

PSCI 2220: Crisis Diplomacy

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How do states make foreign policy decisions in times of crisis or conflict? Which strategies or policies are most likely to help states achieve their goals in international affairs? How do political and military conditions affect these choices and their likely outcomes? PSCI 2220 will focus on questions like these. To better understand the diplomatic decisions of states in crisis, we will draw from a combination of historical and contemporary case studies, rigorous theoretical models, and large-scale statistical evidence.

My main goal in this class is for you to come away understanding:

- Basic principles and models of *strategic* thinking—how one person’s decisions depend on what they expect others to do.
- How political scientists have built on these methods and models to form theories of crisis diplomacy.
- How to apply strategic thinking yourself to analyze ongoing conflict situations, whether in the news or even your own life.

General Information

Place and Time. PSCI 2220 meets in Commons Center 335 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Contact Info. You can reach me by email at brenton.kenkel@vanderbilt.edu. I always respond to student emails within one business day, usually quicker than that—but don’t expect an instant reply if you email me late at night or on the weekend.

Office Hours. My office hours are Tuesdays from 2:00–4:00 p.m. in Commons Center 324. Please feel free to stop by then!

Grader. The grader for PSCI 2220 is Haonan Dong. His office hours are Wednesdays from 1:00–2:00 p.m. in Commons Center 304K (within the LAPOP institute). You can also email him at haonan.dong@vanderbilt.edu.

Grading

Your grade will be based on:

- Weekly reading quizzes (20%). (Lowest score dropped.)
- Three short policy papers (20%). (Lowest score raised by 5 percentage points.)

- In-class debate (15%).
- Takehome midterm exam (20%).
- Takehome final exam (25%).

If you care to know the details about how your assignment grades are translated into your final grade, see the “Calculating Your Course Grade” handout on Brightspace.

Late Assignments

For the three short papers, there is a one-time-use, no-questions-asked, 72-hour extension policy. The first time you miss a deadline on one of these assignments, you can turn in the assignment anytime within 72 hours of the original due date for no penalty. You don’t have to ask or inform me that you are taking the extension option; I will apply it automatically. After the first 72 hours—or if you have used the extension on a previous assignment—each day late is a 5 percentage point grade reduction.

For the reading quizzes, takehome midterm, and takehome final, late assignments will not be accepted except in case of a documented medical or family emergency.

COVID-19 and Attendance Policy

Do not come to class if you have COVID-19 symptoms. Go to Student Health to get tested and self-isolate while you await your results.

Attendance in this class is not required. You do not need to email me if you are going to miss class. Both exams are takehome and all assignments are submitted digitally. If you miss class for illness or other reasons, I recommend catching up on the lecture slides posted on Brightspace, and getting notes from a classmate.

Accommodations

I want to provide an effective learning environment for students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know.

I will do whatever it takes to make sure this class is a place where you can learn and thrive, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, you should also contact Student Access Services to get more information about specific accommodations.

Academic Integrity

As in all classes at Vanderbilt, your work in PSCI 2220 is governed by the Honor Code. I encourage to discuss course material and assignments with your peers, but the written work you turn in must be solely your own.

I have no tolerance for plagiarism. If you turn in plagiarized work, you will receive a failing grade for the course and be reported to the Honor Council. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse or a defense.

Plagiarism is not just verbatim copying and pasting—representing someone else’s arguments or ideas as your own without citing the source is also a form of plagiarism. For more information about what is and is not plagiarism, refer to the Student Handbook section on the Honor System. Take particular note of the section: “The Honor Code Applied to Preparation of Papers”: <https://tinyurl.com/vandy-honor-papers>.

Schedule and Readings

All readings will be posted on Brightspace. These are academic papers and sometimes may be dense. To help out, I’ll also post reading guides listing the key questions you should be able to answer after completing the reading.

In addition to the articles listed here, I may also ask you to read some (brief!) news articles about relevant cases. These will be posted on Brightspace too.

Date	Reading/topic
Coercive Threats	
Thurs 1/20	Schelling (1966, ch. 2)
Tues 1/25	Fearon (1997)
Thurs 1/27	Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer and Renshon (2018)
Nuclear Weapons	
Tues 2/1	Sagan (1997)
Thurs 2/3	Sechser and Fuhrmann (2013)
Sanctions	
Tues 2/8	Drezner (2021)
Thurs 2/10	Miller (2014)
Paper 1 due	
Alliances	
Tues 2/15	Morrow (2000)
Thurs 2/17	Leeds (2003)
Tues 2/22	Johnson and Leeds (2011)
Thurs 2/24	Kenwick, Vasquez and Powers (2015)
Foreign Aid	
Tues 3/1	Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2012, ch. 7)

Thurs	3/3	Alesina and Dollar (2000)	Paper 2 due
Tues	3/15	<i>Midterm review</i>	
Weds	3/16		Midterm handed out
Thurs	3/17	Bermeo (2011)	
Fri	3/18		Midterm due
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Diplomatic Meetings			
Tues	3/22	Holmes and Yarhi-Milo (2017)	
Thurs	3/24	Malis (2021)	
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Public Influence			
Tues	3/29	Nye Jr. (2008)	
Thurs	3/31	Goldsmith, Horiuchi and Matush (2021)	Paper 3 due
Tues	4/5	Hafner-Burton (2008)	
Thurs	4/7	<i>First in-class debate</i>	
Tues	4/12	Helmus et al. (2018, ch. 2)	
Thurs	4/14	<i>Second in-class debate</i>	
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Terrorism			
Tues	4/19	Kydd and Walter (2006)	
Thurs	4/21	<i>Third in-class debate</i>	
Tues	4/26	Trager and Zagorcheva (2006)	
Thurs	4/28	Fortna (2015)	
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Weds	5/4		Final handed out
Fri	5/6		Final due

References

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