

THE CAUSES OF WAR

Winter 2020

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Course Description

This course will inquire into the causes of war from a number of contending theoretical perspectives. Following on critical engagement with debates concerning what constitutes war and peace, students will be introduced to successive explanations of war, its causes, and the conditions for peace as well as critiques highlighting the weaknesses of each. In each instance, connections will be made between these debates and those concerning competing conceptions of security in contemporary International Relations.

The approach taken will seek to uncover insights into the causes of war through a range of inquiries into the conditions for peace as well as through engagement with more direct cause-and-effect types of explanations. This is intended to give students a greater sense of both the various accounts of the causes of war and the broader political contexts in which those accounts are embedded. Lectures and assigned readings are designed to be complementary, so it is essential that students come to class having read and thought about the assigned readings for the week. Likewise, each lecture and set of assigned readings will provide crucial bases for students to make sense of complex ideas covered subsequently. Dedicated students will be rewarded for their efforts with a deeper understanding of war and its causes and by the opportunity to sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should:

- Be familiar with major currents in the causes of war debates as they have taken shape in disciplinary International Relations.
- Have a deeper understanding of how the causes of war debates may actually limit us in thinking about political possibilities short of resort to organized political violence.
- Recognize and evaluate the range of questions and insights left unexplored in the causes of war debates and how they affect the ways we might make sense of conflict between political communities.
- Have built on and refined analytical writing skills through argumentative essays.

Required Materials and Texts

- All required readings are available online via e-Journals from the Library website.
- Through the first five weeks of the course, students should view at least 5 films from the list below, selecting at least one of the five from each category (documentary; docudrama; historical drama; sci fi). Films are available through various subscription services, including but not limited to major commercially available streaming services. Students may make their viewing selections according to their individual access subscription preferences. One of these films

will be selected by students to serve as the narrative component of the Analytic Essay due in class on March 12th (see description under the heading, 'Course Evaluation – Details', below).

Films, by category:

DOCUMENTARY

- *Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (2003; directed by Errol Morris)
- *Only the Dead* (2015; directed by Michael Ware and Bill Guttentag)
- *They Shall Not Grow Old* (2018; directed by Peter Jackson)

DOCUDRAMA

- *Thirteen Days* (2000; directed by Roger Donaldson)
- *Downfall* (2004; directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel)
- *13 Minutes* (2015; directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel)

HISTORICAL DRAMA

- *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930; directed by Lewis Milestone)
- *Paths of Glory* (1957; directed by Stanley Kubrick)
- *Dr. Strangelove (or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb)* (1964; directed by Stanley Kubrick)
- *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1979; directed by Delbert Mann)
- *Apocalypse Now* (1979; Francis Ford Coppola)
- *Gallipoli* (1981; directed by Brian May)
- *The Day After* (1983; directed by Nicholas Meyer)
- *Pearl Harbor* (2001; directed by Michael Bay)

- *Lord of War* (2005; directed by Andrew Niccol)
- *Hurt Locker* (2008; directed by Kathryn Bigelow)
- *Beasts of No Nation* (2015; directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga)
- *Eye in the Sky* (2015; Gavin Hood)
- *Hyena Road* (2015; directed by Paul Gross)
- *1898, Our Last Men in the Philippines* (2016; directed by Salvador Calvo)
- *Sand Castle* (2017; directed by Fernando Coimbra)

SCI FI

- *Starship Troopers* (1997; directed by Paul Verhoeven)
- *Avatar* (2009; directed by James Cameron)
- *District 9* (2009; directed by Neill Blomkamp)
- *Ender's Game* (2013; directed by Gavin Hood)

Class Format

The course will operate on a weekly lecture format.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Think Piece – 25%, due in class January 30, 2020
2. Analytic Essay – 40%, due in class March 12, 2020
3. Final Exam – 35%, to be held during Registrar-scheduled examination period.

Course Evaluation – Details

Think Piece (25%), due in class January 30, 2020

Students will write a short essay (1000 words) engaging with the material covered in lecture on January 16th and informed by Johan Galtung's "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." This assignment is to be a 'think piece' in which students will make the case

for a particular definition of war over others covered in the January 16th lecture and suggested, in part, by Galtung's article.

Analytic Essay (40%), due in class March 12, 2020

Students will prepare an essay of 1500 – 1750 words in length, undertaking applied analysis of a chosen war narrative. Students will select a film from the list provided above. The war narrative of the film will serve as a 'case study' by which to assess the relative merits of any two of the major theoretical approaches covered in the course. Students should have a clear thesis advocating for one of these approaches over the other for its greater analytic/explanatory value in the context of the war as it is narrated in the film. Papers should make use of and properly cite assigned readings from the course and may also draw from additional sources.

Final Exam (35%), to be scheduled by Registrar

The final exam, designed to be written in two hours, will be based on the material covered in lectures and assigned readings. The exam will include both a short answer/identification component and questions requiring longer, essay-style responses. Some choice will be given.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 9)

Introduction to the Course

The role of theory; epistemology and method. Traditional approaches to the causes of war debates. The approach we will take in the course.

Reading: None

Week 2 (January 16)

What is War? What is Peace? What of Causes?

Typology of warfare; positive versus negative peace; direct versus structural violence.

Reading:

- Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6:3 (1969).
- Max Boot, "The Evolution of Irregular War," *Foreign Affairs*, 92:2 (2013).
- Edward Newman, "The 'New Wars' Debate: A Historical Perspective Is Needed," *Security Dialogue*, 35:2 (2004).

Week 3 (January 23)

Creating Conditions for Peace

Conceptual aftermath of the First World War; structural explanations of war and prescriptions for peace.

Reading:

- Paul Musgrave, "Argument: IR Theory and Game of Thrones Are Both Fantasies," *Foreign Policy* (23 May 2019), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/23/ir-theory-and-game-of-thrones-are-both-fantasies/?fbclid=IwAR0X5pg06ABrWk02bXQsFKB0UM4nwbYDtEQAyaYK1lvZHxkUvJn4a0R7-bE>.
- Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security*, 9:1 (Summer 1984).

Week 4 (January 30)

Self-Help and Egoistic States

The question of human nature; the quest for survival; the security dilemma.

Reading:

- Azar Gat, "So Why Do People Fight? Evolutionary Theory and the Causes of War," *European Journal of International Relations*. 15:4 (2009).
- Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, 30 (January 1978).

Note: Think Piece due in class.

Week 5 (February 6)

Prisoners of History

War as a consequence of historical process relating to the distribution of power.

Reading:

- Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18:4 (Spring 1988).
- Jack S. Levy, "Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War," *World Politics*, 40:1 (October 1987).

Week 6 (February 13)

Passengers of History

War as a consequence of historical process relating to the distribution of material resources.

Reading:

- Samir Amin, "1492," *Monthly Review*, 44:3 (July-August 1992).
- Anna Stavrianakis, "Call to Arms: The University as a Site of Militarised Capitalism and a Site of Struggle," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 35:1 (December 2006).

Week 7 (February 20)

No class – Reading Week

Week 8 (February 27)

An End to History?

Democratic peace, interdependence, and the 'end of history'.

Reading:

- John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security*, 19:2 (Fall 1994).
- Raymond Cohen, "Pacific Unions: A Reappraisal of the Theory that 'Democracies Do Not Go to War With Each Other,'" *Review of International Studies*, 20:3 (July 1994).

Week 9 (March 5)

What You See is What you Get

War as unintended consequence of human cognitive limits and frailties.

Reading:

- Dina Badie, "Groupthink, Iraq, and the War on Terror: Explaining US Policy Shift toward Iraq," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 6:4 (October 2010).
- Robert Jervis and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Perception and Misperception on the Korean Peninsula: How Unwanted Wars Begin," *Foreign Affairs*, 97:3 (May/June 2018).

Week 10 (March 12)

Social Landscapes of War-Making

Production, dissemination, and naturalization of popular ideas underwriting recourse to war.

Reading:

- Caron E. Gentry, "Anxiety and the Creation of the Scapegoated Other," *Critical Studies on Security*, 3:2 (2015).
- Markus Komprobst, "Framing, Resonance and War: Foregrounds and Backgrounds of Cultural Congruence," *European Journal of International Relations*, 25:1 (2019).

Note: Essay due in class.

Week 11 (March 19)

Guest Lecture: War and Large-Scale Indiscriminacy

Exploring the use/threat of use of inherently indiscriminate weapons.

Reading:

- Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12:4 (1987).
- Anne I. Harrington, "Power, Violence, and Nuclear Weapons," *Critical Studies on Security*, 4:1 (2016).

Week 12 (March 26)

No Class – ISA Conference

Week 13 (April 2)

Ways Forward: Final Reflections and Exam Review

The return of 'human nature': back to the future?

Reading:

- Napoleon A. Chagnon, "Life Histories, Blood Revenge, and Warfare in a Tribal Population," *Science*, 239 (26 February 1988).
- R. Brian Ferguson, "Blood of the Leviathan: Western Contact and Warfare in Amazonia," *American Ethnologist*, 17:2 (May 1990).

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Written work must be submitted in hard copy in class.

When marking your written work throughout the term, I will consider the following criteria. Please be sure to read them carefully:

Analytical Content: Higher grades will be given to work that demonstrates comprehension of the readings and issues raised in class, and that presents an interpretation and critical analysis of that material. Lower grades will be given to work that simply summarizes or describes the readings and course content. To determine whether you are on the right track, ask yourself, “Am I telling the reader what I think about the concepts and ideas in my paper and why they are important to my argument, or am I simply telling the reader what those concepts are?” The key here is engagement with the literature, as opposed to repetition of the literature.

Development of an Argument: Higher grades will be given to work that has a clearly stated thesis and a set of logically developed and reasonably comprehensive arguments in support of that thesis. Lower grades will be given to work that has no thesis or has a thesis that is not logically developed or supported by the body of the paper. Ask yourself, “Does my paper seek to prove a point?” The key here is to attempt to convince your reader of the soundness of your argument (i.e., that you are ‘right’). Imagine that you are telling someone about your brilliant idea for world peace – have you anticipated and accounted for their questions and counter-arguments in your paper? NOTE: a paper that has a clear thesis is almost unavoidably analytical, while the failure to pay attention to your thesis and arguments will make the ‘analytical content’ requirement difficult to meet.

Grammar, Spelling, and Style: Higher grades will be given to written work that is grammatically correct and is clearly and accurately written, while lower grades will be given to work that is difficult to read or understand due to excessive grammatical and/or spelling errors. Different approaches work for different people, but I would recommend that you try the following every time you have a written assignment: after completing your assignment, put it away for a while (ideally, for a few days); when you pick it up again, read it carefully, slowly, and aloud – when we are familiar with a paper we tend to skim it during proof-reading, thereby missing errors, so make sure you are reading it word for word. Mistakes in grammar may not always look wrong, but they usually sound wrong. If you need some help with writing, you are encouraged to contact the Student Success Centre (<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-support/>) for assistance.

Meeting the Requirements of the Assignment: All written work must be submitted on time, must be of the appropriate length, must use the required number and type of

resources, and, most importantly, must address the issues or questions posed in the assignment.

Mechanics and Aesthetics: Higher grades will be given to written work that includes all of the basic requirements of any written assignment. This includes a title page, complete and proper referencing in a major recognized format, and numbered pages. Further, all of the conventions of essay writing should be observed (i.e. double-spacing, use of a standard sized font, uniform one-inch margins, single spacing and indenting of quotes longer than four lines, etc.). Lower grades will be assigned to work that does not include all of these elements, and to work that is sloppy in general. Again, a careful proof-reading will be helpful.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Late papers will be accepted, but will be subject to a late penalty of 5 per cent per weekday to a maximum of 5 days, after which they will not be accepted and a mark of 0 will be recorded. In the interest of fairness to all students, there will be no exceptions to this unless you have arranged with me in advance for an extension. Papers submitted after deadlines (including excused late papers) will be marked, but comments will not be provided.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Extensions on assignments can be arranged in the event of illness or similar circumstances. All extensions must be arranged in advance of the day on which a paper is due.

In light of the format of the course and the emphasis on regular and consistent participation in class discussions, attendance is mandatory. Some absences (such as in

cases of illness, for example) may be unavoidable. Please contact me in advance (or as soon thereafter as possible) via email if you are going to be absent.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.