
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
POLS 4368-001: Conflict Analysis (CRN: 34815)
Online Course
Summer 2016

Instructor: Dr. Cigdem V. Sirin
Office Hours: Virtually via e-mail
E-mail: cigdemsirin@utep.edu
Class Website: Blackboard through MyUTEP portal

COURSE OVERVIEW

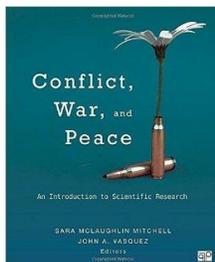
This course explores the theories, empirical studies, and methodological approaches relating to the scientific study of conflict, war, and peace within and between states. Basic knowledge of research methods, particularly quantitative research methods, is a prerequisite (POLS 2312 or 3500). It is also 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

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 bookstores. If you choose to order your book via an online provider, please be mindful of the delivery time as several days may pass before you receive it.

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 Monday, July 18, 11:00am; due on Tuesday, July 19, 11:00pm	25%
Final Exam	will be activated on Monday, August 1, 11:00am; due on Tuesday, August 2, 11:00pm	25%
Research Project	Due on Monday, August 1, 11:00pm	30%
Practice Quizzes	Due Fridays, 11:00pm, each week	Bonus points
Discussion Posts (Class Participation)	Due on Fridays, 11:00pm, each week	20%

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

I do not change grades or give individual-specific extra-credit opportunities to be fair to everyone. If you are concerned about your grade, please contact and/or visit me during my office hours or by appointment. This is particularly important if your grade on the first exam is not what you expected. I will not change the grade, but I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

Keep in mind that this online course is very labor-intensive, particularly since the course covers 16 weeks of course material in a short 4-week summer period. Although completing a course online might seem easier than attending face-to-face classes on the surface, it actually takes a large amount of additional effort and time to (a) read and comprehend all the material (both the detailed lecture notes and assigned readings) and (b) type out and turn in the online class discussion postings, assignments, and other online class activities. While regular classes may require about 7-9 hours of weekly work, our online class will require you to invest closer to around 22-24 hours of dedicated time per week in order to succeed. On the bright side, the 4-week course will be completed in a short time and will earn you the same three credit hours towards graduation.

LEARNING MODULES

This course is designed using a modular format—that is, each week is packaged as a single module so that all the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, discussion posts are in one area for a given week.

REQUIRED READINGS

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

PRACTICE QUIZZES

After you do the assigned readings for a given week, you can take the practice quiz. You should submit your answers to the practice quizzes by Friday, 11:00pm each week. 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 receive an average score below 70 will receive 1 bonus point to be added to their final grade point average. Those with an average from 70 to 79 will receive 2 bonus points. If your average practice quiz score ranges from 80 to 89, 3 bonus points will be added to your final grade point average and if your average score is 90 and over, you will earn 4 bonus points.

EXAMS

There are two exams for the course. Each exam constitutes 25 percent of your final grade point average. Questions are based on the readings, lectures, 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. Each exam will be activated by 11:00am of the designated date and you will have 36 hours to complete the exam upon activation (i.e., due 11:00pm the next day). 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.

Make-up exams

Make-up exams will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* emergency (see "excused absences and excuse for late work" below). Note that make-up exams may be in a different format than the original exam and may require more intensive preparation. If you miss a test and your absence is not considered excused, you will receive a zero on the test. This policy will be strictly enforced.

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 30 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 her/him *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

The research paper is due by **August 1, 11:00pm**. You should submit your paper electronically via “Turnitin” (an online originality checking service made available by UTEP) embedded in Blackboard by the designated due date and time. Papers submitted late will lose 10 points (1 letter grade) per day (including weekends).

Note: For more information on how to submit a paper to Turnitin in Blackboard and how to interpret the originality report provided by Turnitin, see the following tutorial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne8SNO6DguA>

DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION

Each week, you will submit a discussion post in response to the guided questions provided in the respective modules. The discussion posts should be at least 200 words and a maximum of 500 words. Be sure to submit your discussion posts for a given week by Friday, 11:00pm of that week to receive credit for your participation. No late submissions will be accepted for discussion posts. Class participation via discussion posts will count for 20 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

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication

It is essential that the utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be discussing at times sensitive and controversial topics. 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.

Inappropriate behavior will not 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:

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication Policy

Language: Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong 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 strong language.

Respect: A Web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a Web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and I will be reading any postings.

Be Forgiving: If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion is also new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly 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. 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 a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor before posting them.

Test for Clarity: Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly. If you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point: Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Contributions to a discussion should have a clear subject header, and you need to stick to the subject. Don't waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

Read First, Write Later: Don't add your comments to a discussion before reading the comments of other students unless the assignment specifically asks you to. Doing so is tantamount to ignoring your fellow students and is rude. Comments related to the content of previous messages should be posted under them to keep related topics organized, and you should specify the person and the particular point you are following up on.

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.

Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work

I will excuse absences and late work *only* when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his 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, you must notify me *in writing* prior to the date of absence. That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency), you must provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. Such notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent in advance. You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence. In case of an illness, a doctor's note is the proper documentation required. *For my records, you should e-mail me a scanned copy of the documentation that verifies the reason for your absence (if you don't have access to a scanner, you can take a photo of the documentation).* *Documentation that is not provided in a timely manner will not be accepted.* Please do not ask me to excuse absences for minor illnesses or scheduling conflicts (e.g. sports practices, play rehearsals, meetings, appointments with other professors or advisors, student teaching, having your cable installed, having a bad headache, etc.). I am aware that students have other interests and obligations, but you should nevertheless make this class a priority. If you are likely to have recurring conflicts, please take another course that better fits your schedule.

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences: <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=54418>. 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."

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It 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. One example of collusion is preparing a discussion entry for another person or having someone prepare a discussion entry for you. *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. I encourage students to study together and work collectively; however, working together to write any part of a written assignment, research paper, and/or exam is plagiarism. Be aware, 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. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one.

Any act of academic 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. They may not be further retained or disseminated.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: cass@utep.edu; location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

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):

- Adobe Acrobat Reader. To get this program, go to <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html> and follow the instructions.
- Adobe Flash Player. To get this program, go to <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/> and follow the instructions.
- QuickTime Player. To get this program, go to <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/> and follow the instructions.
- Microsoft Office. If you do not have a word-processing software, go to <https://my.apps.utep.edu>. Using My.Apps interface, UTEP students can access most software offered in student computer labs (including Microsoft Office) from their personal computing devices. Students can use any laptop, tablet, or smartphone with an Internet connection and use the software from anywhere at any time. For more information, go to <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740> and follow the instructions.

UTEP TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and Help Desk support at: <http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/>.

ALTERNATE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES

I strongly suggest that you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up in case there is a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, you can always email me (cigdemsirin@utep.edu) your back-up document.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND TASKS BY MODULES/WEEKS*

WEEK 1: JULY 5-JULY 8

- Course Overview and Introduction (Review the materials posted in the “Welcome and Course Introduction” section)
- Carefully read the syllabus
- This week’s readings:
 - Chapter 1. Introduction
 - Chapter 2. Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816-1965
 - Major Contributions: Dangerous Dyads
 - Methodological Notes: Probabilities
 - Chapter 3. Bones of Contention: Comparing Territorial, Maritime, and River Issues
 - Major Contributions: Territorial Conflict
 - Methodological Notes: Log Odds, Logit Model, and Substantive Significance
- Take the practice quiz (due Friday, 11:00pm)
- Post your responses to the discussion task (due Friday, 11:00pm)

WEEK 2: JULY 11-JULY 15

- This week’s readings:
 - Chapter 4. Alliances and the Expansion and Escalation of Militarized Interstate Disputes
 - Major Contributions: Alliances
 - Methodological Notes: Selection Bias
 - 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
- Take the practice quiz (due Friday, 11:00pm)
- Post your responses to the discussion task (due Friday, 11:00pm)

WEEK 3: JULY 18-JULY 22

- Midterm exam (will be activated on Monday, July 18, 11:00am; due on Tuesday, July 19, 11:00pm)
- This week’s 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
 - 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
- Take the practice quiz (due Friday, 11:00pm)
- Post your responses to the discussion task (due Friday, 11:00pm)

WEEK 4: JULY 25-JULY 29

- This week's readings:
 - Chapter 10. Economic Interdependence: A Path to Peace or a Source of Interstate Conflict?
 - Major Contributions: Economic Interdependence
 - Methodological Notes: Missing Data
 - 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
- Take the practice quiz (due Friday, 11:00pm)
- Post your responses to the discussion task (due Friday, 11:00pm)

Summer II Finals

- Research project due on Monday, August 1, 11:00pm.
- Final exam (will be activated on Monday, August 1, 11:00am; due on Tuesday, August 2, 11:00pm)

***The designated time zone for the submission of all course assignments and tasks is Mountain Time (MT).**