Course Goals and Description:

This course provides students with an introduction to theorizing about decision-making in foreign policy. It is intended to be an illustrative, rather than exhaustive, overview of this area of international relations scholarship. It concentrates on micro-level and individual-level factors in foreign policy; at the end of the course, we will also consider how these factors connect to the macro-level variables typically studied in international relations. We will pay significant attention to empirical questions, such as research design and how to make foreign policy arguments falsifiable.

The course will have a special (though not exclusive) emphasis on U.S. foreign policy. It is not an issues-based course, however, but rather concentrates on how we should approach the academic study of U.S. foreign policy and foreign policy decision-making generally.

Student Learning Objectives:

- Students should understand how to define the appropriate unit of analysis: When is it appropriate to study foreign policy outcomes rather than international political outcomes? What does that mean for the independent variables we use to explain these outcomes?
- Students should be able to analyze what is doing the work in studies of foreign policy and/or international politics (e.g., is it individuals, structure, or some combination of both?).
- Students should be familiar with the major literatures and debates in the field of foreign policy decision-making.
- Students should understand how foreign policy decision-making relates to other strands of theoretical and empirical research in international relations (such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism).
- Students should be able to think about how foreign policy decision-making research would proceed empirically, and should be able to apply their knowledge to a foreign policy problem.

Prerequisite:

This course is open to PhD students in Political Science only. It is not appropriate for undergraduates or MA students.
General Policies:

Cell Phones and related devices: Before you enter the classroom, turn off all cell phones, pagers, blackberries, and other devices.

Laptops: You are welcome to bring a laptop to class, but the volume must be set to “mute.”

Email: If you have lengthy questions or comments about the course, I encourage you to come talk to me in person rather than using email. I am happy to set up appointments to meet with you.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation: This is a seminar in which class participation and engagement is vital to the success of the course. You are expected to come to class prepared to critically discuss the readings. Class participation counts for a significant portion of your grade (30%).

Memos, Discussion Questions, and Leading Class Discussion: Students will sign up to lead discussion for two weeks during the semester. For those weeks, students will be responsible for kicking off class discussion and providing questions to keep discussion flowing. In addition, in the weeks they are signed up to lead discussion, students must submit a 2-page memo synthesizing and analyzing the readings for that week, plus a list of 4-5 questions for discussion. The memo should not summarize the readings, but should discuss how the readings relate to each other, the issues they highlight, and their theoretical and empirical strengths and weaknesses. Students should email this memo and discussion questions to the entire class by Monday at noon on the day before the seminar they are due to lead.

Oral Presentation of Final Paper: In the final two class sessions, we will hold mock conference panels. Students will make a presentation of no more than 10 minutes on their final paper.

Final Paper: A final paper is required and is due Tuesday, December 13. Regardless of which of the following two options you choose, all students must meet with me no later than Tuesday, October 25 to discuss your paper topic. The paper may take one of two forms:

- Applied essay: A 15-20 page paper that applies a theory of decision-making to a foreign policy decision or policy initiative.

OR

- Research Paper: A standard research paper. This option is for advanced students and may not be appropriate for everyone; those wishing to pursue this option should discuss it with me in advance. The paper should propose a theory, hypothesis, and research design, and provide empirical evidence. The final product should be a conference paper or journal submission.
Grading:

Class Participation: 30%
Memos on readings, discussion questions, and leadership of discussion: 15% (total for both)
Oral Presentation of Final Paper: 5%
Final Paper: 50%

Academic Integrity:

By taking this course, you are agreeing to abide by the University’s Code of Academic Integrity. Please read the code at http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html. Violations of the Code will be subject to the disciplinary penalties described in the Code.

Course Materials:

There is one required book, available for purchase at the GW Bookstore or online; it is also on reserve at Gelman Library.


I may adjust the readings as necessary – you are responsible for any changes to the readings.

Other Readings and Blackboard:

Most articles can be found through the usual electronic sources (JSTOR, Google Scholar, etc.). Other readings will be distributed as necessary (occasionally through Blackboard’s “Electronic Reserves”) and students should coordinate with me and with each other to obtain non-electronic readings.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (August 30): Introduction

Week 2 (September 6): How Should We Study Foreign Policy Decision-Making?

- Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Chapter 4 (To be distributed).
• Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, Chapter 2 (*To be distributed*).

**Week 3 (September 13): Bounded Rationality**


**Weeks 4 (September 20): Bureaucracies and Organizations: A First Cut & Critiques**

- Review Allison and Halperin, “Bureaucratic Politics”
- Stephen D. Krasner, “Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland),” *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1971).

**Week 5 (September 27): Bureaucracies and Organizations: The Next Wave**

Week 6 (October 4): Groupthink


Week 7 (October 11): Individual Leaders I: Belief Systems and Attributes vs. Leaders in Their Domestic Context


Week 8 (October 18): Individual Leaders II: Problems of Perception

- Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*
Week 9 (October 25): Prospect Theory


Week 10 (November 1): Process, Politics, and Leadership Style

- Alexander George, *Foreign Policy Decisionmaking: The Effective Use of Information and Advice*, Chapters 1, 4 *(To be distributed)*.
- Robert L. Gallucci, *Neither Peace Nor Honor: The Politics of American Military Policy in Viet-Nam*, Chapters 1, 2, 6 *(To be distributed)*.
- Derek H. Chollet and James M. Goldgeier, “The Scholarship of Decision-Making: Do We Know How We Decide?” in Snyder et. al., *Foreign Policy Decision Making (Revisited)* *(To be distributed)*.
- James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Brookings, 1999), Chapters 1, 6 *(To be distributed)*.

Week 11 (November 8): Liberalism, Realism, and Constructivism

• Jeffrey Taliaferro, *Balancing Risks: Great Power Intervention in the Periphery*, Chapters 1-2 (*To be distributed*).

**Week 12 (November 15): Explaining the Decision to Attack Iraq**

• George Packer, *The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq*, Chapter 4 ("Special Plans") (**Blackboard**).

**November 22: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)**

**Week 13 (November 29): Student Presentations**

**Week 14 (December 6): Student Presentations**

**December 13: Papers Due**