

POLI/PWAD 287: STRATEGY & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FALL 2017 · UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

INSTRUCTOR

Prof. Stephen Gent
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COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30–1:45PM, Gardner 210
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00–5:00PM, or by appointment
Course Website: <https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/poli287-f17>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to the study of strategic decision making in international relations. Questions we will consider include: Why is it often hard for nations to cooperate? How can leaders make credible threats and promises to achieve their goals in international politics? Why do pseudo-democratic governments invite foreign election observers? When will bargaining break down and lead to war? Does the provision of humanitarian aid provide perverse incentives for belligerents?

To answer these questions, you will learn how to create and solve basic game theoretic models and then see how these models can be used to gain insights into different strategic situations in international relations. During the course, you will have an opportunity to apply what you have learned through role-playing simulations of international relations.

The goal of this course is to give you a basic introduction to game theoretic modeling and provide you with new insights into strategic behavior in international relations. Thus, we will be covering material on quantitative models in social science. This will require you to use logic skills, but no advanced mathematical background is required. I do, however, expect that you are familiar with basic algebra.

COURSE MATERIALS

Two books are available for purchase in the UNC bookstore. Dixit and Nalebuff will serve as the main textbook for the course and is required.

- Dixit, Avinash K., and Barry J. Nalebuff. *The Art of Strategy*. W.W. Norton.

For students looking for an additional resource on introductory game theory, the following book is recommended:

- Spaniel, William. *Game Theory 101*. CreateSpace.

All other readings for the course are available on Sakai.

GRADING

Research Paper	30%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Homework	10%
Participation	5%

RESEARCH PAPER

You will need to write a short research paper ($\geq 2,000$ words) in which you develop your own game theoretic model to help explain a recent event in international relations. Your paper is due at 5:00PM on Thursday, November 30. Late papers will be penalized 3 points for each day late. To help you get started with the writing process, you will be required to submit a one-page abstract that summarizes your proposed paper topic by Thursday, November 9. Additionally, we will hold an in-class peer review session on Thursday, November 16. Additional details on the paper assignment are available on Sakai.

EXAMS

There will be both a midterm and a final exam. Both exams will be held in class and will cover material from both the lectures and the course readings. The exams will test your knowledge of game theory as well as your ability to use the logic of strategic choice to understand concepts in international relations.

HOMEWORK

You will need to complete several game theory homework assignments. You can collaborate with other students on these assignments, but your solutions must be your own. Copying homework solutions from another student will be considered a violation of the UNC Honor Code. Assignments will be posted on Sakai website, and the due dates are on the schedule below. Completed homework assignments should be submitted in class on the day they are due. Assignments turned in after 1:45PM are considered late. Late assignments will receive a 20% grade reduction for each day late. If you expect to miss class, you should turn in your assignment to me (electronically or in person) before class.

PARTICIPATION

Evaluation of the participation grade will be based upon the following: (1) participation in class simulations and group activities, (2) any written assignments related to in-class simulations and group activities, and (3) participation in the peer review session (11/16).

GRADING SCALE

A	94–100	B	83–86	C	73–76	D	60–66
A–	90–93	B–	80–82	C–	70–72	F	0–59
B+	87–89	C+	77–79	D+	67–69		

IMPORTANT DATES

- Homework 1 due: Thursday, August 31
- Homework 2 due: Thursday, September 7
- Homework 3 due: Thursday, September 14
- Homework 4 due: Thursday, September 28
- Midterm Exam: Tuesday, October 10
- Homework 5 due: Thursday, October 26
- Abstract for Paper due: Thursday, November 9
- Peer Review Session: Thursday, November 16
- Research Paper due: Thursday, November 30
- Final Exam: Friday, December 8 (12:00PM)

CLASS SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO RATIONAL CHOICE

TUESDAY, AUGUST 22

- No reading

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24 & TUESDAY, AUGUST 29

- Shepsle and Bonchek, "Rationality: The Model of Choice"

UNIT 2: SEQUENTIAL MOVES AND BACKWARDS INDUCTION

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31 & TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 2
- Spaniel, Lesson 2.2
- ***HOMEWORK 1 DUE (8/31)***

UNIT 3: PRISONERS' DILEMMA AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 3
- Spaniel, Lesson 1.1
- ***HOMEWORK 2 DUE***

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

- Lipson, "International Cooperation in Economic and Security Affairs"
- "Isle of Ted" Simulation

UNIT 4: NASH EQUILIBRIUM AND INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 4
- Spaniel, Lesson 1.3
- ***HOMEWORK 3 DUE***

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

- Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, pp. 53-67 (1960)
- Krasner, "Global Communications and National Power"

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 5
- Spaniel, Lesson 1.5

UNIT 5: STRATEGIC MOVES AND CREDIBILITY

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 & THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 28

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 6 & 7
- Spaniel, Lessons 2.4 & 2.5
- Schelling, "The Art of Commitment"
- ***HOMEWORK 4 DUE (9/28)***

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3

- Walter, *Committing to Peace*, Ch. 2

MIDTERM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

- Midterm Review

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10

- *****MIDTERM EXAM*****

UNIT 6: INFORMATION AND UNCERTAINTY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12

- No Reading

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 8

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

- **NO CLASS: FALL BREAK**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24

- Hyde, "Catch Us If You Can: Election Monitoring and International Norm Diffusion"
- Weinstein, "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment"

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26

- Hostage-Crisis Simulation
- **HOMEWORK 5 DUE**

UNIT 7: INTERNATIONAL BARGAINING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 11

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2

- Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War”

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

- Werner & Yuen, “Making and Keeping Peace”

UNIT 8: INCENTIVES AND PRINCIPAL-AGENT MODELS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 13
- ****ABSTRACT FOR PAPER DUE 11/9****

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

- Kuperman, “Mitigating the Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention”
- Gourevitch, “Alms Dealers”

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

- **PEER REVIEW SESSION**

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21

- Gent, Crescenzi, Menninga, & Reid, “The Reputation Trap of NGO Accountability”

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23

- **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

COURSE WRAP-UP

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28 & THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30

- Crisis Bargaining Simulation
- *****PAPER DUE 11/30*****

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

- Final Exam Review

*****FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8 AT 12:00PM*****