Syllabus | DSS 5312: War and Peace in the 21st Century

Instructor | **Dr. Charles Larratt-Smith**
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Technical Support | **UTEP Helpdesk at (915)747-5257 or helpdesk@utep.edu**
Course Dates | March 17th – May 7th, 2025
Classes | **Fully Online**

****** Please Note!** This Syllabus is subject to change – please let me know if you spot any errors ******

Instructor & Course Introduction

Welcome to DSS 5312: War and Peace. This course provides a general overview on the causes, dynamics, and outcomes of armed in the contemporary context. It seeks to provide the theoretical, empirical, and analytical tools for students to explain why such conflicts happen, what distinguishes different types of armed conflict, who fights them (and who are affected by them and how), how they are fought, and why some are resolved through either diplomacy (e.g. peace negotiations) or force (e.g. counterinsurgency), while others have proven far more difficult to resolve. In this course, students will first define what is war (and what it is not) and will also learn about the different theories in the social sciences that study the origins of armed conflict. We will look at factors such as international relations, identity, political economy, and self-interest, and how these can motivate groups of people to mobilize violently against others.

About me. I am originally from Toronto. In 2007, I obtained my BA in Puerto Rican and Latino Studies from Brooklyn College (CUNY), and later my MA in International Relations from the City College of New York (CUNY) in 2010. Subsequently, I embarked upon my PhD in Political Science (Comparative Politics and International Relations) at the University of Toronto which I completed in 2020. My doctoral research examined the subnational variation in counterinsurgency outcomes in Colombia between 1997 and 2012, and broadly speaking, my research interests include armed conflict, violence, armed non-state actors, organized crime, and transnational migration. I have lived and worked in Canada, the United States, South Korea, Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico. Although I have previously taught university level courses at a wide array of academic institutions, this is my second year working and teaching at the Department of Criminal Justice and Security Studies at UTEP and I am looking forward to interacting and sharing my research and experiences with you all over the coming semester.

Contacting Me

- You can email me directly. I will always try and respond to you within 48 hours, although more often than not I will respond sooner than this. **Please note that I do not check the messages sent through Blackboard with the same frequency so it is always best to email me directly through Microsoft Outlook using your institutional email so to ensure it arrives in my inbox.**
- We can also set up Zoom, Teams, or Blackboard Collaborate sessions to meet virtually. Please email me to arrange an online meeting at a mutually convenient time.

Information in the Syllabus

This Syllabus document gives a core overview of the course, including a clear breakdown of each Module; its required readings, core questions, and work due.

Online Classroom

We will use Blackboard as our online classroom., I'll post all the necessary course materials and module materials on here.

- There are modules for each week, with lecture videos, readings, and other materials posted.
- All of your weekly assignments will be uploaded to Blackboard, as you will also upload all of your assignments here.

Course Description

The course reviews theories exploring the causes of armed conflicts, the different dynamics of these conflicts, and how these are resolved through peaceful or forceful means. Drawing on a wide range of disciplines and perspectives, including political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and economics, this course offers an introduction to diverse approaches to conflict onset, conflict resolution, and post-conflict state-building. Case studies and real-world examples are used to help students apply the conceptual tools they acquire to prominent conflicts.

The class largely develops thematically, exposing students to a range of canonical literature and contemporary research from a variety of social science backgrounds, with a strong emphasis given to Political Science. The students are expected to understand the general theoretical debates between scholars that are included in this syllabus, and then apply it to particular cases throughout the world. In sum, the ultimate goal of this course is to provide students with the context necessary to understand why armed conflicts happen, who participates in them, and under what conditions they can be resolved.

Learning Objectives

The main aim of the course is to structure and broaden students' understanding of historical and contemporary strategic issues and academic debates, and to give them the critical and analytical tools to do so. Through our work together, and most importantly your own independent research, thinking, and analysis, you will be expected to have a strong understanding of the key ground we will cover. On completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate:

- A comprehensive definition of what armed conflict is and what it is not
- Knowledge of what causes conflict onset
- Understanding of the key debates in this literature
- Ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate different conflict dynamics related to inter and intra-state conflicts, armed mobilization, recruitment, repertoires of violence, counterinsurgency, paramilitarism, peacemaking, foreign intervention and post-conflict state-building and peacekeeping efforts

Course Module Breakdown

Here is a simple breakdown of the weekly module topics on the course.

Week	Module	Class Start
1	The Origins of Conflict	03/17
2	Systemic Warfare	03/24
3	The Decline in Interstate Conflicts	03/31
4	Intrastate Conflicts (Civil War)	04/07
5	Insurgent Mobilization	04/14
6	Counterinsurgent Responses & Conflict Outcomes	04/21
7	Transnational Conflicts, Foreign Intervention, and Peace	04/28

Task Breakdown, Due Dates, and Overall Grading

Tasks within the course are below.

Activity	% of Overall Grade	Due Date
Student Introduction (x1)	5%	03/23 (11:59pm)
Content Analysis (x4)	40% (10% each)	03/30; 04/06; 04/20; 04/27 (11:59pm)
Midterm Assignment	20%	04/13 (11:59pm)
Policy Brief	35%	05/07 (11:59pm)
TOTAL	100%	

The *overall* achieved grades will be given numerically in percentages on the UTEP grading scale:

59 ⬇ (F) | 60-69 (D) | 70-79 [C] | 80-89 (B) | 90-100 (A)

Course Expectations and Key Advice

My expectations of you

My expectations are straightforward - I expect you to try your best on this course, keep to deadlines - or keep me informed if you need some extra time - and complete the work required. This course relies on the participation of all the people in the class to make it successful. The pace of these 7-module courses is frenetic and requires significant motivation and self-discipline.

As this is a graduate course, the reading is quite extensive, and very important. This is the key thing I expect each week – for you to have completed some of the required reading. This reading, and some extra effort, is key to your graded assignments. Indeed, reading is the key to success. In my experience,

there is almost always a correlation between those who demonstrate they have read carefully and widely during the course and those who obtain the highest marks.

What you can expect of me

You should expect flexibility from me and understanding of any situations that might impact your work. You should always feel comfortable approaching me for help, guidance, and advice. If you do need something, let me know. I will endeavor to respond to any email queries within 48 hours, but will normally respond quicker. Additionally, I encourage you to contact me about your assignment topics early on. I will also be understanding of personal circumstances affecting work and deadlines if these are communicated beforehand. I am committed to providing assessment feedback and grades within one week of the due date. In the event of any delay, I will let you know as soon as possible, and in certain cases deadlines for you will be adjusted accordingly.

Expectations of each other

If there is anything you are unsure of, please let me know. If you require content-related help and support, please reach out and try to be courteous in all online communication. If you are confused about something, you can of course contact me directly anytime. I will aim to help with content, and with any situations that are affecting or likely to affect your work. I am always available in some shape or form.

Late Policies

As this course lasts only seven weeks, it is essential to be organized and manage your time wisely. However, if, because of work, illness or family emergency, you find yourself struggling to keep up with what is expected, please email me as soon as possible. I know that on occasion life does of course intrude on other plans. As I mentioned above, I am aware that you have existing commitments and responsibilities. I will be flexible if you communicate with me before key deadlines.

If you require an extension on course work because of extenuating work, health or family reasons, email me at least 12 hours before the relevant assignment deadline. Briefly explain your situation and request an extension of a specific length (e.g. 1-2 days). I will reply as soon as possible. Depending on the case, you may need to submit supporting documentation such as a doctor's note.

In cases where an extension has not been arranged and no contact has been made between me and the student, work submitted late will be subject to a penalty of 5% per day.

Assignments will not be accepted after they are five days late and there has been no communication between us; they will be given a grade of 0.

Again, I will work with you on these issues. I know how busy you all are in the MDSS program, often with full time work commitments and everything else life throws at us. All I ask is that you make sure you let me know what is going on, and I will do my best to accommodate you.

Academic Integrity

As a UTEP student, you are expected to demonstrate academic integrity. You must properly identify and provide references for all material that you quote or paraphrase.

Cheating, plagiarism and collusion are all violations of the UTEP **Handbook of Operating Procedures.** Again, for more on this see the relevant section of the **Curriculum and Classroom Policies**. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for disciplinary action.

NOTE: Large tracts of texts copied verbatim, even if you have a reference for them, can be considered technical plagiarism, especially if they are not indicated with quotations. It *definitely* will not gain good grades as you won't show your own work. Repeating your own work is a form of self-plagiarism. In both cases, action can be taken accordingly.

We will cover this again in class. However, if you have any questions or concerns about this please do let me know. If in doubt, it is always best to check first.

Evaluations

We will have an official evaluation near the completion of the course through UTEP. The university greatly appreciates your input and opinion on courses. From a personal perspective, I take your feedback seriously and will always try to incorporate it into the course where appropriate. We therefore greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete these evaluations.

The Online Learning Community

Learning relies on the participation of all the people in the class to make it successful. You should actively engage in the course and be courteous and thoughtful at all times. Before you begin the course, take a few minutes to review the **core rules of online communication**. The key thing - be as respectful online as you would offline. Disagreement is healthy and natural, insults are not. Read each other's posts carefully, respond with mutual respect, and remember that we're a community learning together.

Other Important / Helpful Information

UTEP Course Drop Policy

If unforeseen circumstances happen where a drop is necessary, *students* are responsible for initiating any course drop. It is the student's responsibility to determine how dropping courses may affect financial aid. Students are limited to dropping no more than 6 courses over their entire academic career of all courses taken at any public college or University in Texas. You should contact me as your advisor about this.

a) Students who drop a course *before the "official census date*," the course will not appear on the transcript, and doesn't count toward the 6-course drop limit.
b) Dropping a course *after the official census date, but before the "course drop date*" will generate a "W" in the course—although the drop shows on your transcript, a "W" does not lower your GPA. However, a "W" counts against your 6 drop limit.
c) If the course is dropped *after the "course drop date"* or if the student just stops participating, taking tests, etc., UTEP requires the instructor to issue an "F" in the course that permanently remains on the transcript.

d) UTEP also allows instructors to administratively drop any student because of too many times the student fails to submit assignments, discussion questions, or because of disciplinary reasons. In this case, the student will be notified of the course drop through their UTEP student email account. A "W" or an "F" will be issued. A "W' for these reasons counts against the 6-drop limit.

Disability Statement

Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. If you have a condition that may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, it is your responsibility to contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at (915)747-5148 (voice or TTY) or cass@utep.edu. CASS has a new portal for students and instructors that makes the whole system electronic – there's information in the link above. You are also encouraged to discuss this in confidence with me, preferably before classes begin.

Copyright & Fair Use

Much of the material that is posted within this course is protected by copyright law. These materials are only for the use of students enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further retained or disseminated.

AI Guidance

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is not allowed for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

Readings

Book chapters and journal articles are accessible electronically via the UTEP library web site, and many are available for free in PDF format online. Assigned readings that are not available through the library system will be shared by me prior to that week's module. Students are expected to have done a minimum of one of the required readings for each week, to have mastered the key concepts.

Full Course Overview

Module 1 **The Origins of Conflict**	**Dates & Deadlines** ***Class*** **03/17**
Readings *Required Readings*	**Student Introduction** 03/23 11.59pm

Thucydides, "The Peloponnesian War," 1.66-1.88 [The Spartan Debate]; 5.84-5.116 [The Melian dialogue], in Robert B. Strassler and Richard Cralwey, eds., The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War (Free Press, 1996) Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. Harvey C. Mansfield (University of Chicago Press, 1998), ch. 14-26. *Recommended Readings* Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (New York: Penguin, 1977 [1651], ch. 13 -17, 183-228. Hugo Grotius, "Prolegomena to the Law of War and Peace," in Forsyth, Keens-Soper and Savigear, eds. The Theory of International Relations (Clarendon: Allen & Unwin, 1970) Immanuel Kant "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch." In H. S. Reiss, Raymond Geuss, and Quentin Skinner, eds., Kant's Political Writings, (Cambridge University Press, [1795] 1991), 93-130. Stanley Hoffmann, "Rousseau on War and Peace." The American Political Science Review. 57/2, (1963), 317-333.	
Module 2 **Systemic Warfare**	***Class*** **03/24**
Readings *Required Readings* Terry Boswell, Mike Sweat, Hegemony, Long Waves, and Major Wars: A Time Series Analysis of Systemic Dynamics, 1496–1967, International Studies Quarterly, Volume 35, Issue 2, June 1991, Pages 123–149. Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol eds., Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge University Press, 1985). *Recommended Readings* E.H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1939 (Harper Torchbooks, 1964), Intro. Midlarsky, M. I. (1990). "Systemic wars and dyadic wars: No single theory" International Interactions, 16(3), 171–181.	**Weekly Assignment** 03/30 11.59pm

Fearon, James. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49 (3): 379-414.	
Module 3 **The Decline in Interstate Conflict**	***Class*** **03/31**
Readings *Required Readings* Robert Jervis (2002) "Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Power Peace" American Political Science Review 96.1, p.1-14. Bruce Russett, Christopher Layne, David E. Spiro, Michael W. Doyle (1995) "The Democratic Peace" International Security, Volume 19, Number 4, pp. 164-184. *Recommended Readings* Holsti, Kalevi. (2016). The Decline of Interstate War: Pondering Systemic Explanations. 10.1007/978-3-319-28818-5_4. Gill-Tiney, P. (2022). A Liberal Peace?: The Growth of Liberal Norms and the Decline of Interstate Violence. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *66*(3), 413-442. Braumoeller, Bear F. 2021. "Trends in Interstate Conflict." In What Do We Know About War?, eds. Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and John A. Vasquez. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 272–90.	**Weekly Assignment** 04/06 11.59pm
Module 4 **Intrastate Conflict (Civil War)**	***Class*** **04/07**
Readings *Required Readings* Kalyvas, Stathis. 2001. ""New" and "Old" Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics* 54 (1): 99-118. Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (6): 814-858. *Recommended Readings*	**Midterm Assignment** 04/13 11:59pm

Mueller, John. 2000. "The Banality of "Ethnic War"," *International Security* 25 (1): 42-70. Ross, Michael. 2004. "How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from Thirteen Cases," *International Organization* 58 (1): 35-67.	
Module 5 **Insurgent Mobilization**	***Class*** **04/14**
Required Readings Gates, Scott. 2002. "Recruitment and Allegiance: The Microfoundations of Rebellion," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (1): 111-130. Viterna, Jocelyn. 2006. "Pulled, pushed, and persuaded: Explaining Women's mobilization into the Salvadoran guerrilla army," *The American Journal of Sociology* 112 (1): 1–45. *Recommended Readings* Lyall, Jason; Graeme Blair; Kosuke Imai. 2013. "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan," *American Political Science Review* 107 (4): 679-705. Shesterinina, Anastasia. 2016. "Collective Threat Framing and Mobilization in Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 110 (3): 411-427. Thomas, Jakana, and Kanisha Bond. 2012. "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations," *American Political Science Review* 109 (3): 488-506.	**Weekly Assignment** 04/20 11.59pm
Module 6 **Counterinsurgent Responses & Conflict Outcomes**	***Class*** **04/21**
Readings *Required Readings* Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. "The "Hearts and Minds" Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare," *International Security* 42 (1): 80–113. Jentzsch, Corinna, Stathis Kalyvas, and Livia Isabella Schubiger. 2015. "Militias in Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (5): 755–769.	**Weekly Assignment** 04/27 11.59pm ***Final Course Evaluation:***

Recommended Readings Aliyev, Huseyn. 2016. "Strong Militias, Weak States and Armed Violence: Towards a Theory of 'State-Parallel' Paramilitaries," *Security Dialogue* 47 (6): 498–516. Byman, Daniel. 2016. "'Death Solves All Problems': The Authoritarian Model of Counterinsurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39 (1): 62-93. Downes, Alexander. 2007. "Draining the Sea by Filling the Graves: Investigating the Effectiveness of Indiscriminate Violence as a Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Civil Wars* 9 (4): 420-444.	*Please complete the evaluation survey provided by UTEP!*
Module 7 **Transnational Conflicts, Foreign Intervention, and Peace**	***Class*** **04/28**
Readings *Required Readings* Cunningham, David E., Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Idean Salehyan. 2009. "It Takes Two: A Dyadic Analysis of Civil War Duration and Outcome." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53 (4): 570–97. Regan, Patrick. 2002. "Third-party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution 46* (1): 55-73. *Recommended Readings* Salehyan, Idean, Kristian Gleditsch, and David Cunningham. 2011. "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups," *International Organization* 65 (4): 709-744. Toft, Monica. 2010. "Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?" *International Security* 34 (4): 7-36. Walter, Barbara. 2004. "Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3): 371-388.	**Final Assignment** 05/07 11:59pm