**Description:** The course examines the origins of war from rationalist, human nature, political, social, and cultural perspectives as well as a wide range of theories on the causes of conflict and cooperation. Specifically, it explores theories of alliance dynamics, domestic politics, power shifts, the offense-defense balance, and cognitive-psychology. In addition to these theories, various kinds of strategic interaction will be examined, including deterrence, compellence, appeasement, and engagement. Much of what is interesting in the study of international relations does not involve strategies of pure conflict (zero-sum games), so the course focuses on theories of interdependent decision-making in mixed-motive games, which model conflict as a bargaining situation. Given that (1) the essence of international conflict is disagreement over policy choices and/or the allocation of scarce resources and (2) politics is, at its core, a process of bargaining to arrive at a mutual agreement that resolves these political disputes, the course examines and critiques non-cooperative bargaining theories of war.

**Requirements:** Class participation and a 25-35 page critical analysis of the literature under one of the subheadings or a review essay that uses a recent and important book as a springboard for the paper.

**Required Books:**


**Week 1: Introduction**

**Week 2. Origins of War: Human Nature or Cultural Invention?**

**Week 3. Theories of War and Imperialism**
Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism* (University of Chicago Press, 1982).

**Week 4. Bargaining Theories of War**

Supplementary Reading:
Donald Green and Ian Shapiro, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory, chaps 1-3.

Week 5. Deterrence, the Security Dilemma, and Offense-Defense Balance Theory
Thomas C. Schelling, Arms and Influence, chaps. 1-3.
Supplementary Reading the Security Dilemma and Offense-Defense Theory:

Supplementary Reading on Deterrence Theory:
Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, ch. 3, "Deterrence, the Spiral Model, and Perceptions of the Adversary."
The following articles are all from a special issue of World Politics 41:2 (January 1989) on the deterrence debate: Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies,"143-169; Alexander George and Richard Smoke, "Deterrence and Foreign Policy," 170-182; Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," 208-224.

Week 6. Misperception and Cognitive Processes: Does It Make a Difference How the Brain Works?

Week 7: Motivated Biases and Emotion: Intelligence, Organizational Culture, and Decision-Making

Robert Jervis, Why Intelligence Fails (Cornell UP, 2010).
This piece deals with emotions at the group level, and so provides counterintuitive insights on the problem of aggregation:

Week 8. Alliance Dynamics

Paul W. Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815-1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of

Supplementary Reading on Appeasement:
Amitai Etzioni, "The Kennedy Experiment," Western Political Quarterly (June 1967).

Supplementary Readings on Alliances and War:
Randall Schweller, Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest (Columbia UP, 1998), chap. 3.

Week 9. Domestic Politics and War

Jack L. Snyder, "Imperial Temptations," The National Interest (Spring 2003).

Supplementary Reading:

Week 10: Power Shifts, and War

Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Supplementary Reading of Power Shifts and Preventive War: