PS 440/540  
Fall 2015  
MW 2:00-3:20, Lillis 112  

Prof. Jane K. Cramer  
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THE CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF WAR  

“Great is the guilt of unnecessary war.”  
-- John Adams, Second President of the U.S., 1797-1801  

This course examines the causes of war with the aim of discovering and assessing means to prevent and control war. We review a large selection of hypotheses of the causes of war but focus upon manipulable or controllable war-causes. Specifically, we look to see how modern major wars may have been avoided or controlled in the past by recognizing dilemmas and misperceptions. We ask: what could people have reasonably done to avoid war? We use our examination of theories and historical evidence to look to the possible causes of wars in the future. What are the most important (yielding the most peace) and the most possible means to prevent wars of the future? We apply the theories we examine to current US foreign policies. We examine “Democratic Peace Theory”—will the spread of democracy lead to more peace? We also consider nationalism and democratic transitions as causes of war. We examine the historical cases of World War I, World War II and the Pacific War. We briefly discuss the emergence and causes of the Cold War, as well as the evolution of policies during the Cold War and policy legacies of the Cold War such as Containment, Deterrence, Pre-emption/First Strike and arms control. Throughout the term we will be watching current events, especially current US-Russian and US-China relations, trying to understand what is happening and forecast the possible emergence or avoidance of a new Cold War or hot war between great powers. We look at choices for US grand strategy, and try determine what strategy best aligns with the theories that tell us the most on how to prevent unnecessary wars in the future. 

Requirements: Grades will be based on one RESEARCH paper (6-10 pages), 4 of 5 reading quizzes (participation grade/instead of a midterm), and a final exam. Class attendance is REQUIRED and class participation will be graded by assessing answers to brief pop questions frequently about the assigned readings and the lectures. There will be a single, comprehensive make up exam offered for students with documented MEDICAL excuses for TWO or more missed quizzes. The paper will focus on an assigned topic.  

Study questions for the final exam will be handed out throughout the term, recombinied and reviewed the last day of class. There will be an accumulating list of terms for short answer questions (most likely 5 short answer questions on the final) and approximately 8-10 longer essay questions to prepare from which I will pick 2 that you will be required to answer during the final exam period.  

Class participation = 40% (attendance, 4 of 5 reading quizzes)  
RESEARCH Paper, Wednesday, Nov. 25 = 30%;  
Final, Tuesday, Dec 8 at 14:45 (2:45-4:45) in the classroom = 30%  

Students are expected to do the readings in advance of the class for which the reading is assigned. This is very important for the class--students will be called on from time to time.  

PS 510—Graduate students are required to do all of the work and exams, including the additional readings, especially the Levy and Thompson book, as listed below on the syllabus. They will also need to do a longer research paper, 15-20 pages. Graduate students will arrange to meet for several extra discussions with Prof. Cramer in or just after office hours. Assignments weighted: Final =30%; Research Paper = 40%; class participation = 30%.  

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**CANVAS:** There is a CANVAS site for this class—all students need to make sure to check this site regularly for announcements, discussion and MORE HINTS as to how to succeed in this class. Make sure you receive our e-mails through this site—they will include hints for quizzes and other very important announcements.

**Required Readings:**

**Book:** Students should buy this book at the University Bookstore or off the web (money saving ideas discussed in class!):


**Some Recommended Books***, easy to order and most are on Reserve at Knight Library:

- Richard K. Betts, *Conflict After the Cold War* (20013: Pearson Longman)
- Michael E. Brown et. al. (editors), *Theories of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998)
- Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender* (Cambridge University Press, 2001)

***Some of these books could help you a lot when you are writing your paper. Cheap, cheap copies of these books can be found on-line at amazon.com used books and elsewhere.

All other readings will be available e-reserve or linked through the CANVAS website—see CANVAS for instructions!

**PLEASE:** Follow *The New York Times* (especially the International Section & Op-Eds.) We will discuss the NYT sometimes in class, and we will try to use the theories we learn to assess current events—especially current US-Russian relations, and US-China relations.

**Learning Outcomes and Critical Skills:** This class will provide students with an introduction to understanding the causes of international conflict and thus to understanding how better to promote international cooperation. This course will help students develop the critical skills of
identifying, describing and defining basic factual information and analytical concepts concerning political systems and war and peace. Students will also learn to analyze political issues of international security and use political science concepts, theories and methods to study war. Students will learn to use arguments and evidence effectively to communicate original analysis of political phenomena concerning war.

**Week 1: INTRODUCTION: Causes of War? (Is war an insolvable problem!??)**

How can we begin to study "the causes of war?" Many perceive that there are too many causes of war and each situation is unique, so it is not possible to study war with the hope of discovering real solutions. Is it even possible to discover regular "laws of motion" for international politics? If so, how can we discover them? Can we use methods parallel to those of the harder sciences? How has the study of war been approached? What methods are available?

This course approaches the study of war primarily as a problem between states. While the problem of violence and conflict was partially redefined as of September 11, 2001, the general study of interstate war remains relevant and the theories and history studied here have many pertinent lessons. A special focus of this class will be on creating war-solving military doctrines, understanding the causes of problems between states, and how to prevent misperceptions between states, especially understanding the problems and peaceful possibilities of a world system structured by nuclear deterrence. Further, we explore the link between the spread of democracy and the spread of peace, and the democratic causes of war. I will argue that these key lessons offer some of the greatest leverage over today’s security problems.

--No readings assigned for Monday; two handouts will be available at class on “Crater Supports Idea on Extinction” from NYTimes, 1992 & NSF press release, “New Blow for Dinosaur-Killing Asteroid Theory”

**PLAN to Attend TALK THURSDAY, 10/1, 4:00pm in Straub 145: “The Causes and Consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict: A View from Poland” –Dr. Wojciech Michnik --EXTRA CREDIT**

**Week 1 (cont’d): THEORIES OF WAR:**

**Introducing the LEVELS OF ANALYSIS: The level of the individual: Is it Human Nature to fight? Do wars happen because of psychological biases of humans?**

Political scientists generally organize the study of war by examining different “levels of analysis.” We will discuss the most popular and the most compelling hypotheses proposed at each level. The first level we discuss is the Individual Level. Does war happen because individuals instinctively fight or because they are taught to fight? Nature v. nurture and the causes of war. Gender and war. Does war happen because of human psychological biases?

Daniel Kahneman and Jonathan Renshon, “Hawkish Biases,”

Robert Jervis, “Understanding beliefs and threat inflation”

Alexander L. George, “Coercive Diplomacy” in A & G

Mary Warner Blanchard, “American manhood and the Rhetoric of War,” CANVAS

**Recommended on reserve:**

BK. 1. Greg Cashman, *What Causes War?*. Cashman provides an overview of the study of war—a comprehensive review of the theories at different "levels of analysis." This is a somewhat dated textbook for undergrads—easy to read—and it can really help the uninitiated throughout this class. For this week, read pp. 1-17, p.35, 36-46, 75-76. Skim 17-34, 46-74. If you want to know more, or do not fully understand lecture, much clarity could be gained through reading this book. If you feel lost-- I recommend you read as much as you can—soon—or at least confront it all. This is also a handy reference if you ever want more detail about theories I can only briefly mention and not discuss at length. Cashman and Robinson have the more recent follow-up book, listed above, that will be discussed in class and it could be a valuable resource for this course, but it is organized differently, as we will discuss. ALSO, Levy and Thompson is a brilliant book organized by Levels of Analysis—perfect for grad students, and much more up-to-date, but not as easy to read for undergraduates.
**Week 2: State Level Theories: Democracy and Nationalism**

Is it the type of state that matters for war? Are democracies more peaceful than non-democracies? How important are governmental decision making processes for war? Is nationalism a cause of war or peace? How can it be contained or controlled?

Barry R. Posen, “The Sources of Military Doctrine” in A & G

John M. Owen, “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace” CANVAS

Christopher Layne, “Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace Theory” CANVAS

Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and the Danger of War” CANVAS

**Recommended on Reserve:**

Dale C. Copeland, “Economic Interdependence and War: A Theory of Trade Expectations”


BK. 1. Cashman, pp.77-160. Read lots, skim as necessary. Pay most attention to Chapter 5 for now.

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**Week 3: Anarchy, System Level Theories, Offense-Defense Theory and the Security Dilemma**

**Anarchy:** The international system is “anarchic” because there is no sovereign to enforce a rule of law between states. Does this mean war is inevitable?

**Security Dilemma:** Often/sometimes--the means a state uses to increase its own security decreases the security of other states. This is the security dilemma. This means efforts to increase security may in fact provoke actions by others that will leave the state worse off. Ooops. So what is a state to do? Should a state always “play it safe” and deter other states? Or should a state “appease” others in an effort to avoid unwanted conflict spirals? How does a state decide which action is appropriate? Can you apply this idea to history or current events?

**Military Doctrines as Causes of War:** States have many choices in the types of policies they can choose to pursue. Very crucially, it matters a great deal what type of military doctrine a state adopts—an offensive doctrine or a defensive doctrine or some mix. Here we examine the factors that help to shape military doctrines, and then the various types of choices a state makes, either consciously or by default.


Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War*, --Intro on CANVAS

Stephen Van Evera, “Offense, Defense and the Causes of War” CANVAS


Richard K. Betts, “The Lost Logic of Deterrence” A & G

**Recommended:**

Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War*.

Jack S. Levy, “The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology”


would use the stick, warning that using the carrot ("appeasement") emboldens others to make more demands. Who's right? Probably both--but under what circumstances? How can you tell which circumstances you are in?


**Week 4: Misperceptions are a very common cause of war. Where do misperceptions come from?**
Throughout this class we will examine how common and how dangerous misperceptions are in international politics. Misperceptions are extremely common. States/leaders often fail to understand each other, and the consequences are often deadly. What are the numerous causes of misperceptions? What can be done?

Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception" *World Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Apr., 1968), 454-479. A classic discussion of the delusions to which states are prone. Is Jervis' list of myopias a good one? Do they arise from the psychological sources he stresses or are other causes at work?

Snyder, Myths of Empire, pp.1-65, Chapter 1, “The Myth of Security Through Expansion” and Chapter 2 “Three Theories of Overexpansion”. Snyder identifies common “myths” that can be seen across time and in different states, and he offers some possible explanations of where these “myths” come from.

Jack Snyder, “Imperial Myths and Threat Inflation” CANVAS


**Recommended for reference:**
Chaim Kaufmann, “Threat Inflation and the failure of the Marketplace of Ideas” CANVAS


**II. HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES OF WARS**

**Week 5 & 6: World War I – Still enjoying 100 year anniversary!**
An avoidable tragedy? A world war that emerged within a few short decades from a seemingly untroubled world. Any parallels to today? Lessons to be learned?

Annika Mombauer, “Long and short-term causes of the First World War” selection from The Origins of the First World War


Immanuel Geiss, German Foreign Policy, 1871-1914 (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 142-150, 206-207. This selection is the tale of the War Council of 8 December 1912. This book summarizes the views of the "Fischer School," which argues that German aggression was a prime cause of World War I. Others find Fischer and Geiss unpersuasive. Who's right?


**ALSO:**
Jack Snyder, “The Cult of the Offensive in 1914” in A & G.
Dale Copeland, “The July Crisis and the Outbreak of World War I” ch. 4 in The Origins of Major War
**Week 6/7: World War II in Europe**

Yes, Hitler planned and caused the war—but did the West fail to deter him? Was “appeasement” the real cause of the war? Why was the West in such a mood to appease Hitler so soon after WWI? Did they feel guilty about Versailles and want to be fair to the Germans? Were these feelings valid or misperceptions? Why did they appease Hitler? What lessons are here?


John Mearsheimer, “Hitler and the Blitzkrieg Strategy” in A & G.

**Week 7: World War II in the Pacific**

The US attempted to deter Japan--it certainly did not appease Japan--and yet Japan still went to war with the US. Would war have been averted or greatly minimized if Japan had been appeased? Did the US actually begin the war by embargoing Japan's oil and provoking the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Sir George Sansom, “Japan’s Fatal Blunder” in A & G.

Scott Sagan, "The Origins of the Pacific War."

Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War 1931-1945*, pp. 3-54; 247-256—but the rest is very engrossing. Was the Japanese decision for war a rational response to circumstances, or in some sense "irrational"? Ienaga and Sagan disagree—who's right?


**Week 8 & 9: The Cold War & The Nuclear Revolution**

Have nuclear weapons changed everything? What has not changed?

Stephen Van Evera, “The Nuclear Revolution” ch. 8 from *The Causes of War*

Donald A. Welch, James G. Blight, and Bruce J. Allyn, “The Cuban Missile Crisis” A & G

Kenneth N. Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities” in A & G.

Richard K. Betts, “The Lost Logic of Deterrence” A & G (review from above.)

**6-10 page Research Paper due 11/25 — in class—do NOT MISS CLASS TO FINISH THE PAPER!**

**Week 10: The Future Causes of WAR**

Contemporary Era & Current Military Strategies—are they war-causing?

Barry R. Posen “The Strategy of Restraint” A & G


*International Security,* 30/4, (Spring 2006), pp.7-44.

**Wednesday, 12/2: Review**
I will handout possible questions for final.

*Bring THREE green books to final on Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 14:45 (2:45 pm) in the classroom.* I will hand out study questions for the final on the last day of class. Most of the essay questions on the exam will be taken from this set of study questions, or closely based on these questions. There will also be a number of short identification questions on the final as well, mostly unasked/reworded potential quiz questions from throughout the term.