
Political Science 270
Mechanisms of International Relations

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Harkness 320
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Course Information:
Fall 2013
3:25-6:05 Thursday
Harkness 115

The last ten years or so have seen a major revolution in the social sciences. Instead of trying to discover and test grand "covering laws" that have universal validity and tremendous scope, think Newton's gravity or Einstein's relativity, we have seen a general trend of switching to more narrow and middle-range theories and explanations, often referred to as causal mechanisms.

In the bulk of this course, students will be introduced to a range of such causal mechanisms with applications in international relations. Although these causal mechanisms can loosely be described in general terms, the course will provide a more detailed and rigorous understanding of what is "really" going on. To set us on that path, we begin with some very basic notions of formal models to introduce you to formal models in a rigorous way to show the power and potential of this approach. In other words, there will be some *gasp* *Algebra*. During the rest of the semester we examine specific and ubiquitous mechanisms and apply them to various international relations phenomena and in applied studies. We will explore several substantive themes, such as the "democratic peace," ethnic conflict and international trade to illustrate the mechanisms and cumulative potential of this research approach.

Course Requirements. Students are, of course, required to read all the material assigned.

Participation in the seminar comprises a third of your grade. Participation includes participation in class discussions, as well as presentations. In this class presentation, you are to present and describe one of the mechanisms we discuss in class with an example of your own. This example can be from a newspaper article, a journal article, or a book. You must provide a summary of the presentation to me by email, which must arrive in my inbox by 8 PM, the day before the presentation is due.

A midterm exam counts for another third of your grade, and a final exam counts for the final third of your grade. The final exam is given during the period scheduled by the University. In particular instances, students may substitute a *serious* research paper for the final. Students interested in the paper should contact me before the mid-term.

For those enrolled in the W section, you must provide me with a one-page statement of your proposed paper no later than one week after the mid-term. Failure to do so will be penalized.

potential competing explanations.

Academic Integrity

Be familiar with the University's policies on academic integrity and disciplinary action (<http://www.purdue.edu/academicintegrity>). Violations of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with severely, which means that your grade will suffer, and I will forward your case to the Chair of the College Board on Academic Honesty, on which I serve.

Tests

I will provide you with one week of study about an hour and a half
before the Mid-term and two weeks before the final.

The following books are required reading:

1. Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Advantage: How Positive Psychology Can Transform Your Life, Your Team, and Your Organization*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

http://www.amazon.com/Explaining-Social-Behavior-Roots-Sciences/dp/0521777445/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1314898407&sr=8-1

New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

2. Marcel Krimminger, *Empire, Prisoners, Plots: The Terrifying War of Polish Prisoners*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

3. Barbara E. Walter, *Democracy and Civil War: Why Some Start Civil Wars and Others Don't*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Readings not included in this list may be found through one of the online databases on the library's course web page, or there will be photocopies made available in the graduate lounge on the third floor, in a mail box under 130 210. These readings are listed in the syllabus in italics. In addition, I expect students to read one of the following newspapers: the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, or the *Financial Times*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Kyōto Keizai Shinbun*, or a comparable international news provider.

Course Outline

Thursday September 5

1. INTRODUCTION

Thursday September 12

2. Thinking Strategically

- Marek Kaminski, *Games Prisoners Play: the Tragicomic Worlds of Polish Prisons*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Thursday September 19

3. Causal Mechanisms

- Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Parts 1-3, pp. 3-171.
- Charles Tilly, "Mechanisms in Political Processes." in *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol.4, June 2001, 21-41. Available at <http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev.polisci.4.1.21>

Thursday September 26

4. The Prisoner's Dilemma

- Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma" *World Politics* 30, January 1988, no. 167-214.
- Robert Axelrod, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 7 in *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1984.
- Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 1968, Vol. 162: 1243-1248.
- Elinor Ostrom, "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms," in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 14, No. 3, (Summer 2000), 137-158.

Thursday October 3

5. Coordination

- Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, Chapter 1.
- Randall Colman, "Leadership and Its Basis in Problems of Social Coordination," *International Political Science Review* 13 (1992), pp. 7-24.

Thursday October 10

6. Coordination; Tipping Models

- Timur Kuran, "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989," in *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (October 1991), pp. 7-49.
- Duncan Snidal, "Coordination versus Prisoners' Dilemma: Implications for International Cooperation and Regimes," *American Political Science Review* 70 (1): 920-912 (December 1996).
- Gerry Mackie, "Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 6 (December 1996), 999-1017.
- Barry P. Weingast, "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (June 1997), 245-263.
- Thomas Schelling, "Thermostats, Lemons, and Other Families of Models," Chapter 2 in *The man Shelling: Miscellaneous and Miscellaneous*. New York: Norton, 1979.

Optional

- Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Back Bay Books; (January 2002)

Thursday October 17

7. Commitment Problems

- John C. Harsanyi, "Advances in Understanding Rational Behavior," Chapter 3 in Jon Elster, (ed.) *Rational Choice*, New York: NYU Press, 1986, 82-108.
- Thomas Schelling, Chapter 2, "The art of commitment," in *Arms and Influence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966; 35-91.
- Barbara F. Walter, "The critical barrier to civil war settlement," *International Organization*, 51 (3): 335-364 Summer 1997.
- James D. Fearon, "Commitment Problems and the spread of Ethnic Conflict," Chapter 5 in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, (eds.), *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: fear diffusion, and escalation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, 107-126.
- Barry Weingast and Rui de Figueiredo, "Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict," in Ted Sussner and Barbara Walter, (eds.), *Civil war, insecurity, and intervention*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Thursday October 24

8. MID TERM EXAM

STUDENTS WHO ARE WRITING A PAPER FOR THIS CLASS MUST HAND IN THEIR OWN

NAME EMPLOYED ON THIS DAY:

9. Bargaining

- Akhilesh Misra, 2000. "A New Technical International Bargaining Theory." *World Economics*, 1(2), 145-166.
- Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games" in *International Organization* 49 (Summer 1995), 427-460.
- Thomas Schelling. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960/1990. Chapters 2 & 3, 21-50.
- James D. Fearon, "Bargaining Power in International Organization, Vol.49 (3) (Summer 1995), pp.379-414.
- Amartya Sen. 1990. "Gender & Cooperative Conflict," Chapter 8 in Irene Tinker, ed. *Persistent Inequalities*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Thursday November 7

10. Signalling (Tying Hands, Sinking Costs)

- James D. Fearon, "Signaling foreign policy interests—Tying hands versus sinking costs," in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41 (1): 68-90 February 1997.
- Kenneth Schultz. *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Chapters 2-4.
- Barry R. Weingast. "The Role of Credible Commitments in State Finance." *Public Choice* 66 (1): 89-97 July 1990.

Thursday November 14

11. Principal-Agent Models

- H. E. Goemans. *War and Punishment*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000; Chapters 1-3.
- James D. Fearon, "Domestic political audiences and the escalation of international disputes," *American Political Science Review*, 88 (3): 577-592. September 1994.

Thursday November 21

12. Reputation

- Barbara F. Walter, *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts are so Violent*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009
- Reinhard Selten, "The Chain Store Paradox." *Theory and Decision*, 9 (2): 127-159.

Thursday November 22 TRANSMISSING PAPER

Thursday December 5

- Jack S. Levy, "Loss Aversion, Framing Effects, and International Conflict: Perspectives from Prospect Theory." in Manus Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies II*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000: 193-221.
- Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Reversal of Preference." *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 1 (1): 181-211. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Thursday December 12: Last Day of Class

13. Psychological Mechanisms

- John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, "The Psychological Foundations of Culture." Chapter 1 in Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides and John Tooby (eds.), *The Adapted Mind, Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press 1992. Pp. 19-136.
- Leda Cosmides and John Tooby, "Cognitive Adaptations for Social Exchange." Chapter 3 in Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides and John Tooby (eds.), *The Adapted Mind, Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press 1992. Pp. 163-228.

Questions to consider in formulating and evaluating social science research

1. What is the central question?

- Why is it important (theoretically substantive)?
- What is being explained (what is the dependent variable and how does it vary)?
- How does this phenomenon present a puzzle?

2. What is the central answer?

- What is doing the explaining (what are the independent variables and how do they vary)?
- What are the hypotheses, i.e., what is the relationship between independent and dependent variables, what kind of change in the independent variable causes what kind of change in the dependent variable?
- What are the causal mechanisms, i.e., why does the independent variable cause the dependent variable?
- How do the independent variables relate to each other?
- What assumptions does your theory make?
- Is the theory falsifiable in concept?
- What does this explanation add to our understanding of the question?

3. What are the possible alternative explanations?

- What assumptions are you making about the direction of causality?
- What other explanations might there be for the phenomenon of study, and to what degree do they conflict with the central answer?
- Could the hypothesized relationships have occurred by chance?

4. Why are the possible alternative explanations wrong?

- What is the logical structure of the alternative explanations (compare 2)?
- What is the empirical evidence?

5. What does the research design allow to vary, and what does it hold constant?

- What does the research design allow to vary, i.e., in this design are the explanations variables or constants?
- What does your research design hold constant, i.e., does it help to rule out the alternative competing explanations?

How are the theoretical constructs being measured, i.e., how do you know what you are measuring (measurement)?

6. How do the empirical conclusions relate to the theory?

- How confident are you about the theory in light of the evidence?

7. What does the provisionally accepted or revised theory say about questions of broader importance?

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