

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
POLS 4368-001: Conflict Analysis
Online Course
Spring 2023

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Office Location: Benedict Hall 302
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Class Website: Blackboard through MyUTEP portal
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12pm-1pm virtually *via Zoom* or by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course explores the theories, empirical studies, and methodological approaches relating to the scientific study of conflict, war, and peace within and between states. Basic knowledge of research methods, particularly quantitative research methods, is a prerequisite. It is also advisable that students have some prior understanding of international relations. Throughout this course, students will learn how to effectively conduct empirical research and how to systematically design a research paper that involves quantitative data analysis and hypothesis testing.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

I believe, with adequate effort and willingness, all of you are capable of doing well in this course. By the end of this course, you can expect to accomplish the following learning outcomes:

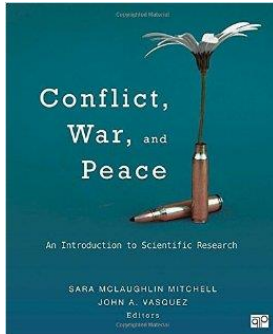
- to define, understand, and use concepts and terms relevant to the scientific study of conflict
- to apply and critique major theories and perspectives relevant to understanding the role of domestic and international arrangements that structure conflict, war, and peace
- to develop a basic understanding of the literature in various areas of conflict studies
- to apply and critique a body of factual knowledge necessary for analyzing the role of historical, social, political, economic, and global forces on the outbreak of conflict
- to recognize and formulate testable hypotheses relevant to the scientific study of conflict
- to recognize, identify, and apply empirical datasets and methodological approaches relevant for the scientific study of conflict
- to develop foresight for situations and episodes where the outbreak of conflict is likely

Targeted [UTEP Edge](#) advantages: Communication, critical thinking, problem solving, social responsibility, and global awareness.

LEARNING MODULES

This course is designed using a modular format so that all the respective course materials and submission links are in one area for a given module. Each consecutive module will be made available as scheduled as the semester progresses.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXT



Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and John A. Vasquez. *Conflict, War, and Peace: An Introduction to Scientific Research*. CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-4522-4449-5

This book is available at the UTEP Bookstore and also available at various other venues for rent or purchase.

GRADING POLICY

Your final grade in this class will be based on the following requirements:

Course Requirement	Due Dates*	Weight
Midterm Exam	will be activated on Thursday, 03/09, 11:00am; due on Sunday, 03/12, 11:59pm	25%
Final Exam	will be activated on Monday, 05/01, 11:00am; due on Thursday, 05/04, 11:59pm	25%
Research Project	due on Thursday, 05/04, 11:59pm	25%
Discussion Posts	Discussion posts and practice quizzes are due by Sunday, 11:59pm at the end of each module.	25%
Practice Quizzes		Bonus points

*The designated time zone for all due dates is Mountain Time (MT).

All grades (including the final grade) are based on the following distribution of points:

Points	Letter
≥ 89.50	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
≤ 59.49	F

If you are concerned about your grade, please contact me and/or visit me during my office hours or by appointment. I will be happy to give you personalized feedback and suggestions on how to improve your course performance.

REQUIRED READINGS

In each module, you will have assigned readings from your textbook. A chapter summary will be provided for each module's readings but simply reading the chapter summaries will not be sufficient for effectively completing the course tasks. It is important that you begin each module by first carefully doing the required readings. The list of readings per module is provided on the last section of the syllabus.

PRACTICE QUIZZES

After you do the assigned readings for a given module, you can take the practice quizzes. Each quiz can be taken up to three times. These practice quizzes are not only useful for preparing for the exams but also for earning bonus points toward your final grade point average. At the end of the semester, those who achieve an average score that ranges from 70 to 79 for their practice quizzes will receive 1 bonus point to be added to their final grade point average. If your average practice quiz score ranges from 80 to 89, 2 bonus points will be added to your final grade point average and if your average score is 90 and over, you will earn 3 bonus points. No bonus points will be earned for a score less than 70.

EXAMS

There are two exams for the course: a midterm and a final. Each exam constitutes 25 percent of your final grade point average. Questions are based on the readings, lecture notes, and online discussions. The exams will be “open book” so that you will be able to review all support materials you think are necessary to answer the exam questions. The exams will be administered via Blackboard. The exams are to be taken individually—it is not allowed to discuss the exam questions with the classmates or anyone else. Refer to the section on “Academic Integrity” below to review the university and instructor policies on cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

RESEARCH PROJECT

For your research project, you will receive various pieces of information about a fictitious pair of countries over a 20 year time period. You will predict whether or not these countries will fight a war against each other. This prediction must be supported on the basis of relevant information provided, and the arguments must be drawn from the theoretical material covered in the course on the scientific study of war. For each factor you select in making your prediction (such as alliances), you must explain how that factor is related to war in general (citing the appropriate material from the course and based on further research), and how you think it will relate to a potential war (or lack of war) in this fictitious dyad. The research project constitutes 25 percent of your final grade point average.

Formatting Guidelines

- The paper should be double-spaced and 5-7 pages long (not counting the cover page, abstract, tables, figures, and references).
- The paper should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins, and pages should be numbered.
- There should be no more than two extensive quotations (in excess of three lines of text).

Citation and References

- In your research paper, you must provide at least 10 scholarly sources (academic books and articles) or you will lose 5 points for each missing scholarly source. You can use up to four readings assigned for the course, but they should not be the sole source of information. If you are unclear about what constitutes a scholarly book or article, please ask (for example, Wikipedia is NOT a scholarly source, nor are magazines and newspapers such as the *Economist* or the *New York Times*).

- The formatting of your paper should follow the *American Political Science Association* (APSA) style. Specifically, you are required to carefully read the document on citation and reference requirements (also available on Blackboard) and employ these formatting rules for your research paper. Papers submitted with an inaccurate citation/reference format will lose up to 25 points (depending on severity).

Plagiarism

- Make sure you are aware of the scholarly pitfalls of plagiarism, which are discussed in detail in the document on academic misconduct (available on Blackboard). Specifically, whenever you use an idea or information from another source, you must give credit to the author by properly citing them *within the text* as well as by including a list of all references at the end of the text. Not doing so constitutes an act of plagiarism, which will result in a score of zero for the paper.

Quality of Writing

- In addition to the substantive quality of your assignments, grades will also be based on the clarity of one's writing (e.g., appropriate tone of writing, organization, quality of spelling and grammar, etc.).
- Please note that the University Writing Center (UWC) provides writing assistance to all UTEP students. The UWC is located on the second (ground) floor of the library in Room 227 Library; phone: (915) 747-5112. The UWC also provides online writing consultation – visit <http://uwc.utep.edu/index.php/online-consultation> to make an online appointment.

Deadline

You should submit your paper electronically via “SafeAssign” (an online originality checking service made available by UTEP and embedded in Blackboard) by the designated deadline. Papers submitted late will lose 10 points (1 letter grade) per day (including weekends). Here is a helpful video tutorial on "Safe Assign" paper submission/originality check tool: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gGRgjzDYEA>.

DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION

In each module, you will submit a discussion post in response to the guided questions provided in the respective modules. The discussion posts should be at least 250 words and a maximum of 500 words. You will also respond to at least one of your peers' discussion posts (min. 100 words-max. 500 words). Class participation via discussion posts will count for 25 percent of your final grade.

I expect everyone to actively participate in class and do so in a positive and appropriate way (see the “Online Etiquette and Effective Communication” section below). Keep in mind that class participation is more than just completing the scheduled assignments and taking exams—you should be willing to ask and answer questions, and contribute intellectually to class debates via online discussion posts. Before posting a discussion, you should complete the assigned readings and go over the lecture notes. Exams will cover material from the readings, lectures, and our online discussions, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage. Full credit for a discussion post is reserved only for those that follow the online etiquette and effective communication rules below.

COURSE/INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

E-Mail Protocol

UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt during weekdays. I will respond to weekend messages by Monday at the latest. When e-mailing me, please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication

In an online environment, it is essential that utmost respect and professionalism be adhered to in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be at times discussing sensitive and controversial topics. In our virtual discussions, avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views. No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated. Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the university and it is at the professor's full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior.

Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

Language: Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong and/or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any offensive language.

Respect: An online classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom would also be inappropriate in an online course. Treat your professor and your classmates with respect.

Be Forgiving: If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to your professor. Remember that the person contributing to the online discussion may be new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

This is Permanent: Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent to the group, there is no taking it back once it is viewed (even if you can later delete or edit your message). When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas—not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

Edit Your Work: The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled

words or poorly constructed sentences. It is good practice to compose and check your comments in a word processor, and proofread before posting them.

Test for Clarity: Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be unclear to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly.

Read First, Write Later: Make sure to do all the readings, activities, and individual research before crafting your discussion post. Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. You need to stick to the subject—avoid going off on irrelevant tangents. An informed, well-researched discussion point will enhance the quality of everyone’s learning experience and exchange of ideas.

Make sure to also contribute to and review our community agreement available in Module 1.

Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work

I will excuse absences and late work when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of their faith that happens to coincide with a class session, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts a medical emergency. To be excused, please notify me in writing prior to the date of absence if possible. That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency or lack of childcare), please provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. *If available*, please also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence (such as a doctor’s note) for my records.

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, “When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of “W” before the course drop deadline and with a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline.”

Incomplete Grade Policy

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct and dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. This includes, but is not limited to cheating, collusion, and plagiarism. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Plagiarism is commonly defined as passing off the ideas, works, writing, etc., of another person as your own. Accordingly, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own work, even if you have the permission of that person. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one. A document detailing different forms of plagiarism is provided

on Blackboard. Just as the Internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. All written work submitted for this course will be checked for originality via *SafeAssign*—an online originality checking service made available by UTEP.

Any act of academic misconduct and dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Refer to <http://studentaffairs.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=4386> for further information.

Copyright Statement for Course Materials

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course.

Diversity

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally and/or for other students.

Accessibility

It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate any issues related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please meet with me outside of class so we can explore potential options. Students with disabilities may also wish to work with the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in this course, including official accommodations. Please visit their website for contact and additional information: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the CASS, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together.

Land Acknowledgement Statement

As members of the University of Texas at El Paso community, we acknowledge that we are meeting on unceded Indigenous land. We would like to recognize and pay our respects to the Indigenous people with long ties to the immediate region: Lipan Apache, Mescalero Apache, Piro, Manso, Suma, Jumano, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, and Tortugas Pueblo. We also acknowledge the nations whose territories include present day Texas: the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, and the peoples of Chihuahua and northern Mexico from whom most/many of our students descend, such as the Rarámuri, Tepehuan, Wixarika and Nahuatlaca peoples. Finally, we recognize all of the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories here in Paso del Norte, on Turtle Island. The University of Texas at El Paso honors your history and cultures

and we seek greater awareness of the myriad ways in which your legacy can guide us in fruitful partnerships and mutually fulfilling relationships.

Alternate Means of Submitting Work in Case of Technical Issues

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#). You can email me (cigdemsirin@utep.edu) your assignment as a last resort if you cannot submit your work on Blackboard due to technical issues.

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed):

- Microsoft Office. If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources

[UTEP Help Desk](#): If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students.

Academic Resources

[UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.

[University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.

[Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.

[History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.

[RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources

[Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.

[Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND TASKS

Module 1: 01/17-01/22

- Carefully read the syllabus
- Review the introductory materials posted in this module
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
 - Introduce yourself to the class and respond to at least one of your peers
- Submit “Collective Task: Building Our Own Community Agreement”
- Take the syllabus quiz

Module 2: 01/23-02/05

- Do this module’s required readings:
 - Chapter 1. Introduction
 - Chapter 2. Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816-1965
 - Major Contributions: Dangerous Dyads
 - Methodological Notes: Probabilities
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Take the practice quiz

Module 3: 02/06-02/19

- Do this module’s required readings:
 - Chapter 3. Bones of Contention: Comparing Territorial, Maritime, and River Issues
 - Major Contributions: Territorial Conflict
 - Methodological Notes: Log Odds, Logit Model, and Substantive Significance
 - Chapter 4. Alliances and the Expansion and Escalation of Militarized Interstate Disputes
 - Major Contributions: Alliances
 - Methodological Notes: Selection Bias
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Take the practice quiz

Module 4: 02/20-03/05

- Do this module’s required readings:
 - Chapter 5. The New Rivalry Dataset: Procedures and Patterns
 - Major Contributions: Rivalry
 - Methodological Notes: Percentages, Reliability, and Validity
 - Chapter 6. The Outcomes of Military Buildups: Minor States vs. Major Powers
 - Major Contributions: Arms Races
 - Methodological Notes: Statistical Significance and Control Variables
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Take the practice quiz

Module 5: 03/06-03/12

- Study for the midterm exam by reviewing course materials to date

- Take the midterm exam (will be activated on Thursday, 03/09, 11:00am; due on Sunday, 03/12, 11:59pm)

~ Spring Break: 03/13-03/19 ~

Module 6: 03/20-04/02

- Do this module's required readings:
 - Chapter 7. Assessing the Steps to War
 - Major Contributions: The Steps to War
 - Methodological Notes: Research Design and Measurement
 - Chapter 8. Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force
 - Major Contributions: Diversionary Theory
 - Methodological Notes: Interaction Terms and the GEE Model
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Take the practice quiz

Module 7: 04/03-04/16

- Do this module's required readings:
 - Chapter 9. The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefits of Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885-1992
 - Major Contributions: Democratic Peace
 - Methodological Notes: Levels of Analysis
 - Chapter 10. Economic Interdependence: A Path to Peace or a Source of Interstate Conflict?
 - Major Contributions: Economic Interdependence
 - Methodological Notes: Missing Data
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Take the practice quiz

Module 8: 04/17-04/30

- Do this module's required readings:
 - Chapter 11. A Unified Statistical Model of Conflict Onset and Escalation
 - Major Contributions: Power Preponderance
 - Methodological Notes: Selection (Censored Probit) Models
 - Chapter 12. Bordering on Peace: Democracy, Territorial Issues, and Conflict
 - Major Contributions: Territorial Peace
 - Methodological Notes: Spurious Relationships
- Submit your discussion post and peer response
- Take the practice quiz

Module 9: 05/01-05/04 (official end date for the course)

- Study for the final exam by reviewing *post-midterm* course materials to date
- Take the final exam (will be activated on Monday, 05/01, 11:00am; due on Thursday, 05/04, 11:59pm)
- Submit your research project (due on Thursday, 05/04, 11:59pm)