This course explores theories about conditions that promote cooperation or conflict in international affairs. The main objective is to identify strategies that promote cooperative solutions to international disputes and to evaluate those strategies in terms of their historical effectiveness. We examine both external and internal factors that influence relations between states. The primary emphasis is on the application of rigorous theoretic models and evidence as tools for assessing defense strategy. Seminar sessions will build on and expand beyond the required readings.

Students are encouraged to prepare one-page to two-page papers every other week. I require at least four such short papers from each student spread across the semester. These very short papers should present a quick and dirty test of a hypothesis in the next week’s reading or a related hypothesis formulated by the student, including a basic justification of the hypothesis, relevant data, and test. Alternatively, short papers can develop a theoretical argument that leads to a new proposition that could be tested in a subsequent short paper. The short papers serve as a useful stimulus for identifying a topic for the semester research paper. Students are required to prepare a research paper of up to 35 pages (i.e., an appropriate length for submission to a peer-reviewed journal) that develops and/or tests one or more hypotheses about international cooperation or conflict. Of course the paper can be shorter. I will be happy to discuss the paper with each student and will happily read preliminary drafts or sections. Research papers are due on April 23rd with the expectation that students will present their research findings during the final class session on April 30th. I do not object to giving an incomplete if the paper is not finished by the end of the semester provided that there is sufficient progress on the paper that the student can present core theoretical ideas or data analysis by the end of April.

The core readings for the course are: Robert Powell, In the Shadow of Power (hereafter Powell) and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, The Logic of Political Survival (hereafter LPS). In addition, we read a number of journal articles and portions of other books. Everything should be read with an eye on identifying core assumptions, the logical link between assumptions and hypotheses and evidence.

January 22:  Intro: Modeling and Rationality

January 29: Balance of Power: Theory

Suggested Readings: Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics; Edward Vose Gulick, Europe’s Classical Balance of Power; Colin Elman and John Vasquez, eds. Realism and the Balancing of Power: A New Debate.

February 5: Balance of Power: Evidence


February 12: Domestic Audiences and National Foreign Policy

February 19: Holiday

February 26: Testing Audience Costs

March 5: Leader Survival and Institutions
LPS, Chapters 2-3.

March 12: Spring Recess
March 19: Democratic Peace: Constraints or Norms or Both  

March 26: Democratic Peace: Evidence  

April 2: Domestic Institutions, Political Survival, and War  

April 9: Foreign Aid as a Tool of Domestic and Foreign Policy  

April 16: Foreign Aid, Military Intervention and Endogenous Institution Change  

April 23: Student Presentations

April 30: Conclusions  
Papers Due