal of freedom in how you actually write the paper. But be sure to avoid the tendency of turning the paper into simply a historical narrative of the events of your chosen war. History is never neutral, and you should strive to identify the theoretical and analytical framework of the books and articles that you have selected. You might want to provide contrasting factual accounts of the war that correspond to the different theoretical perspectives that you are utilizing. You will likely have to be creative in this exercise and determine how the theories that we have discussed in class actually relate to the war you have selected. How do you appraise one theoretical account as being superior to another? As you work on this assignment, please keep in mind that it is both a historical and theoretical enterprise. And once again, I am looking for two contrasting theoretical explanations of the war that you have chosen to study.

Writing is a very important skill, and you should strive to write the best paper that you can. The paper should adhere to all of the rules and requirements of written composition. Paragraph development, grammar, punctuation, spelling, citations, title page, overall appearance are all important and will be taken into account when I grade your paper. Edit and proofread your paper before submitting it. Do not let yourself lose crucial points because of spelling and punctuation errors.

It is extremely important to cite properly the sources you draw upon for facts and/or interpretation. You need to document all quotations and scholarly borrowing from other authors by careful footnoting. To avoid plagiarism, do not paraphrase or cite passages from other published sources without giving full credit to them. When you quote from an author be sure that you use quotation marks and cite the work and page number where the quotation can be located (beware, I do check). This should not be a mystery. A good writing manual will explain all the procedures for documenting a research paper. Take a careful look at the exemplary endnote format used in Copeland's *Origins of Major War*.

While web sources might be helpful to you, be sure that you are clear about the source of the material. If you do use a web source, be sure that you document it properly. This is an academic exercise and you should be consulting scholarly books and journal articles. When you do make reference to a particular source, you should strive to identify the author(s) (e.g. According to

A.J.P. Taylor, “international anarchy was an underlying reason for the outbreak of WW II.”). In addition to identifying the relevant theories to understand the war you have selected; you will need to support your theories with the facts of your case. How does theory help us to understand the specific historical details of your chosen case? Identifying and utilizing the best sources for understanding your war is crucial to a successful paper. This is often a time-consuming process, and you should begin it early.

IX. Appendix

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

- **Carleton Resources:**

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

- **Off Campus Resources:**

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy accommodation: Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a

formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

Religious accommodation: Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Accommodations for students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation, or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, reach out to your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, [click here](#).

Accommodation for student activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and to the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who engage in student activities at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more information, please [click here](#).

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline.

Sexual Violence Policy

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated. Survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Carleton's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) addresses academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, misrepresentation, impersonation, withholding of records, obstruction/interference, disruption of instruction or examinations, improper access to and/or dissemination of information, or violation of test and examination rules. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's academic integrity rules.

Plagiarism

The Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes 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. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, websites, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- Using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- Submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor in a particular course, any use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to produce assessed content (e.g., text, code, equations, image, summary, video, etc.) is considered a violation of academic integrity standards.

Procedures in Cases of Suspected Violations

Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy are serious offences which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. When an instructor suspects a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, the Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the assignment/exam in question or a final grade of "F" for the course. More information on the University’s Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

Intellectual property

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Submission and Return of Term Work

Papers must be submitted directly to the instructor according to the instructions in the course outline. The departmental office will not accept assignments submitted in hard copy.

Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

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

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.

Carleton E-mail Accounts

All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via official Carleton University e-mail accounts and/or Brightspace. As important course and university information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton University email accounts and Brightspace.

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. By hosting social events, including Model Parliament, debates, professional development sessions and more, CPSS aims to involve all political science students 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 our networking opportunities, academic engagement initiatives and numerous events which aim to complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, visit us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CarletonPoliticalScienceSociety/>.

Official Course Outline

The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.