COMPARATIVE FOREIGN POLICY
DIPL 6180NA
SPRING 2006

The John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations
Seton Hall University

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Course Description and Objectives:

How do states behave in the international system? Why do they choose to respond one way or another to various situations in world politics? To what extent are domestic characteristics of states responsible for dictating foreign-policy decisions, and when are they ignored? What is the role of power and ideas in state behavior? Finally, how has foreign policymaking evolved, and what strategies do existing and rising powers as well as developing states pursue in an increasingly interdependent world?

This course examines theoretical approaches to studying foreign policy and applies them to various states and issue areas. We will examine the contribution of realism, liberalism, and constructivism to understanding why states behave the way they do. We will analyze the extent to which these approaches provide a useful tool through which policymaking can be analyzed. We will study their limitations, and propose suggestions for innovative thinking about foreign policy. In addition, we will examine the insights from individual and group-level approaches to studying foreign policy and will observe how levels of transparency and incomplete information affect international bargaining. Finally, we will employ our theoretical insights to study behavior of great and emergent powers and of small-developing states.

At the end of the course students should be able to use and critically evaluate the insights from main theoretical approaches in international relations to analyze foreign policies of states in the areas of security, economy, and human rights. Through a variety of writing and thinking assignments, students will learn how to structure arguments, provide evidence, and evaluate contending theoretical approaches to understand and design policies.

Requirements:

- Two-short critical papers, each 15 % 30 %

Writing assignments are the core component of this class. Students will write two short critical papers (3-4 pages) based on the weekly readings. In the paper, students should briefly explain the main debates and arguments in the readings. They should address some of the questions posed in the syllabus. I’m interested in critical analysis of the readings—what are the limitations of the points presented in the readings? How do the readings relate to
each other, to the broader issues in world politics and to this course? How do they differ?
What do we make out of these similarities/differences? Finally, I'm looking for your creative
ideas on how to expand the research or analytical problems posed in the material. The paper
should be analytical in content rather than merely descriptive. The papers are due 24 hours
before class—Sunday at 6 pm. Those students who wrote the papers for the particular
week should be prepared to discuss their ideas in class.

- In-class simulation participation and report 15%

Students will be divided into groups and assume the roles of various U.S. officials to
devise a response to the crisis with North Korea. Relying on the material we learned in class,
case description, and practical observation, students will need to analyze the costs and
benefits of possible solutions when deciding on the most appropriate policy. Each group will
present its policy to the class and write a brief report highlighting its response to the crisis. I
will provide specific directions about this assignment two weeks before the scheduled
activity.

- Midterm: Analysis Paper 20%

Students will read a case study of crisis situation and will be responsible for analyzing
and presenting the policymaker's response to the crisis. Students will rely on theoretical
approaches to analyze the case. I will provide further details about the paper and the topic
two weeks before the due date.

- Final: Research and Analysis Paper 30%

Students will pick a country and analyze its response to one international issue or a
policy it employed in response to international developments. Students will briefly describe
the case and the issue and then rely on theoretical approaches studied in class to analyze why
a particular response was employed. Details will be announced later in the semester.

- Participation 5%

Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings so that we could have a stimulating
session.

Grading Distribution:

I will use the following criteria to evaluate your work:

A (6 points)=Excellent completion of the assignment

Student completed the entire assignment as asked in the directions. All the questions
were answered or, in the case of short papers, some questions from the syllabus were
addressed. The student had a good understanding of the material, was capable of integrating
the learned material as discussed in the readings and the lectures and engaged in strong
critical analysis. In addition to excellent comprehension and analysis, the student offered
his/her own creative ideas to the problem addressed in the paper; an attempt was made to
provided extension to current research and/or analytical points posed in the readings/class.
Work went well beyond description and engaged in strong analysis. Good writing. Paper was proofread for grammar, spelling, and style.

A-(5 points) = Very good completion of the assignment

Student completed the entire assignment as asked in the directions. All the questions were answered. The student had a good understanding of the material, was capable of integrating the learned material as discussed in the readings and the lectures, and engaged in somewhat good critical analysis. Work went beyond description and engaged in analysis. Creative ideas or extensions to problems/research were presented, but very limited or not developed. Good writing. Paper was proofread for grammar, spelling, and style.

B+(4 points) = Good completion of the assignment

Student completed the entire assignment as asked in the directions. All the questions were answered. The student had a good understanding of the material, was capable of integrating the learned material as discussed in the readings and the lectures. Critical analysis, however, was average. No creative ideas or extensions to problems/research were presented. Good writing. Paper was proofread for grammar, spelling, and style.

B (3 points) = Average completion of the assignment

Student completed the entire assignment as asked in the directions. All the questions were answered. The student had an average understanding of the material, was somewhat capable of integrating the learned material as discussed in the readings and the lectures. Critical analysis is present, but very limited. No creative ideas or extensions to problems/research were presented. Writing is poor.

B- (2 points) = Below average completion of the assignment

Student completed only parts of the assignment. Understanding of the material was average, limited integration of the learned material as discussed in the readings and the lectures. Critical analysis is absent. No creative ideas or extensions to problems/research were presented. Writing is poor.

C+ or lower (1 or 0 points) = Inadequate completion of the assignment

Student failed to answer major questions in the assignment. Poor understanding of the material. Writing is purely descriptive, no integration of learned material. Critical analysis is absent. No creative ideas or extensions to problems/research were presented. Writing is poor.

Class Rules:

You are responsible for turning in all the assignments. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade for the course. The policy for lateness is the following: I will deduct ten points from the assignment for each day that it is late. You should e-mail me your short paper 24 hours before class and then bring a hard copy with you. Please do not e-mail me your midterm or final, but bring them to class. You must be present in class on the day that your
short paper is due to present your ideas to the class. You must also come to class during simulation sessions.

Please respect academic integrity and be familiar with rules on plagiarism. Academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course. Thank you

Course Schedule:

I. January 9: Introduction: What is Foreign Policy, Why and How Do We Study It?: Levels of Analysis

a) Evolution of foreign policy studies
b) Levels of analysis
c) Theory and practice: how to bridge the two


II. January 16: The International Level of Analysis: States, Anarchy, and Power-Insights from Realism

a) What is meant by a unitary, rational actor?
b) How important are systemic factors in understanding behavior of states in the international system? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these factors? How do various techniques in research design affect our understanding of international relations theories?
c) How does anarchy constrain state behavior?
d) What role do changes in power play in foreign policy? What implications do balance of power theory and power transition have for policymakers?
e) How relevant are systemic factors in today's globalized world, and what policy suggestions do they offer?

Readings:


III. January 23: The International Level of Analysis: The Role of International Organizations in Shaping State Behavior—Insights from Neoliberalism

a) In what ways can international organizations constrain state behavior?
b) How does compliance with international regimes vary depending on issue area (e.g. security, human rights, trade)?
c) Are international organizations more effective in shaping foreign policy of small, medium, or great powers? Do we see any specific patterns?
d) How has the influence of international organizations evolved and how strong is it today?
e) How does a focus on institutions differ from realist insights in understanding state behavior? What implications does this have on the world today?

Readings:


IV. January 30: The International Level of Analysis: Social Interactions, Ideas, and Identity—Insights from Constructivism

a) What role does identity play in shaping states’ foreign policy? Where does state identity and ideas about the world emerge from?
b) How do the constructivist, realist, and neoliberal approaches differ in their suggestions for the way we analyze foreign policy?
c) How applicable are constructivist insights in understanding foreign policy of various states and change in policy? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?

d) How can various theoretical approaches help us understand the behavior of parties involved in the Iranian nuclear crisis? What are the stakes? What would these approaches suggest about the future of the crisis?

Readings:


V. February 6: Domestic Level of Analysis: Regime Type

a) Does the existence of democratic regimes facilitate peaceful resolution of crisis with other states? Which elements of democratic institutions prevent democracies from bluffing?

b) Why are democracies peaceful towards each other? What logic underlines the democratic-peace arguments? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the cultural and structural arguments for democratic peace?

c) What types of regimes are most war-prone?

d) What is the implication of focusing on regime type versus on systemic factors when thinking about behavior of states?

Readings:


Cowhey, Peter (1993). “Domestic Institutions and the Credibility of International


VI. February 13: Domestic Level of Analysis: Bureaucratic Processes and Organizational Structure

a) When are insights from bureaucratic and organizational processes useful in understanding state behavior?
b) How do differences in these processes affect policymaking?
c) Are bureaucratic and organization models more useful in foreign policy analysis than the rational actor model?
d) How do bureaucratic and organizational models’ explanatory power compare to other approaches in foreign policy analysis we studied thus far?

Readings:


Kraser, Stephen (1972). “Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland)” *Foreign Policy*,7 (Summer).

VII. February 20: Domestic Level of Analysis: Public Opinion and Interest Groups

a) Does public opinion influence policymaking? How and under what conditions? Who influences whom?
b) How important are interest groups in affecting policymaking? Has the influence of interest groups changed over time? How does the impact of interest groups compare to that of the general public?
c) How do domestic constraints of policymakers affect his/her ability to strike international deals? Do domestic constraints send any signals to the other party in the negotiations about bargaining on issues? Does such signaling complicate or facilitate agreement on international deals?
Readings:


VIII. February 27: Individual Level Analysis: Psychological and Rational Explanations

a) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the psychological and rational explanations for foreign policy conduct? How do they differ?
b) How do explanations at the individual level compare to those at the domestic and international level in their ability to predict behavior of states?

Readings:


IX. March 13: Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Group Dynamics and Intelligence Failures

a) What is the impact of groupthink on policymaking?
b) What are the different decision-making frameworks and what implications do they have on the way foreign policies are made? Are some frameworks better than others? In what ways? Do issue areas matter at all in this context?

c) What role does intelligence play in foreign policymaking? How can intelligence failures be minimized? Why are adaptations in intelligence community so slow?

MIDTERM HANDED OUT

Readings:


X. March 20: Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Strategic Interaction and Bargaining

a) What is the difference between static and dynamic approaches to analyzing foreign policymaking? How do rationalist approaches to state behavior vary from the previous one we discussed?

b) Does the severity of commitment problems vary depending on the issues at stake (security, human rights, trade)? If so, why and how?

c) What are some ways in which commitment problems could be overcome? How do domestic and international factors alleviate, or alternatively, increase the extent of the problem through the signals they send to the negotiating parties?

d) What are the limitations of the strategic approach to foreign policy analysis?

Readings:


Case Studies

MIDTERM DUE

XI. March 27: New Thinking in Soviet Foreign Policy - Policies of Great Powers

a) How do various theoretical approaches to analyzing foreign policy explain the change in Soviet policy under Gorbachev?
b) What are the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches in addressing the change?
c) Which of the approaches do you find most compelling in explaining transformations of Soviet policies?
d) Are power-based and ideas-based explanations mutually exclusive?

Readings:


XII. April 3: Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy after 9/11-Policies of Great Powers

a) How have threats to U.S. security changed since the end of the Cold War?
b) How do terrorism and globalizations affect U.S. foreign policy?
c) What are the roots of terrorism?

d) How useful are various theoretical approaches in understanding the rise of new security threats and in explaining the changing nature of U.S. foreign policy?

e) How and when do policymakers in democracies “sell” foreign policy? Has the need to “sell” policy changed at all since the end of the Cold War, that is are leaders more accountable to the public now? If so, why?

f) What is the link between democracy, power, and nationalism as the central focus of U.S. foreign policy? Where has this focus come from?

Readings:


XIII. April 10: Foreign Policy of Rising Powers-China

a) How do we explain the growing international influence of China?

b) How do liberalism, realism, and constructivism explain the rise of this state and its foreign behavior? What predictions would these theories make about foreign policy goals of the state?

c) How does foreign policymaking of rising states differ from those of existing great powers and developing states? How do interests and constraints of these different set of states vary? How are they similar?

d) Is foreign policy of rising powers always incompatible with the existing great powers? How can conflict be avoided?

Readings:


XIV. April 17: Foreign Policy of the Developing Countries: the Role of Power, and Identity in the Age of Globalization

a) How does power and identity affect foreign policy of the developing world? Which of these two explanations provide a stronger explanatory power and in which contexts?

b) How important are domestic factors in affecting foreign behavior of developing countries? How do these explanations compare to systemic factors?

c) How does policymaking of the developing world differ from that of the great powers? How, if at all, have foreign policy concerns of the developing world evolved?

Readings:


XV. April 24: Simulation Activity: North Korea and Nuclear Crisis

Group Policy Design

XVI. May 1: Simulation Activity: North Korea and Nuclear Crisis

Group Policy Presentation

Final Exam: Date to be announced