

POLSCI 590-3S / 763S: Foundational Scholarship in International Relations
Duke University (Fall 2025)

Last Update: August 14, 2025

Instructor

Prof./Dr. Rachel Myrick
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
rachel.myrick@duke.edu

Course Time: Tuesdays from 1:25-3:55pm in Gross Hall 105

Office Hours: Thursdays from 1:30-3:30pm in 204J Gross Hall or on Zoom. In order for me to accommodate both in-person and virtual options, please sign up for office hours in advance at: <https://calendly.com/rmmyrick/office-hours>

What is this class?

This class is about understanding foundational texts in the field of international relations. We will learn about the key debates that have animated IR both as a subfield within political science and beyond political science as a broader, interdisciplinary field. This class will be theory-heavy, focusing on concepts and ideas that IR scholars use to explore patterns of conflict and cooperation in international politics. This course has five objectives:

1. Understand major concepts, frameworks, and debates in the field of IR.
2. Critically analyze classic IR texts both independently and in conversation with one another.
3. Learn the basics of theory-building and research design, such that you can work toward honing your skills as a researcher.
4. Understand how to apply IR theory to understand real-world problems, both historical and contemporary.
5. Develop ideas for your own research by reviewing IR literature beyond required readings.

This class is geared towards research-oriented introductory graduate students. It is most relevant for first-year political science graduate students concentrating in Security, Peace, and Conflict (SPC). Advanced undergraduates or graduate students coming from a practitioner background are welcome but should know that this class is research-oriented rather than policy-oriented.¹ Since we will have students coming from different backgrounds, this syllabus is detailed so that you are aware of the course content and expectations.

¹ What this means is that sometimes we will talk about “boring stuff” like how to operationalize a concept.

But should I take it?

You may wish to take this class if:

- You are a graduate student interested in international relations, and/or you are concentrating in Security, Peace, and Conflict.
- You are an undergraduate interested in research and/or graduate work in political science, international relations, or a similar field.
- You are an undergraduate that has done advanced coursework in the social sciences and are interested in a more intellectually challenging course than is offered at the undergraduate level.

You may not wish to take this class if:

- You do not want to read extensively and engage with complex texts.
- You have no background in political science, international relations, or any courses in security, peace, and conflict, and you're not willing to do extra reading to catch up.
- You are looking exclusively for a policy-oriented class. This is an IR theory class, and therefore would not be the best fit, but I'm happy to recommend classes that are policy focused.
- You are looking for the most cutting-edge political science research. We will focus on a few contemporary pieces, but this class emphasizes "classic texts." If you want more contemporary applications, I also teach POLSCI 668S (Theory and Practice of International Security).
- You are not interested in producing a larger written product (a literature review essay) at the end of class.

What is it due, and how am I graded?

Your grade for this course will be calculated as follows:

20%: Class Discussion and Participation

20%: Weekly Exercises (due on Canvas on Mondays at noon, starting in Week 2)

20% Book Review

- 10% Book Review
 - Book choice due on Tuesday, September 9
 - Book review due on Tuesday, October 21
- 10% Peer Reviews of Classmates' Book Reviews
 - Peer review due on Tuesday, October 28

40% Literature Review Essay

- 10% Literature Review Proposal
 - General topic ideas due Tuesday, September 2
 - Specific topic due Tuesday, September 23
 - Proposal due on Tuesday, November 11
- 30% Final Literature Review Essay
 - Presentation in class on Tuesday, November 18
 - Final review due on Tuesday, December 9 at 5pm

All assignments should be uploaded to Canvas. Your weekly exercises are due on Mondays at noon the day before class, posted on Canvas. All other assignments are due by the time the class starts on Tuesday morning unless specified. As in most graduate seminars, As are reserved for exceptional work.

What does class look like, and what's expected of me in class?

This class is about reading, analyzing, and discussing challenging material. You're expected to sit with (sometimes dense) texts, look up terms, and puzzle through how authors are in conversation with each other. You should read all required readings to prepare for each session. I recommend reading them in the order they are listed in the syllabus. To assist in your reading, I'll post questions for each week on Canvas that will help shape in-class discussion. During each class session, we'll generally do four things (although we'll mix up the order). First, we'll walk through the readings, recapping, making sure everyone is on the same page. Second, we'll have an open discussion on the big picture questions that synthesize the readings. Third, we'll discuss how we see the theoretical debates in the class play out in the real world, with an application to a recent news article or essay. (Note that many of applications selected for this class are intentionally provocative and designed to spark debate). Finally, we'll discuss the weekly exercises.

In a graduate seminar, your fellow students are in many ways more important than the instructor. Because of this, you cannot get an "A" in this class without active in-class participation. Since students have different comfort levels with speaking in class, for the first three classes, I'll release discussion questions for each session on Canvas in advance. These are fair game for what I refer to as "low stakes, advance notice cold calling." You are not required to answer any discussion questions in advance, but you should feel free to jot down notes for yourself if it helps you feel better prepared for class. In class, your participation each session is assessed on two things: active engagement and constructive feedback.

Active engagement means demonstrating, through your comments and questions, that you thoroughly engaged with the readings and that it has inspired insights and reactions that you share with the class. It also means learning to "think out loud" when called on. Active engagement does not mean being the most talkative, nor does it mean being right all the time. In fact, in many cases, there will be no such thing as the "correct answer" – it will be a matter of interpretation and debate.

Constructive feedback means providing comments and questions that help move a particular piece of work or a broader research agenda forward. In graduate school, it becomes second nature to learn how to ruthlessly criticize any work you read. While developing skills to critically engage with published work is essential, it can be paralyzing once you start your own research. The reality is that every piece of research you read in this class will be flawed, and all of the research that we produce – including yours and mine – will be too. Instead, I am interested in what you can do to make the field better. If you see theoretical gaps, how would you fill them in? If you are skeptical about the robustness of the empirical analysis, what additional evidence would you find compelling? How do (or did) flaws in existing work pose opportunities for new research?

What is your attendance policy?

If you plan to be absent from class, please send me an email beforehand. When you miss a session, you should still complete the weekly exercise before the following class if you would like credit for that session. You have one "free pass" for missing a session during the semester. After that, missing class will negatively impact your participation grade. Of course, life happens, and you may miss more than one session. If that happens, you can "make up" participation by demonstrating that you've

engaged with the readings through a written response essay (2-3 pages, single spaced). This make-up essay is due before the following class via email to the instructor.

What are the weekly exercises?

In lieu of writing a weekly reading response essay, each week will be accompanied with a short exercise. You should post your response to the exercise on the relevant forum on Canvas *by noon on Monday before class so that everyone has an opportunity to read them*. Your responses won't be individually graded, but we'll discuss them in class. At the end of the course, you'll get a participation grade that is based on both your in-class participation and your out-of-class exercises. In weekly exercises, I'm much more interested in your ideas than in your writing. In many cases, posting your response in bullet points is perfectly fine. Creative thinking is encouraged, and the extent to which your responses generate class discussion should be a good indicator of the quality of your ideas.

What's the book review?

For your first graded “midterm” assignment, you will write a book review on a recent academic IR book of your choosing, ideally published by a university press sometime in the last three years (since 2022). The idea is to pick something relevant for your own research – hopefully that is part of your larger literature review project. You should write as if you are submitting the book review for publication at an academic journal that accepts “unsolicited reviews.” Most likely, reviews will be well-suited for destinations like *International Studies Review* or *International Affairs*. Your book selection is due on Tuesday, September 9. Your completed book review is due on Tuesday, October 21, and an assigned peer review of your classmates’ book review is due the following week on Tuesday, October 28.

What's the literature review project?

Your final project is a literature review on a topic of your choice. You will propose a general topic area in class on September 2 and a specific topic area on September 23. A proposal is due on November 11 (more instructions will be provided). Unlike a standard literature review, the objective of this project is to identify two specific, researchable questions that follow from gaps you've identified in the literature. Your review should be 20-30 pages in length (double spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt font with 1-inch margins), including references. Most students will submit ~10-20 pages of a literature review and ~3-5 pages of discussion of researchable questions, followed by a reference list.

There are two requirements for the project. First, you must pick something connected to international relations. Second, you must generate something new for this course. You are welcome (and encouraged) to use this literature review to build towards a prelim paper, dissertation, MA thesis, or undergraduate thesis. However, you cannot recycle something that you've previously written or submit the same review to another class. I'm most interested in you working on a project relevant for your own research. Therefore, you can request to modify the assignment in a way that best fits your research agenda.² If you would like a modification, I suggest coming to office hours early in the term to discuss this. On the last day of class (November 18), you'll do a brief presentation to the class about what you

² Examples of modifications include: (a) Writing two shorter literature reviews exploring two different topics. (b) Expanding in greater detail on 1 researchable question (i.e., outlining a research design, setting up competing hypotheses, investigating a dynamic within a historical case, etc.). (c) Writing a literature review with a theory section for a larger paper or thesis project. (d) Turning in a different component of a thesis or dissertation that we mutually agree upon.

learned from the literature review, with an emphasis on getting feedback on your researchable questions. Your final review is due on Canvas on Tuesday, December 9 at 5pm.

What else should I know about these assignments?

I take plagiarism very seriously. For all writing assignments in this class (including weekly exercises), students are expected to adhere to the [Duke Community Standard](#). Please note that per Duke policies, “along with use of uncredited ideas and content created by persons, AI-generated content falls under the definition of plagiarism at Duke.” Any written content submitted in this course may be subject to AI detection software.

What is your AI policy in this course?

AI tools are great for a lot of things, but they’re pretty bad at the kind of thinking and writing required for a graduate seminar. In this course, you are permitted to use AI tools in two ways:

1. To look up background context while you read for your own personal knowledge, much like you would use Wikipedia. Please exercise caution in doing this, as AI tools are especially bad at accurately summarizing pay-walled peer-reviewed research.
2. To check for minor grammatical errors in written content that you have generated on your own (e.g., using tools like Grammarly).

You are NOT permitted to use AI tools to generate ideas or text in any written assignments in this course. If you are not able to generate your own ideas or write a paragraph for weekly exercises on your own without using AI tools, then graduate coursework is probably not a good fit for you.

If you have any questions at all about what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable uses of AI in this course, don’t hesitate to ask.

WEEK 1 (August 26)

TOPIC: What is International Relations? How and Why Do We Study It?

EXERCISE: *Read the Syllabus*

Read the syllabus and think about the discussion questions for our first class (see Canvas)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Keohane. 2009. “Political Science as a Vocation.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*.
- Jervis. 2016. “Theories of International Relations.” In *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Costigola and Hogan, eds.).
- Lake. 2013. “Theory is Dead, Long Live Theory: The End of the Great Debates and the Rise of Eclecticism in International Relations.” *European Journal of International Relations*.
- Desch. 2019. “How Political Science Became Irrelevant.” *The Chronicle*.
- Barma and Goldgeier. 2022. “How Not to Bridge the Gap in International Relations.” *International Affairs*.

Read at least one of these three recent *Foreign Affairs* articles that interests you (you are welcome to read more than one) and be prepared to discuss how it is informed by IR theory.

- Application: Kavanagh and Kelanic. 2025. “The Real Obstacle to Peace with Iran.” *Foreign Affairs*.
- Application: Keohane and Nye. 2025. “The End of the Long American Century: Trump and the Sources of US Power.” *Foreign Affairs*.
- Application: Khong and Liow. 2025. “Southeast Asia is Starting to Choose: Why the Region is Leaning Toward China.” *Foreign Affairs*.

WEEK 2 (September 2)

TOPIC: Level I – Individuals, Human Nature, & Cognition

DUE: One or two ideas for the general topic area for your literature review³

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *Distill and Apply an Argument*

The best way to communicate that you understand what you have read is to be able to distill the central argument succinctly and in your own words. Select one of the core readings this week. For that reading: (1) summarize the argument or key takeaway in your own words in 25 words or less (don’t lift phrases or sentences directly from the article), and (2) write ONE paragraph that applies and evaluates this argument with respect to a current debate going on in international politics. How does that argument resonate or not resonate with something happening in the world today? The application for today is an example, but you should select a different debate. This assignment is intentionally broad: creativity is encouraged.

³ Don’t know where to start? Check out Jack Levy’s “War and Peace” syllabus for a long list of IR topics (on Canvas).

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Extract from “The Melian Dialogue” from *The Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides
- Carr. 1939. *The Twenty Years Crisis: 1919-1939*. Chapters 1 (pgs. 1-13) & 5 (pgs. 62-81).
- Morgenthau. 1948. *Politics Among Nations*. Ch. 1.
- Jervis. 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Chapter 3 (pgs. 58-67 only).
- Johnson and Tierney. 2019. “Bad World: The Negativity Bias in International Politics.” *International Security*. (pgs. 96-124 only)
- Application: Hathaway and Shapiro. 2025. “Might Unmakes Right: The Catastrophic Collapse of Norms Against the Use of Force.” *Foreign Affairs*.

WEEK 3 (September 9)

TOPIC: Level I – Foreign Policy Decision-Making

DUE: Book choice for book review essay

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *Books on Books!*

Post on Canvas with two things:

- (1) The title of the book you want to review for your book review essay (due October 21) and a link to a copy on Amazon. The book must be: (a) published by an academic press about an IR-related subject (b) recently published / ideally 2023 or later, (c) related to a topic you would like to write about for your literature review essay in this class, (d) in stock/available to be delivered within a few days from Amazon, and (e) under \$40.⁴ If you are unsure about any of these, include a back-up option. I will buy your book for you and bring it next class.
- (2) A link to a book review published in an academic journal of a DIFFERENT book that looks interesting (ideally, in a similar area, but doesn’t have to be recent). Post ONE paragraph with your analysis of the book review (i.e., tell us what makes this a strong or weak review). Be prepared to discuss “best practices for writing a book review” based on the review you read.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Allison. 1969. “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis.” *The American Political Science Review*.
- Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter. 2006. *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*. Ch. 3, pgs. 25-61.
- Saunders. 2009. “Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy.” *International Security*.
- McFaul. 2020. “Putin, Putinism, and the Domestic Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy.” *International Security*.
- Jost. 2022. “Leaders, Bureaucracy, and Miscalculation in International Crises.” Working Paper.

⁴ Pending approval, Rachel will place the book order via Amazon. If you want to review a book you’ve purchased but haven’t yet read, that works too.

- Application: Jost. 2023. “The Bad Advice Plaguing Beijing’s Foreign Policy: How China’s Bureaucracy Guides Its Leaders Into Error.” *Foreign Affairs*.

WEEK 4 (September 16)

TOPIC: Level III – International Structure as Material (The Problem of Anarchy)

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *Staying Relevant*

A common critique of studying the classics in IR is that the field has largely “moved on” from debates about grand theory. Yet they still permeate contemporary research in various ways. To demonstrate this, find two examples of a books or articles published in the last five years: one that carries through themes from Waltz (1979), and one that carries through themes of Axelrod and Keohane (1985). For each book/article, provide a link to the source and write ONE paragraph (bullet points are also fine) explaining how it connects to classic IR debates and describing how the field has moved forward. Try not to share something your classmate has already posted.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Waltz. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Ch. 5 & 6.
- Axelrod and Keohane. 1985. “Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions.” *World Politics*.
- Milner. 1991. “The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique.” *Review of International Studies*.
- Lake. 2009. *Hierarchy in International Relations*. Introduction & Ch. 2.
- Kertzer, Brutger, and Quek. 2024. “Perspective Taking and the Security Dilemma: Cross-National Experimental Evidence from China and the United States.” *World Politics*.
- Application: Glaser. 2024. “Fear Factor: How to Know You’re in a Security Dilemma.” *Foreign Affairs*.

WEEK 5 (September 23)

TOPIC: Level III – International Structure as Non-Material (Norms and Ideas)

DUE: Specific topic area for your literature review

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *Norms in the Wild*

Select an international norm that interests you and is not covered extensively in your readings for today. Try not to select an issue that your classmate has already posted about. Write ONE paragraph (bullet points are also fine) that relates the norm “life cycle” described in Finnemore & Sikkink (1998) to the norm of your choosing. Be specific about what stage you think the norm is in, when the norm emerged, who the relevant norm entrepreneurs were, what you see as the tipping point, what (if anything) has eroded the norm, etc. Is there anything that you would amend from the Finnemore & Sikkink framework after trying to apply it in practice?

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Wendt. 1992. “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics.” *International Organization*.

- Sjoberg. 2012. “Gender, Structure, and War: What Waltz Couldn’t See.” *International Theory*.
- Finnemore and Sikkink. 1998. “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change.” *International Organization*.
- Tannenwald. 1999. “The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use.” *International Organization*.
- Application: Schwartz. 2024. “The Nuclear Taboo is a Myth.” *Lawfare*.
- Zacher. 2001. “The Territorial Integrity Norm.” *International Organization*.
- Application: Fazal. 2022. “The Return of Conquest? Why the Future of Global Order Hinges on Ukraine.” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022.

WEEK 6 (September 30)

TOPIC: Level II – Domestic Politics and Cooperation

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *Generating Researchable Questions*

After you reading the readings this week, propose one coherent research question that you came up with related to domestic politics and cooperation (broadly speaking). Post only the question on Canvas. Be prepared to explain in class what you think constitutes a researchable question and why the question you posted is both (a) novel and (b) researchable.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Moravscik. 1997. “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics.” *International Organization*.
- Putnam. 1988. “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games.” *International Organization*.
- Leeds. 1999. “Domestic Political Institutions, Credibility Commitments, and International Cooperation.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Moravscik. 2000. “The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe.” *International Organization*.
- De Vries, Hobolt, and Walter. 2021. “Politicizing International Cooperation: The Mass Public, Political Entrepreneurs, and Political Opportunity Structures.” *International Organization*.
- Application: Besch and Youngs. 2025. “Europe Needs a New Way to Cooperate: How to Fill the Gaps Created by the EU’s and NATO’s Shortcomings.” *Foreign Affairs*.

WEEK 7 (October 7)

TOPIC: Level II – Regime Type and Conflict

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *What’s Missing?*

After reading all required readings from this week, identify two other readings that could or should be included on the syllabus this week. One of these should be a classic reading. One of these should be a more contemporary application (published in the last 5-10 years). For each reading, include the citation with a link to the book or article, and write a few sentences explaining why you see this as directly relevant. Try not to duplicate what your classmates have posted.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Doyle. 1983. “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs,” Part I, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*.
- Maoz and Russett. 1993. “Normative and Structural Causes of the Democratic Peace, 1946-1986.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Rosato. 2003. “The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Weeks. 2014. *Dictators at War and Peace*. Ch. 1.
- Bell and Quek. 2018. “Authoritarian Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace.” *International Organization*.
- Application: Colby and Kaplan. 2020. “The Ideology Delusion: America’s Competition with China Is Not About Doctrine.” *Foreign Affairs*.

NO CLASS (October 14)

This week is Fall Break. There will be no class on Tuesday, October 14th.

WEEK 8 (October 21)

TOPIC: Causes of War

DUE: Book review essay (upload to Resources >> Book Reviews on Canvas before class)

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *How Many Cheers for Bargaining Theory?*

Think about how causes of war frameworks apply to recent conflicts. Select one of the following conflicts: (a) the Russia-Ukraine War initiated by Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, (b) the Gaza War initiated by Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, or (c) the Iran-Israel War initiated by Israel’s bombing of Iranian military and nuclear facilities on June 13, 2025. Pick a news article or report of your choosing that give context for the background and origins of the conflict and post a link to that article. Then, answer the following: In your understanding own analysis, what is the best explanation for why this conflict started? Is the war best explained by a rationalist explanation (like an information problem or a commitment problem) or a non-rationalist explanation (like a misperception)? Or is this war entirely about domestic politics? Select only one explanation that you think best fits the case and write ONE paragraph justifying your response (there are many possible right answers). Be specific in your answer and be prepared to defend it in class.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Levy. 1998. “The Causes of War and the Conditions of Peace.” *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Levy. 1989. “The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique.” In Manus Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies*.
- Fearon. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization*.
- Goddard. 2006. “Uncommon Ground: Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy.” *International Organization*.
- Lake. 2010. “Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory.” *International Security*.
- Application: Select a background reading of your choosing on one of three recent conflicts.

WEEK 9 (October 28)

TOPIC: Alliances

DUE: Peer review of a classmate's book review (sent by email before class, copying Prof. Myrick)

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *Inductive Theory-Building, Part I*

Pick one small or medium-sized country that interests you and is not extensively covered in the readings today. Read about its security environment, drawing on either academic articles, think tank reports, or news sources. In one or two paragraphs, summarize what the country sees as its major foreign threats and how it is responding to them. Link to sources where relevant. Is it balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, or something else? Is there anything about its behavior that you find interesting vis-à-vis the theories you read about today? Would you revise any existing theories based on your understanding of this case?

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Walt. 1987. *The Origins of Alliances*. Chapters 1 &2.
- Schweller. 1994. "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In." *International Security*.
- Risse-Kappen. 2016. "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO." *Domestic Politics and Norm Diffusion in International Relations*, Ch. 4.
- Kang. 2003. "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks." *International Security*.
- Edry, Johnson, and Leeds. 2021. "Threats at Home and Abroad: Interstate War, Civil War, and Alliance Formation." *International Organization*.
- Application: Spektor. 2025. "Rise of the Nonaligned: Who Wins in a Multipolar World?" *Foreign Affairs*.

WEEK 10 (November 4)

TOPIC: International Institutions

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *Inductive Theory-Building, Part II*

Pick one international institution that you are interested in that we don't cover in detail in today's readings (i.e., do not pick the UNSC, UNHCR, or the ICC). Read about the design of the institution, and think about the five dimensions that Korememos et al. (2001) introduction. How well do the different "conjectures" that Korememos et al. (2001) offer map onto the institution that you've selected? You don't need to walk us through every conjecture, but tell us 3-5 things that stuck out to you that are either consistent or inconsistent with different conjectures. Is there anything you would revise about Korememos et al.'s (2001) theory after this exercise? In one or two paragraphs, summarize your key findings. Bullet points are also acceptable.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Korememos et al. 2001. "The Rational Design of International Institutions." *International Organization*.
- Barnett and Finnemore. 2004. *Rules of the World*, Ch. 1 (read) & Ch. 4 (skim).

- Beardsley & Schmidt. 2012. "Following the Flag or Following the Charter? Examining the Determinants of UN Involvement in International Crises, 1945-2002." *International Studies Quarterly*.
- Hehir. 2013. "The Permanence of Inconsistency: Libya, the Security Council, and the Responsibility to Protect." *International Security*.
- Jo and Simmons. 2016. "Can the International Criminal Court Deter Atrocity?" *International Organization*.
- Application: Ovadek. 2025. "Hungary's Exit from the International Criminal Court is a sign of the times." *The Conversation*.

WEEK 11 (November 11)

TOPIC: Power Transition

DUE: Literature Review Proposal

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *IR Assumptions in the News*

Find ONE news article, op-ed, or policy piece about the US-China relationship that implicitly or explicitly draws on international relations theory. Try to find an article that has not already been posted by a classmate. Post a link to the article on Canvas and write ONE paragraph that evaluates how the piece engages with IR theory. For example, you might: (a) identify the testable assumptions the author makes, (b) point out additional theoretical arguments that author could have engaged with, and/or (c) critique how the author interprets or applies IR concepts.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Gilpin 1981. *War and Change in World Politics*. Ch. 5.
- Mearsheimer. 1991. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Ch. 1 (Introduction)
- Friedberg. 2005. "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*.
- Goddard. 2018. *When Right Makes Might: Rising Powers and World Order*, Ch. 2 (pg. 16-46).
- Shifrinson. 2018. *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts*. Ch. 1 (pg. 14-31).
- Application: "Forum: What Does America Want from China?" 2024. *Foreign Affairs*.
 - Optional Reading (what this Forum responds to): Pottinger and Gallagher. 2024. "No Substitute for Victory" by Pottinger and Gallagher. *Foreign Affairs*.

WEEK 12 (November 18)

TOPIC: Final Presentations + Where is the Field of International Relations Going?

DUE: Presentation about your literature review (5 slides in 5 minutes)

EXERCISE (DUE BY NOON ON MONDAY): *IR Theory in the Policy World*

Select one of the following documents that interests you: US National Security Strategy (2017/Trump or 2022/Biden), G7 Communique (2024). Read (skim) the document and briefly (a few sentences) answer the following questions:

1. Identify one testable assumption about how international politics works that you think is baked into this document.
2. Identify one topic or policy problem that you think IR theory could speak to that you think is understudied in the field right now. How would IR theory help? Be specific.
3. Identify one idea or policy problem that you think existing theories in IR would struggle to address. Why?

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Reiter. 2015. "Should We Leave Behind the Subfield of International Relations?" *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Colgan. 2016. "Where Is International Relations Going? Evidence from Graduate Training." *International Studies Quarterly*.
- Read through (skimming okay) one of the following documents:
 - US National Security Strategy. 2017. (Trump Administration)
 - US National Security Strategy. 2022 (Biden Administration).
 - G7 Leaders' Communique. 2024.⁵

NO CLASS (November 25)

This week is Thanksgiving Break (and the last week of graduate student classes), and I've found that it's best not to schedule final presentations this week because some students will miss them. We will not hold a formal session this week. Instead, I will hold optional office hours / 1-1 virtual meetings during our regular course time in the event you would like to discuss your final project.

FINAL LITERATURE REVIEW DUE: Tuesday, December 9th at 5pm

⁵ Note that the 2025 G7 Summit didn't end with a joint communique.