

Department: International Relations

Faculty: Social Sciences

Course Title: War in International Relations (MA, Optional)

Number of Credits: Four

Course Objectives:

International Relations as a formal discipline was established in the context of the devastations caused by World War One. The initial objective of this discipline was to study wars to find out why they recurred. This course introduces students to wars as a phenomenon in the international system. Not only will this course examine the various reasons why wars break out in the international system but it will also engage with insights and theories drawn from other disciplines to add additional perspective on this issue. The course aims to be more than just answering the question, “Why do wars occur?” It will also examine the relationship between wars on the one hand and societies, the changing nature of wars and some of its salient aspects.

It is hoped that by the end of the course, students will develop an appreciation of the phenomenon of wars and acquaint themselves with the various frameworks that examine wars. As a number of IR theories have been developed keeping wars as the object of focus, it is apt that students understand the various dynamics associated with wars and the basic debates that animate scholarship on the issue.

Course Structure:

Unit I: Wars – Beyond Acts of Violence

(This unit will be covered in Weeks 1 and 2)

This unit will introduce students to war in definitional and conceptual terms. It will underline the fact that wars are more than mere acts of senseless violence. In order to do so, students will be exposed to thinkers who sought to understand wars as purposeful enterprises and who also asserted that wars play an important role in upholding the basic edifice of the international system.

Unit II: War Trajectories

(This unit will be covered in Weeks 3 and 4)

In this unit, we will be examining the broad trends as far as modern wars are concerned. What has been their trajectory and how have the nature of wars been changing over time? How have modern wars impinged on the way hierarchies have been established in different parts of the world?

Unit III: Wars – The First Image

(This unit will be covered in Weeks 5 and 6)

As part of this topic, students will be shown the relationship between individuals and wars. What role do individuals (decision-makers, the lay person) play in the occurrence of wars? Is human nature the reason why we indulge in wars? How have individuals’ perceptions of events and realities created the conditions for the outbreak of wars?

Unit IV: The Sub-State Level

(This unit will be covered in Weeks 7 and 8)

This unit will introduce students to factors that inhere at a level between the individual and the state that have the potential to trigger wars. It will examine the ways in which intra-group dynamics create conditions that could lead to crises and even wars.

Unit V: Wars – The Second Image

(This unit will be covered in Weeks 9 and 10)

This topic will focus on factors that inhere within states that have led to, or could lead, to wars. It will look at the means and processes within states that enable them to mobilize resources and personnel for the purpose of conducting wars.

Unit VI: The Third Image

(This unit will be covered in Weeks 11 and 12)

Students will be introduced to the proposition that the structure of the international system – and not individual proclivities or internal characteristics of a state – plays an important role in the outbreak of wars. This unit will also examine the debate: are more nuclear weapons a guarantee of a safer international system?

Reading Suggestions:

Bull, Hedley (1977), *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press

Cashman, Greg (2014), *What Causes Wars? An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict*, 2nd Ed, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield

Chickering, Roger; Showalter, Dennis; and Van De Ven, Hans (ed.) (2012), *The Cambridge History of War*, Vol. IV, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Holsti, K.J. (2004), *The State, War, and the State of War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Khan, Yasmin (2015), *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War*, Gurgaon: Random House India

Paret, Peter, (ed.) (1986), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Vasquez, John A. (2009), *The War Puzzle Revisited*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Wilkinson, Steven (2015), *Army and Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy since Independence*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black