This course focuses on the conditions that affect the prospects for militarized interstate conflict. Various factors at different levels of analysis (decision-making, monadic, dyadic, and systemic) will be considered in an attempt to understand why states fight. The course is primarily informed by the scholarly literature within the behavioral research community – without ignoring, however, certain “classical” approaches.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Required Reading Materials**

4. Electronic journal (EJ) readings are available through the CU Library [http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu) full-text electronic journals services.
5. Electronic reserve (ER) reading materials are available through D2L: [https://learn.colorado.edu](https://learn.colorado.edu)
6. Additional readings not listed on the syllabus may be assigned as the semester progresses.

**Student Initiative**

As a graduate student, you are an integral part of the scholarly community. Our class represents a microcosm of this community. In terms of our weekly meetings, this means that you are expected to take the initiative in presenting, discussing, and critiquing the assigned materials both with the instructor and your colleagues. Therefore, our sessions will not be lecture-based but rather will follow the seminar format. It is important that students read assigned materials thoughtfully and thoroughly and that they attend classes regularly, since class time will be primarily devoted to the exploration and integration of assigned readings. In terms of the term paper assignment, you are expected to help each other out with ideas and constructive criticisms.

**Research Project**

See the end of the syllabus.

**Discussion**

Participation in the class is essential to the success of this course. In order to prepare for the upcoming class, read the assigned materials with the following goals in mind. First, understand each individual reading’s conflict-generating logic, methodology, and findings. What are the gaps in these areas? Second, integrate the readings with one another, by comparing and contrasting their logic, methods, and findings. How do you account for the differences and especially for any inconsistencies across the findings? What makes one of the readings more compelling than another? What are the general problems with the research on the topic? What would be fruitful avenues for future research?

**Weekly Outlines**

On a rotating basis, students will develop an integrated outline for each class session, focusing on the second point issues in the above requirement and offering a few discussion questions. I will use the outline to come up with the general discussion agenda for the class session. The outline is due by e-mail by 11 am on Monday prior to the class. Outlines received by 3 pm Monday will be penalized by 10%.
No points will be awarded after this deadline even though missing the deadline does not exempt you from fulfilling this requirement. I will e-mail you back confirming the receipt of the outline.

Attendance
Regular attendance is expected. Absences will negatively impact the overall course grade.

Grading Policy
Weekly Outlines 30%
Term Paper 35% (15% + 20%)
Discussion/Participation 35%

Class Policies
1. Students are expected to turn in assignments at the beginning of class or at times otherwise noted.
2. Failure to meet a deadline does not exempt a student from fulfilling these requirements. Every assignment must be turned in by the last day of classes to pass the course.
3. Exceptions to the rules are granted at the instructor’s discretion, only under circumstances of extreme personal emergency or serious illness. In all instances, appropriate evidentiary documentation will be requested.
4. My policy for academic dishonesty is very simple: you will receive a failing grade for the class if you are found cheating on examinations, plagiarizing the work of others or attempting to turn in assignments used in previous classes, along with all other possible infractions noted in the University's policy on academic dishonesty. Moreover, disciplinary proceedings to dismiss you from the University may be initiated against you. I will not tolerate academic dishonesty and will assure you that you will face the harshest punishment possible if you attempt it.
5. Students may request the instructor to re-read exam answers or papers that they feel have been unfairly evaluated. Requests for re-evaluation must be submitted to the instructor in typewritten form, along with the assignment, within a week after it has been returned to the class. The written statement must explain specifically why the student believes that the grade should be reconsidered and what grade the assignment deserves.
6. Accommodations based on disability and/or religious beliefs will be made whenever possible. But, it is the student’s responsibility to let the instructor know about needing such accommodations within the first two weeks of class. Accommodation requests after this time period may not be granted.
7. All students are expected to complete assigned readings before they are discussed in class and they are expected to discuss and respond to random questioning by the instructor.

TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Session 1, August 27
Course Overview

Session 2, September 3
I. STUDYING WAR

- Levy and Thompson: Chapter 1.
- Most and Starr. Inquiry, Logic, and International Politics, Chapters 1-3, and 5.
**Session 3, September 10**

### II. REALIST APPROACHES

- **Levy and Thompson**: Chapter 2.
- **Vasquez (ed)**: Kang, Choong-Nam, “Alliances: Path to Peace or Path to War?” 27-44.

**Session 4, September 17**

### III. DECISION-MAKING APPROACHES

#### A. Rational Choice and Related Approaches

- **Levy and Thompson**: 63-70, 128-133.

**Session 5, September 24**

#### B. Psychological and Other Alternatives to Rational Choice-Based Approaches

- **Levy and Thompson**: 133-161 and Chapter 6.
Session 6, October 1

III. ISSUE-BASED APPROACHES: EXAMPLE OF TERRITORY AND GEOGRAPHY

- Optional: Levy and Thompson: 60-63.

Session 7, October 8

IV. DEMOCRATIC PEACE AND ITS CRITICS

A. Part 1

- Levy and Thompson: 104-117.

Session 8, October 15

B. Part 2


**Session 9, October 22**

**V. ECONOMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION**

• Levy and Thompson: 70-77.


**Session 10, October 29**

**VI. DIVERSIONARY THEORY OF WAR**

• Levy and Thompson: 99-104.


Session 11, November 5

VII. OUTCOMES AND CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICT


Session 12, November 12

- Research day

Sessions 13 and 14, November 19 and December 3

- Mini conference: student presentations

Session 15, December 10

VII. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Levy and Thompson: Chapter 8.

**RESEARCH PROJECT**

The aim of the project is to produce the front end of a professional-level research paper that could be, with additional work, presented at a conference and eventually submitted for publication. With this in mind, the project will focus on the theoretical underpinnings of the paper. In selecting your topic and conducting your work, please keep the following rules in mind. First, the paper must represent original research. General literature reviews or summaries of other works are not acceptable. Second, the papers must have a non-case specific theoretical focus. Papers should not address purely policy questions (e.g., should NATO intervene in Syria?). That is, the paper should address the general logic of the phenomenon you are investigating and not a specific case(s). Third, even though you are not asked to perform any empirical analyses in the paper, the goal of the project is to produce well thought out, testable hypotheses that could be operationalized and tested later on. Finally, the topic of the paper must
deal with militarized international conflict in a prominent manner. Note that the assignment lengths are quite short. Research and **think a lot before writing!**

**Assignment 1: Project Prospectus**

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the literature as soon as possible. If you do not have a topic in mind already, survey the syllabus and perform additional readings. Once you have a topic in mind, consult as many sources as possible to see what kind of investigations have been conducted on your topic of interest.

Good places to start may be journals such as *Journal of Conflict Resolution, Journal of Peace Research, International Studies Quarterly, Conflict Management and Peace Science, International Interactions,* and *International Security.* *International Organization* and *APSR, JOP, AJPS,* may also prove helpful.

Step 2: Identify gaps in the literature that you believe are particularly deserving of scholarly attention. This means that you will devise an angle of approach to your topic of interest that does not seem to be covered by the literature either at all or particularly well. Turn the narrowed-down topic into a research question. The research question should address an empirical puzzle – meaning that the phenomenon you are trying to explain is sometimes present while at other times it is not. The point of the research project is to figure out what determines the phenomenon’s presence versus absence. For example, we observe that some countries start wars while others do not; what explains the difference (e.g. presence and type of unresolved issues, regime type, history of conflict, alliance patterns, power distribution, etc.)?

Step 3: What is your argument vis-à-vis the question? To set up your project properly, you need to have a good idea of what your theoretical argument will be. This will provide the needed direction for the project.

Step 4: Answer the all-important “so what” question. That is, you need to be able to clearly demonstrate the “value added” dimension of your project. What will we (and the literature and field as a whole) know because of your project that was not known before? Why is this important?

**Prospectus Format.** Please follow this outline:

1. State your research question.
2. Explain briefly where the question is coming from (i.e. what is the gap in the literature it is addressing?) and why it matters.
3. Provide a preliminary answer to your question. This is a preview of your theoretical argument only, as you will develop your theory fully in the following assignment. Be sure to clearly and convincingly show why you are pursuing this line of argument; you definitely want to avoid the appearance of a fishing expedition here.
4. Conclude by defending the project idea against the “so what” question. What novel insights/twists are you offering? Once the project is complete, what will we know that we did not know before and why is this important?
5. Length: 3-5 typewritten pages plus the bibliography.
6. **Due: between October 1 and 22.**

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**Assignment 2: Theory and Hypotheses**

In the readings for the class, you will see plenty of examples of other people’s theorizing. This is your chance to practice contributing to important scholarly debates and to start making your mark!

In this assignment, you build a theory based on *your own insights,* with assistance from the literature. Reference the literature often to show how you are building and advancing upon it, but **do not derive your**
expectations directly from the literature (e.g. I expect X because Horowitz says so – be very careful not to even imply this). Instead, build a theoretical story of how the phenomenon you are investigating works; this allows you to offer novel insights. As a part of this process of theoretical development, you will need to make a series of assumptions (e.g. regarding the levels of analysis, agent-structure debate, motivations of behavior, identity of agents [individuals, groups, states, state coalitions], etc.). Make sure you understand both the stated and implied assumptions you are making and that they are logically consistent with one another.

Your theory should lead to the explication of 1-3 testable hypotheses. In the process of theorizing and hypothesizing, imagine that you must persuade a very skeptical audience that your theory and hypotheses are important, insightful, and likely empirically true.

Prepare a PowerPoint presentation of your project for the mini conference, tentatively scheduled for the class sessions on November 19 and December 3. This will be a chance to obtain peer and instructor feedback before turning in the final paper.

Turn in the paper (1) re-stating your research question (2-3 sentences to a paragraph at the most), (2) presenting the theory, and (3) spelling out your hypotheses. Length: about 6 typewritten pages plus the bibliography. The due date for the paper is Friday, December 13 by 3 pm.