INTL 1555: The Political Economy of Strategy:  
From the Financial Revolution to the Revolution in Military Affairs

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 2:30 p.m. to 3:50 p.m.  
Office hours following each class; location TBD

Description

This is a course about how major powers make, maintain and potentially undermine themselves using several recent examples -- Great Britain, the United States, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan. We make no claims that this course will reveal clues about the end of the American Empire, or the Pax Americana, but we do argue that only through an honest accounting of the history of the political economy of strategy can students understand both the costs and benefits of hegemony.

Nations have a variety of tools at their disposal to impose their will upon others. Major media, politicians and many analysts often focus upon either “hard” power -- military might -- or “soft” power -- culture, humanitarian aid, public health, etc. -- rather than the topics of this course: productive and financial power. Contemporary discussions of U.S. military capabilities rarely take into account the implications of deindustrialization, globalization, and growing socio-economic inequality for U.S. global power and authority. In this sometimes overlooked domain we believe that students and their instructors might come to understand a dimension to national power that citizens and their leaders overlook at their peril.

Among the questions we explore are:

- How do nations and empires pay for hegemony?
- What are the costs and benefits of the different approaches to financing military power?
- How do hegemons manage competition from external rivals?
- How do economies cope with violent or non-violent coercion?
- How is a nation’s domestic political-economic culture affected by its rivals?
- Is great power status compatible with free markets?
- What is the role of the state in promoting military, economic, and technical power?

Our case studies range over several centuries, but each week we will return to a set of fundamental issues of which actors and institutions benefits from the variety of factors that compose a framework we call political economy. Our definition is both material and elastic -- while we address the traditional dimensions of political economy including finance, banking and economic diplomacy or coercion ranging from trade to sanctions -- we also include the role of science, technology and technical knowledge in the emergence and maintenance of national
power. Our approach is also interdisciplinary, as we seek to blend insights from history, international political economy, and strategic studies.

We often hear claims that the present is different, that contemporary communications technology, and the speed with which events transpire have forever altered the calculus of political life. This course should help you deflate such claims. We are not studying history for its own sake. By the end of the course, students should have a grasp on the values and consequences of hegemony as well as the costs and benefits of empire for both established powers and their declining or rising rivals. While the past may serve as a set of maps of possible futures, it cannot predict or explain the future; in this course we use the past to afford us a sense of best practices to structure our thinking about the challenges to come.

Since World War One, industrialized nations have become less and less willing to bear the costs and risks of conventional warfare -- a process that has only accelerated with the advent and proliferation of nuclear weapons. Since these countries have not relinquished their ambition to influence events beyond their borders, their governments have made steadily greater use of economic instruments to impose their will on their adversaries, rivals, and partners. The results have not always lived up to expectations, which suggests our ambitions exceed our knowledge. We are running out of time to rectify this shortcoming. The peaceful resolution of crises such as the on-going one on the Korean Peninsula depend upon nations adopting strategies that make effective use of the economic and financial instruments of power at their disposal.

**Format**

Each class session will involve lecture by both instructors and discussion between faculty and students. Our goal is that you, our students, will bear an increasing burden of articulating our common project as we move through the semester. Although the course is presented in a sequential fashion, it is profoundly cumulative. We are not interested in having you memorize details, but in acquiring habits of interpretation and reasoning so that you might ask and answer more nuanced questions about the issues at hand. While class participation is an integral aspect of your grade, a take-home midterm and participation in a simulation will also serve as the basis for your evaluation.

Assignments and Evaluation: In addition to class participation, students will receive grades on three written assignments—a short essay as well as a take home midterm and materials prepared for a simulation during the penultimate class. We propose using the following rubric for evaluating written work and class participation.

There are four elements to a good essay: it answers the question asked; it has a thesis; it marshals evidence to support that thesis; and it does all of these things in a clear and well-organized fashion. These four elements serve as the foundation for a grading rubric that articulates the expectations for the essay, sets base criteria for grading, clarifies the standards for a quality performance, and guides feedback about progress toward those standards. The ability to compose a succinct thesis and marshal evidence to prove it is a hallmark of analytical thinking allowing students to communicate ideas with clarity and precision.
Standards for Written Work

A: Work of superior quality that demonstrates a high degree of original, critical thought. Thesis is clearly articulated and focused, evidence is significant, and the essay is very well-written.

B: A well-executed essay that meets all five standards of an essay as outlined above. A solid effort in which a thesis is articulated, the treatment of supporting evidence has strong points, and the answer is well presented and well-constructed.

C: Below-average undergraduate-level performance. The essay is generally missing one or more of the elements described above. The thesis may be vague or unclear and evidence may be inadequate, analysis may be incomplete, and poor prose makes for difficult reading.

Late Work: Unexcused tardy student work -- that is, work turned in past the deadline without previous permission from the instructors -- will receive a grade of incomplete.

We are not ogres. If you are having problems completing the assignment because of personal or family issues please tell us. We will make accommodations, but it is incumbent upon you to inform us in a timely fashion if you cannot complete the assignments because of issues outside your control. If something is going on, don’t wait until the last minute; send us an email or tell us in advance so that we can make the appropriate response.

Standards for Class Participation during Lectures and Simulation

A: Contribution is always of superior quality. Unfailingly thinks through the issue at hand before commenting. Arrives prepared for every class. Contributions are highlighted by insightful thoughts and understanding, and contain some original interpretations of complex comments.

B: Average level contribution. Involvement in discussions reflects adequate preparation for class with the occasional contribution of original and insightful thought, but may not adequately consider others’ contributions.

C: Contribution is marginal. Occasionally attempts to put forward a plausible opinion, but the inadequate use of evidence, incoherent logic structure, and critically unclear quality of insight is insufficient to adequately examine the issue at hand. Usually content to let others conduct the class discussion.

Course Requirements and Time Commitments

This class has a demanding quantity of reading. Students should expect to complete a approximately 200 pages per week, or between 80-120 pages per session. In addition to three hours of class each week, completing the readings each week should occupy 4-6 hours (25 pages per hour) of additional work each week. We have attached our estimates concerning the length of time complete our assignments to a description of each below:
• A 8-10 pg. writing assignment addressing a prompt or choice of prompts provided by the instructors that draws upon the reading and lectures. We expect that this should take 4-6 hours depending on whether or not students have kept up with the reading.

• A take-home mid-term of at most 2,500 words (8-10 pg.) answering the student’s choice from a menu of questions. Choose one of three, for example. This should take 6-10 hours, again depending on how much reading the students have not done for class.

• The “Hegemony Game”. We will divide the class into groups representing various nations. Students will prepare for a game that will take up at least one class period, and perhaps two. The object of the game is to either become the hegemon or come up with some collective security arrangement that will satisfy the various players. Students will be evaluated on the basis of their preparation, participation in the simulation and recap, and a brief written reflection (5 pgs.) on the significance of the simulation and its relevance to the course material.

Percentage Breakdown of Assignments

• 1st Written Assignment (20%): circulated 26 February 2019; due 07 March 2019
• 2nd Written Assignment (30%): circulated 11 April 2019; due 30 April 2019
• 3rd Written Assignment (25%): circulated 11 April 2019; due TBD
• Class & Simulation Participation: 25%

Lectures and Readings

Core Text for Purchase: Kennedy, Paul. The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. New York: Vintage, 2010. We have made copies of all required reading available on Canvas.

Supplementary Readings: These readings are not required either for class or any assignment. We will, however, make use of these works during our lectures, and we encourage students to consult the supplementary readings if they wish to research specific topics more deeply.
Schedule of Classes

Course Introduction:

24 January 2019

Required Readings: N/A

Opening Module:

Lecture (29 January 2019):

What is strategy? What is political economy? How do they fit together?

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


Module 1: Is geography destiny?

First Lecture (31 January 2019):

Why Europe? Why not Asia? Europe, China & India, and the Great Divergence

Required Readings:
Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, 3-30


Supplementary Readings:


**Second Lecture (05 February 2019):**

*Is Warmaking Statemaking?*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


**Module 2: Where does power come from?**

**Lecture (07 February 2019):**

*Is Money Power? The Fiscal-Military State and the Rise of Britain*

Required Readings:

Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, 73-139.


Supplementary Readings:


**Module 3: Does empire pay?**

**First Lecture (12 February 2019):**

*Is there a Tradeoff between Guns and Butter? The British Empire before 1914*

Required Readings:
Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, 151-158, 224-232


Supplementary Readings


**Second Lecture (14 February 2019):**

*Can You Have Your Cake and Eat it, Too? Vietnam vs. the Great Society*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


Module 4: Does conquest pay?

First Lecture (21 February 2019):

*Bad Germans vs. Worse Germans: Occupation Policy in WWI vs. WWII*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


Second Lecture (26 February 2019):

*How does knowledge/power travel? Intellectual property as state plunder*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


First Assignment Distributed

Module 5: Can you save capitalism?

**Lecture (28 February 2019):**

*The Great Depression and the Rise of Keynesianism, 1929-1937*

**Required Readings:**


**Supplementary Readings:**


### Module 6: What were the alternatives to capitalism?

**First Lecture (05 March 2019):**

*The Economics of Spectacle: Italy, Germany, and Japan, 1922-1945*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


**Second Lecture (07 March 2019):**

*The People’s Future? Communism in the Soviet Union, 1917-1991*
Required Reading:


Supplementary Readings:


First Assignment Due

**Module 7: Can you strangle an economy?**

**First Lecture (12 March 2019):**

*Are Calories Weapons? The Blockade of Germany, WWI & WWII*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:

Davis and Engerman, *Blockades*, 159-238.


**Second Lecture (14 March 2009):**

*Do Numbers Kill? Sanctions as a Coercive Tool*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


**Module 8: Can you break an economy?**

**Lecture (19 March 2019):**

*Strategic bombing as economic warfare, 1939-1945*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


https://archive.org/details/unitedstatesstra00cent

**Module 9: Does quantity have a quality all its own?**

**First Lecture (21 March 2019):**

*Two “Miracles”: Albert Speer vs. Detroit*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


**Second Lecture (02 April 2019):**

*Dollars vs. Blood: How the Allies Won WWII*

Required Readings:

Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, 347-357.


Supplementary Readings:


**Module 10 (Part I): Is energy power?**

**Lecture (04 April 2019):**

*The Geopolitics of Energy: The Hydrocarbon Revolution*
Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


**Module 11: How do you create order from chaos?**

**Lecture (09 April 2019):**

*The Postwar Liberal-Internationalist Order: The Bretton Woods System and the Marshall Plan*

Required Readings:


Hearden, Patrick J. Architects of Globalism: Building a New World Order During World War Two. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2002, pp. 11-64


Supplementary Readings:


Module 12: Are budgets strategy?

First Lecture (11 April 2019):

The Rise of the Military-Industrial Complex

Required Readings:

Kennedy, Rise and Fall, 357-372


Eisenhower, Dwight D. “Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17th, 1961”: 
https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/farewell_address.pdf
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyBNeceVtdU


Supplementary Readings:


Second Lecture (16 April 2019):

Can You Buy Science On an Installment Plan?

Required Readings:


Morse, Philip M. “Must We Always Be Gadgeteers?” *Physics today* 3 (1950): 4.

Supplementary Readings:

N/A

*Second & Third Assignments and Simulation Rules Distributed*

**Module 13: Does globalization undermine military power?**

**First Lecture (18 April 2019):**

*The Decline of Britain as a Great Power*

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


Second Lecture (23 April 2019):

Deindustrialization & Financialization: The United States since the 1970s

Readings:

Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, 413-437, 514-535.


Supplementary Readings:


Module 10 (Part II): Is energy power?

Lecture (25 April 2019):
Anthropogenic Climate Change as a Strategic Challenge

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


**Review Session: What Have We Learned So Far?**

**Lecture (30 April 2019):**

*Is strategy insurance or an index fund?*

Required Readings:

Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*, 438-446.


Supplementary Readings:


Second Assignment Due

Simulation (Part I): The Hegemony Game

02 May 2019

Guest Moderator: Paul Solman, PBS Newshour

Required Readings: TBD

Supplementary Readings: TBD

Simulation (Part II): Recap

07 May 2019

Guest Moderator: Paul Solman, PBS Newshour

Required Readings: TBD

Supplementary Readings: TBD