

POLI 289: Strategy and International Relations
Fall 2012 — University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
(Updated: 9/13/12)

Instructor

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Course Information

Meeting Times: T-Th 9:30–10:45am, Gardner 210
Office Hours: M 2:00–5:00pm
Course Website (Sakai): <https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/poli289f12>

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 nations make credible threats to get their way in international politics? When will bargaining break down and lead to war? How do domestic constituencies influence international negotiations?

To answer these questions, you will first learn how to create and solve basic game theoretic models. You will 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. While this is mainly an applied course, 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.

Grading

Paper	35%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Participation (Simulations, Peer Review)	5%

Paper

You will be required to write a paper (~ 6 pages) in which you develop a game theoretic model to help explain a recent event in international relations. This paper will be due on Thursday, November 29. 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 Tuesday, November 15. Additionally, we will hold an in-class peer review session on Tuesday, November 22. This will provide you with an opportunity to get feedback on the model that you are developing for your paper. Additional details on the paper assignment will be provided at a later date.

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.

Homework

You will need to complete three homework assignments on game theory. The due dates for these assignments are on the schedule below. Assignment will be posted on Sakai website and are due at the beginning of class. If you expect to miss class for any reason, you should turn in your assignment to me (in the tray on my office door) before the beginning of class. Late assignments will not be accepted.

The homeworks will be incorporated into the course grade in the form of extra credit on the midterm exam. Students who receive a passing grade ($\geq 60\%$) on all three homework assignments will receive two bonus points on the midterm. Students who receive a passing grade on two homework assignments will receive one bonus point on the midterm. Students who receive a passing grade on fewer than two homeworks will not receive any bonus points.

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 (11/20).

Simulations

We will be conducting several simulations in class. These role-playing simulations will mimic actual international strategic situations, and they are aimed to allow you to gain hands-on experience with strategic decision making in international relations. Some of these simulations may require short writing assignments. Specific details on the simulations will be provided at a later date.

Course Materials

The following book is required. All other readings will be available online through Sakai.

- Dixit, Avinash K., and Barry J. Nalebuff. 2008. *The Art of Strategy*. W.W. Norton.

Important Dates

- Homework 1 due: Thursday, September 6
- Homework 2 due: Tuesday, September 11
- Homework 3 due: Tuesday, October 2
- Midterm Exam: Tuesday, October 9
- Abstract for Paper due: Tuesday, November 13
- Peer Review Session: Tuesday, November 20
- Paper due: Thursday, November 29
- Final Exam: Tuesday, December 11

Class Schedule

Introduction to Rational Choice

Tuesday, August 21 & Thursday, August 23

- No reading

Tuesday, August 28

- Shepsle and Bonchek, "Rationality: The Model of Choice" (1997)

Thursday, August 30

- *NO CLASS: APSA CONFERENCE*

Sequential Moves and Backwards Induction

Tuesday, September 4 & Thursday, September 6

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 2
- *HOMEWORK 1 DUE (9/4)*

Prisoners' Dilemma and International Cooperation

Tuesday, September 11

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

Thursday, September 13

- Axelrod, "The Live-and-Let-Live System in Trench Warfare in World War I" (1984)
- "Isle of Ted" Simulation

Nash Equilibrium and International Coordination

Tuesday, September 18

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 4

Thursday, September 20

- Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, pp. 53-67 (1960)
- Krasner, "Global Communications and National Power" (1991)

Tuesday, September 25

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 5

Strategic Moves and Credibility**Thursday, September 27**

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 6

Tuesday, October 2

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 7
- Schelling, "The Art of Commitment" (1966)
- **HOMEWORK 3 DUE**

Midterm**Thursday, October 4**

- Midterm Review

Tuesday, October 9

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

Information and Uncertainty**Thursday, October 11 & Tuesday, October 16**

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 8

Thursday, October 18

- **NO CLASS: FALL BREAK**

International Bargaining**Tuesday, October 23**

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 11

Thursday, October 25 & Tuesday, October 30

- Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War" (1995)

Thursday, November 1

- Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics" (1988)

Tuesday, November 6 & Thursday, November 8

- Crisis Bargaining Simulation

Incentives and Principal-Agent Relationships**Tuesday, November 13 & Thursday, November 15**

- Dixit & Nalebuff, Ch. 13
- Kuperman, "Mitigating the Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention" (2008)
- Gourevitch, "Alms Dealers" (2010)
- ****ABSTRACT FOR PAPER DUE 11/13****

Course Wrap-Up**Tuesday, November 20**

- Peer Review Session

Thursday, November 22

- **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

Tuesday, November 27 & Thursday, November 29

- Terrorism Simulation
- *****PAPER DUE 11/29*****

Tuesday, December 4

- Final Exam Review

*****FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, December 11 at 8:00am*****