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**Political Science 270**  
**Mechanisms of International Relations**

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**Hein Goemans**  
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OH: Wed. 1:30 { 2:30 PM  
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**Course Information:**  
Spring 2024  
Wednesday 15:25{18:05  
Meliora Room 206



## Course Outline

Wednesday January 17

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Wednesday January 24

### 2. Thinking Strategically

- William Spaniel, from Game Theory 101 MOOC, lesson #1: Introduction.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSVm0C\\_5zrE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSVm0C_5zrE)

Wednesday January 31

### 3. Causal Mechanisms

- Jon Elster, "Introduction," in Jon Elster, (ed.) *Rational Choice*, New York: NYU Press, 1986, 1{33.
- Charles Tilly, "Mechanisms in Political Processes," in *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol.4, June 2001, 21{41.
- Hedström, Peter, and Petri Ylikoski. 2010. "Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (1): 49{67
- WATCH: William Spaniel, from Game Theory 101 MOOC,
  - { lesson #2: The Prisoner's Dilemma.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lotsMu1J8fA>
  - { lesson #3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DanTKx1FLY8>
  - { lesson #4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08T9spKHVWQ>

Wednesday February 7

### 4. The Prisoner's Dilemma

- Robert Axelrod, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 7 in *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984.
- Elinor Ostrom, "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms," in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 14, No. 3, (Summer 2000), 137{158
- WATCH: William Spaniel, from Game Theory 101 MOOC,
  - { lesson #5: Nash Equilibria.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TcYV6CZ7ml>
  - { lesson #6: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuDutyTs\\_r8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuDutyTs_r8)
  - { lesson #7: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvEQujUcPv4>

{ lesson #8: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa8USttcDoE>

Wednesday February 14

## 5. Coordination

- Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Con ict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995; Chapters 1{4.
- WATCH: William Spaniel, from Game Theory 101 MOOC,
  - { lesson #10: Battle of the Sexes.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BdBWmL8tJc>
  - { lesson #11: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lEl4vDkML8>

Wednesday February 21

## 6. Coordination: Various applications { Read at least three

- Randall Calvert, "Leadership and Its Basis in Problems of Social Coordination." *International Political Science Review* 13 (1992), pp. 7{24.
- 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{48.
- Christian S. Crandall, "Social Contagion of Binge Eating." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1988, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 588{598
- Gerry Mackie, "Ending Footbinding and In bulation: A Convention Account," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 6 (December 1996), 999{1017
- Barry R. Weingast, "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (June 1997), 245{263.
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{ lesson #22: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxlrKkGRpBY>

{ lesson #24: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmPDAJlpQr0>

Wednesday March 6

8. **Commitment Problems** { Read at least three

- John C. Harsanyi, "Advances in Understanding Rational Behavior," Chapter 3 in Jon Elster, (ed.) *Rational Choice*, New York: NYU Press, 1986, 82{108.
- 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, disillusion, 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 Jack Snyder and Barbara Walter (eds.), *Civil wars, insecurity, and intervention*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Wednesday March 13

No Class: Spring Recess

Wednesday March 20

Mid Term Exam

Wednesday March 27

Students who are writing a paper for this class must hand in their one page proposal on this day.

9. **A Game Theoretic Examination of The First World War**

- Scott Wolford, 2019. The Theory of War I: Commitment Problems; Armed Continent: The Anglo-German Naval Race; and Leaping into the Dark: Europe Goes to War. Chapters 2-4 in his *The Politics of the First World War; A Course in Game Theory and International Security*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp.25{99

Wednesday April 3



## Questions to consider in formulating and evaluating social science research

### 1. *What is the central question?*

- Why is it important (theoretically, substantively)?
- 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 are the independent and dependent variables so related?
- How do the independent and dependent variables vary?

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