The core graduate course in international relations is designed to explore the main issues and research strategies in the study of international relations. Despite the “core” nature of this class, I do not intend it to be a survey of the entire field. I believe that it is simply impossible to cover all the pertinent questions in international relations in a single class. Rather than superficially skim many topics, we shall examine a limited set of problems and focus on the research methodologies involved. It is much better to take your intuitions about how the world works and develop them in a scientific manner than it is to be able to recall what everyone has previously said on a topic. A good question pursued in an appropriate way makes for good research! Knowing everything that has been written in the past does not!

I have limited the number of readings each week. I want us to focus on the key concepts of the arguments made, the logic used, the falsifiability of the argument and how the arguments are tested. There is a strong focus on articles by people at NYU and the sort of topics they research: I make no apology for this. First, I believe that these are some of the most important developments in the field. Second, this is the material I can most effectively teach. Third, it helps NYU students identify the research interests and methodological approaches of the NYU faculty.

Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the week’s readings, with special emphasis on the way in which hypotheses are developed, the fundamental elements of research design, and with ideas about how the research questions in the readings might be better examined or about future directions in research on the topic under discussion. Critiques of the reading assignments should focus on any problems in logic or evidence and should offer concrete and feasible ideas about how to improve on the research. Students will be assigned to lead the discussion of the readings.

Each student needs to write three short papers (1-3 pages) and a longer term paper. The short paper should be “think pieces” which focus on research ideas inspired by the readings (or other sources) which consider an appropriate research question and how it might be pursued. These papers should not be summaries of the readings or other forms of surveys of the literature. I want you to think about how you would do research. The final paper, due at noon on December 22nd, should be a research paper—perhaps developing and carrying out the ideas in one of the think pieces. Reviews of the literature are not acceptable. The final paper could be a theoretical idea used to derive hypotheses. Alternatively, you might consider testing existing arguments within the literature. However, it absolutely can not be a list of what other people have said.

The readings are predominately articles. However, in addition I am assigning one book: Robert Powell. (1999) In the Shadow of Power (Princeton University Press). As yet I have not assigned topics for the last two weeks. Instead I have suggested a series of topics. We will either look at these or other topics depending upon students’ interests.

1) (September 5th) Introduction to key conceptions
James Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” International Organization (Summer 1995)
Powell 1999 chapt. 1.

2) (Sept. 12th) Realism/Polarity
Powell 1999 chapt 2&3.
Kenneth Waltz, “Evaluating Theories,” APSR (December 1997)
John Vasquez, “The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs, APSR (December 1997)

3) (Sept 19th) System Structure and Power Transition
Fearon, James 1996 Bargaining over objects that influence future bargaining power. Working paper

4) (Sept. 26th) Nature of War

5) (Oct. 3rd) Deterrence and Alliances
6) (Oct. 10th) Alliance Formation

7) (Oct. 17th) Democratic Peace

8) (Oct. 24th) Audience Costs
James Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” American Political Science Review (September 1994)

9) (Oct. 31st) Liberalism/Cooperation

10) (Nov 7th) **International Dimensions of Internal Conflict**

11) (Nov. 14th) **Political Survival and Foreign Policy Choice**
Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003. Logic of political survival chapter 9
Alejandro Flores TBA.
Matthew O. Jackson and Massimo Morelli 2006. Political Bias and War. Working paper

11) (Nov. 21st)
12) (Nov. 28th)
**Classes on the following two of the following topics depending upon interest.**
A) Economic Sanctions
B) Economic Factors and Conflict
C) Ethnic Conflict and Civil War
D) Diversionary War Theory.

13) (Dec. 5th) **Student Presentations**