We should seek by all means in our power to avoid war, by analyzing possible causes, by trying to remove them, [and] by discussion in a spirit of collaboration and good will. Neville Chamberlain, 1938

Course Description: What causes war is arguably one of the most important questions in the field of international politics. This course analyzes the major theories about the causes of war, in relation to different levels of analysis (international, state, and individual). In each week of the course, a candidate theory is examined and then a specific war is analyzed in depth to test the validity of the theory. The course aims to discover not only which theories are most persuasive but also the circumstances in which each theory is or is not valid.

Required Reading: You may purchase the following books from the William and Mary bookstore or try to find less expensive or used copies on the internet.


* A number of readings on the syllabus and all course documents are available on Blackboard (http://blackboard.wm.edu).

Course Requirements: You are expected to attend every class, complete the readings before the class for which they were assigned, and participate in class discussions. Graded assignments include: two take-home essays, a literature review, and a 20-25 page research paper. The guidelines for the research paper
are appended to the syllabus. The paper is due in Morton 25 on **May 11 by 5:00 p.m.** The take-home essays will assess your ability to think creatively and critically about course material. The question will be distributed in class one week prior to the due date. **Students cannot pass the course without completing all assignments.**

**Grading:** Your participation in class discussions and performance on the take-home essays and research paper will determine your final grade. They are weighted as follows:

- Participation: 15%
- Take-home essay #1: 20%
- Take-home essay #2: 20%
- Literature review: 15%
- Research paper: 30%

Numeric grades translate into letter grades in the following manner:

- 100-94: A
- 93-90: A-
- 89-87: B+
- 86-84: B
- 83-80: B-, etc.

**Late Assignments:** Failure to hand in an assignment at the scheduled time will result in a zero for that assignment. Receiving an extension because of an absence requires notice from the Health Center or the Dean of Students. Late papers and take-home essays will be penalized 2/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late (i.e., the grade for a paper that is one day late will be lowered, for example, from an A- to a B).

**Academic Honesty:** You are expected to adhere to the tenets of the Honor Code when completing course assignments; they will be strictly enforced. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism (e.g., the rules for properly attributing cited material or how to paraphrase), please ask for clarification from me before handing in your paper.

* COURSE SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR*
Course Schedule

January 19: Introduction

January 26: The Challenge of Studying War

* J. David Singer, “The Levels of Analysis Problem in International Relations,” World Politics (October 1961). (BB)

February 2: Polarity and War (WWII)

Background: * R. J. Overy, The Origins of the Second World War, all.


February 9: Power Transitions and War (WWI)

Background: * Gordon Martel, The Origins of the First World War, all.


February 16: The Offense-Defense Balance and War (WWI)


February 23: Economic Interdependence, Capitalism, and War (WWI)

* V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Conflict After the Cold War*.
* Joseph Schumpeter, "Imperialism and Capitalism," in *Conflict After the Cold War*.

**Case Readings:** * James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (Longman, 1992), ch. 6-7. (BB)

**March 2: Regime Change and War** (Russian interventions in Chechnya)

**Readings:**
* Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and War," in *Conflict After the Cold War*.


**Assignment:** * Take-home essay #1 due in class.

**March 5-13: Spring Break (no classes)**

**March 16: Ethnic Divisions and War** (The Breakup of Yugoslavia)

**Readings:**


**March 23: Resource Scarcity and War** (The Pacific War)

**Readings:**

**Case Readings:** * Scott Sagan, “The Origins of the Pacific War,” in *Origin and Prevention*.

**Assignment:** * Submit a 5-7 page literature review, which describes your proposed project and discusses the existing research related to your chosen topic. An effective literature review accomplishes two goals: (1) it summarizes and evaluates the state of knowledge on a particular subject; and (2) it situates the proposed project in relation to the existing research and highlights its value added (e.g., shows that it fills a gap in a literature, corrects a flaw or problem in previous studies, applies an existing theory to a new topic, etc.). In sum, your literature review will provide an overview of the scholarship most pertinent to your research and explain how the proposed paper will add to or alter the existing body of knowledge. The literature review is due in class.*
March 30: Misperception and War (Korean War)

**Readings:**

**Case Readings:**

April 6: Gender and War (Persian Gulf War)

**Readings:**
* J. Ann Tickner, “Men, Women and War,” in *Conflict After the Cold War.*

**Case Readings:**

April 13: Personality and War or the “Bad Men” Theory of War (Saddam Hussein’s Wars)

**Readings:**

**Case Readings:**

April 20: Human Nature and War (2003 Iraq War)

**Readings:**

**Case Readings:**

April 27: What Do We Know About War?

**Assignment:**
* Take-home essay #2 due in class.
For this assignment, you will integrate theoretical arguments on the causes of war with historical cases of conflict. There are five main options for your paper:

1. Use a theory to explain more accurately the outbreak of war in a particular case (e.g., balance of power theory and World War I)—ideally a case (perhaps representing a larger class of cases) that has not been explained using that theory;

2. Choose one theory and two cases of war in order to make an argument about when the theory is strongest and weakest (e.g., Walt’s theory of revolution and war, World War I, and the Russo-Japanese War) with the aim of identifying new scope conditions for that theory;

3. Show how two theories, when combined, offer a superior explanation of a particular case of war (e.g., misperception, the offensive-defense balance, and World War II)—the theories should be combined in a way that has been overlooked by scholars;

4. Find two competing theories and use a case to demonstrate that one explanation is superior (e.g., Rosecrance’s “Trade and Power,” Lenin’s theory imperialism, and the 19th century colonial wars) in order to construct a new or superior test of one of those theories; or

5. Identify an overlooked explanation for war and illustrate its utility by applying it to a case (note: this may include adding a new variable to an existing theory of war).

Thus, your paper should aim to make an original contribution to the literature on the causes of war. To determine whether you are adding to the existing research on war, you will need to conduct a literature review. An effective literature review accomplishes two goals: (1) it summarizes and evaluates the state of knowledge on a particular subject; and (2) it situates the proposed project in relation to the existing research and highlights its value added. In sum, a literature review will provide an overview of the scholarship most pertinent to your research interests and explain how the proposed research will add to or alter the existing body of knowledge. Examples of effective literature reviews are available on Blackboard.

Keep in mind: your paper is not merely descriptive, but rather engages in a thoughtful and critical analysis of a theoretical puzzle. History should be used as evidence to support an explicitly theoretical argument. A simple description of the events that led up to the outbreak of a war, which is not grounded in theory, is inadequate. Criticize and engage the theories. I am especially interested in a creative and analytical response: what is right and wrong with the theories. Feel free to narrow your focus to one aspect of the theory of the causes of war, one variable, one definitional problem, etc. Similarly, narrow your focus on the historical case, looking at one episode in the origins of the war. It is unlikely that your paper will be too focused.

You should draw on and cite a wide range of the best and most reliable sources. Be sure to begin your research early. Relying exclusively on the library’s search engine to locate articles or books is a mistake, as it usually identifies only a fraction of the available sources. Excellent research requires no small amount of detective work to find the most appropriate and up-to-date sources. If you find one particularly useful article, use its bibliography to track down other sources. Note that you are not only looking for relevant books. There are many potentially useful sources of information: academic (peer-reviewed) journals, policy journals (e.g. Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, National Interest); chapters in edited books; and news and magazine periodicals. You are also encouraged to use primary sources.

Remember: you must cite any information or ideas that you borrow from someone else’s work (when in doubt, cite). Any social science citation style is acceptable as long as it is used correctly and consistently. Include a complete bibliography at the end of the paper. You will be able to find a number of guides in the reference section of the library, describing how to correctly format footnotes and the bibliography. If you have any questions about whether or how to properly cite material, please ask me for guidance.
Write with clarity: be concise and avoid jargon. Begin each paragraph with a thesis sentence and support your arguments with evidence. Pay particular attention to organization. The paper should be organized logically, so that ideas and arguments flow from one to the next. Proofread for misspellings, grammatical errors, awkward sentences, and so on. Remember that an excellent paper is usually the product of several redrafts. Even the most skilled writers need to polish their prose.

Your paper should be 20-25 pages in length (not including the bibliography). It should be typed, double-spaced, and a standard 12 point font. Please number your pages and be certain that your paper is stapled before you hand it in. You must hand in a hard copy to me.

Late papers will be penalized 2/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late (i.e., the grade for a paper that is one day late will be lowered, for example, from an A- to a B). The paper is due in Morton 25 on May 11 by 5:00 p.m.

General Sources to Consider


* OnWar.com web site: http://www.onwar.com/aced/index.htm
### COW Interstate Wars, 1815-2007

<table>
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