The Causes of War

War is the single most destructive social act in which humanity engages: while precise numbers are impossible to get, by many estimates in the twentieth century over 100 million people died as a direct result of war. And while there have been no wars between the great powers of the international system in over fifty years, violence continues in many other forms: almost five million people died as a result of the 1998-2003 Congo War, and fighting continues not just in Iraq and Afghanistan but in dozens of places around the world. Why do these wars happen? What (if anything) can be done to prevent them? What can we do to bring ongoing wars to an end and to consolidate peace in their aftermath?

This course addresses these questions, focusing on a variety of popular and scholarly explanations for interstate war. We will pair theoretical discussions with examination of historical cases, including both prominent cases such as the World Wars and lesser known conflicts from Africa and elsewhere. By the end of this course, students should have both a good understanding of the merits of different explanations for war as well as significant knowledge about wars through history.

Readings:

Required Books: Geoffery Blainey, The Causes of War (any edition is fine), Richard Betts, Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace (any edition is fine)

The rest of the readings can be accessed through blackboard or via the websites provided on the syllabus.

Important Dates:

*Midterm Exam I (in-class): February 18
*Midterm Exam II (in-class): March 22
*Escalation Simulation: “The July 1965 Decision to Escalate”: March 24
*Escalation Simulation 3-Page Write-up (in-class): March 31
*Final Exam: **SEE BU EXAM WEEK SCHEDULE**
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Simulations: These simulations are designed to put you in the place of the policy maker. You will be given a scenario and tasked, with your group, to advice the President or defense organization in question, on future policy. For the simulation to be successful you must complete the weeks readings before coming to class that day. You will be graded on both your participation in class and a 3-page write up of the simulation due the next class. The 3-page write up will change and will be given out at the end of the simulation and due the next class.

Make-up Policy: There are no makeup exams or simulations (especially simulations as they are done in a group and in class). Plan your vacations and travel accordingly.

Electronic Communications in Class: Please do not use laptop computers, cell phones, or any other electronic devices during the seminar. These are serious distractions to your learning.

Academic Integrity: By remaining in the course you are tacitly agreeing to follow standard principles of academic integrity in this course. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense because it undermines the bonds of trust and honesty among members of the community and defrauds those who may eventually depend upon our knowledge and integrity. Such dishonesty consists of cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. Examples of academic dishonesty include using someone else’s words or ideas without proper documentation; copying some portion of your text from another source without proper acknowledgement of indebtedness; borrowing another person’s specific ideas without documenting their source; turning in a paper written by someone else, an essay “service,” or from a web site. Any assignment that was generated in whole or part through academic dishonesty will be failed with no “do-overs.” If you are not sure you understand what constitutes academic integrity or the lack of it, consult with me. [Wording provided largely by Jeffrey Henriques.] For the university policy on academic conduct, see http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/.

Disabilities: Students have a right to reasonable accommodations to take account of certain physical or cognitive disabilities and allow them to pursue success in their education at BU. Students who believe they require such accommodations must go through the formal process of application in a timely way. For more information, see http://www.bu.edu/disability/policies-procedures/academic-accommodations/beginning-academic-program/.
Part I: Introduction and What is War?

Week 1: January 19-21

What is War?
- Blainey, Geoffrey, *The Causes of War, Chapter 1*

Part II: Structural Causes of Interstate War

Week 2: January 26 – 28

Structural Causes and Hegemonic War. Case Study – Rising China?
- Waltz, K, *The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory* in Betts
- Betts and Christensen, *China: Can the Next Super Power Rise without War?* in Betts

Week 3: February 2 – 4

Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagon
- Walt, Stephen, *Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning*

Offensive, Defensive, and, the Security Dilemma. Case Study – World War I
- Levy, J, *The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology* in Betts
- Singer and Freedman (2014). “Cult of the Cyber Offensive,” *Foreign Policy*
Part III: Domestic Causes of Interstate War

Week 4: February 9 – 11

Economic Causes (and Consequences?) of War (and Peace?)
- Lenin, V. I. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* in Betts
- Milward, *War as Policy* in Betts
- Keynes, John *Economic Consequences of Peace*, Chapter 1-2, skim 4-5, 6

Week 5: February 16 – 18

Divisionary War

**Midterm February 18**

Part IV: The Inevitable Causes of War?

Week 6: February 23 – 25

The Bargaining Model of War. Case Study – Iraq War 2003
- Case Study: “A Firm And Commensurate Response” U.S. Retaliation for the Bush Assassination Attempt

Week 7: March 1 – 3

Optimism. Case Study – Korean War 1950
- Case Study: MacArthur – Document Packet – Handed out In Class
Nukes

- Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons* in Betts
- Mearsheimer, *The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent* - 
  http://johnmearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/Mearsheimer%20Case%20for%20Ukrainian%20Nuclear%20Deterrent.pdf

**Week 8: March 8 – 10 **SPRING BREAK**

**Part V: What Does War Look Like and Why?**

**Week 9: March 15 – 17**

**War Duration**

- Blainey, Geoffrey, *The Causes of War,* Chapter 10, 13, and 14

**War Termination**

- Goemans, Hein, War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War, pp 1-13, 22-26

**CLASS CANCELLED MARCH 17**

**Week 10: March 22 – 24**

**March 22 **MIDTERM EXAM**

**March 24 **1965 Escalation Simulation**

- Case Study Material for 1965 Escalation Simulation – Handed out in class

**Part III: Causes of Civil War**

**Week 11: March 29 – 31**

**Structural and Proximate Causes of Civil War**

Week 12: April 5 – 7

Modernization and Democratization

• Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* in Betts
• Mansfield, E. and Snyder, J, *Democratization and War* in Betts
• Kaufmann, *Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic and Civil Wars*

Week 13: April 11 – 13

Iraq, Syria, and ISIS

• Articles – On Blackboard

Part V: That Which Makes War Less Likely

Week 14: April 23 – 25

The Liberal Peace I – Regime Type, Institutions, and Cooperation

• Blainey, Geoffrey, *The Causes of War*, Chapter 2
• Kant, I, *Perpetual Peace* in Betts
• Doyle, *Liberalism and World Politics* in Betts

Psychology: Unconscious Sources of Conflict

• Freud, *Why War* in Betts
• Milgram, *How Good People Do Bad Things* in Betts
• Keegan, John *Why Men Fight* in History of Warfare PP 79-98

Week 15: April 28 – 30

TBA