

HISTORY 404-101
Capstone
War and Misperception, 1648-1945

Spring 2013
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Class meeting times: Mondays and Wednesdays 1-2:30 pm

Misperception involves the discrepancy between the psychological environment of decision makers and the “operational”, fact-based environment of the real world. Decisions may be determined (and all too often are) by the former; effects or consequences constrained by the latter. (Images are not conceptualized as misperceptions because they involve normative judgments or idiosyncratic responses for which there exist no empirical, rational or objective standards of evaluation).

This course will examine in detail the relationship between misperception on the part of decision makers and the processes leading to particular wars during the period 1648-1945. Conceptually, the course will question the rational models of conflict constructed by generations of military historians which work from the assumption that leaders accurately perceive external threats and opportunities and select policies based on rational calculation in order to advance national interests. Attention will be devoted to the impact of ideas and identifiable personal factors on the course of event as well as the relationship between the human element and the conventions, structures, ethical precepts, and institutions that distinguished European societies during this period and help explain the pattern of interstate relationships and conflict.

The first part of the course consists of weekly discussions of the salient literature on the subject including extracts from international theory, systemic empirical research, crisis resolution and historical studies of decision-making and crisis behavior.

Section two will extract key theoretical perspectives from this literature and apply these to concrete case studies of selected crisis situations leading to actual war. These case studies will form the basis of research papers presented and discussed by students in class.

Course Goals:

The course aims to provide for students the latest research on the roots of conflict—within the context of the complex processes involved in crisis decision making. This should enable them to think more critically and creatively about war as a universal cultural phenomenon and one integral to political history; defying attempts at prediction, manipulation or control. Also the extensive reading and writing involved in this course will, hopefully, enhance students’ critical thinking and compositional skills.

Course Requirements:

HSS 404 requires one book review (6 pages minimum in length) based on a book relating to the course themes of the course, chosen by the student (with Professor’s

approval) but not one of the course texts. This is due on **Monday, March 11** and will count for 20 percent of the final grade. Book review guidelines will be provided. Novels, autobiographies, memoirs are **not acceptable**. The review has to be handed in at the beginning of class—hard copy, not email. Moreover, students are required to prepare a properly documented and researched paper of 15-20 pages on a topic relevant to the course, which they select (with Professor's approval). This is worth 40 percent of the final grade. (Note: Internet sources for this paper must be kept to a minimum. No more than two per paper. Otherwise marks will be deducted.) The essay must be submitted at the beginning of class, **Monday, April 29** and is worth 40 percent of the final grade. An essay guideline will be provided. There will also be a midterm exam worth 30 percent of the final grade (date to be decided).

Assignments and Marks:

Book Review	20% (due Monday, March 11)
Mid term Exam	30% (date to be decided)
Research Essay	40% (due Monday, April 29)
Class Participation	10%

Class texts:

Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (1999).
 R. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (1976).
 James A. Nathan, *Soldiers, Statecraft and History* (2002).

Syllabus:

- I. Introduction:
 - i) War and Misperception: Theoretical Perspectives and Analytical Problems.
 - ii) Common Misperceptions.
 - iii) First Move Advantage and Systemic Instability.
 - iv) Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War.
 - v) Balance of Military Technology.
 - vi) Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy.
 - vii) Alliance Dynamics.
 - viii) Cumulatitivity.
- II. The Military Revolution and Technological Advances: 1500-1800.
- III. Power and Capability: Key Variables.
- IV. Cognitive Dissonance and International Dynamics.
- V. Offensive/Defensive Theory.
- VI. Enlightened Despotism, Diplomacy and War.

Case Study – Frederick the Great and the Origins of the Seven Years War.
- The Campaigns of the Seven Years War.

VII. Warfare in the Age of Revolution.

Case Study – Napoleon: For or Against?
- Wellington and the Art of War.

VIII. Domestic Politics and Perception.

IX. The Origins of World War I: A War of Illusions?

Case Study – Issues and Personalities on the Eve of the War.

X. Hitler and Operation Barbarossa: The Grand Delusion.

Recommended Readings:

- D. Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (1995).
A. Osiander, *The States System of Europe, 1640-1990* (1994).
R. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (1981).
O.R. Holsti, *Crisis, Escalation, War* (1972).
K. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflict and International Order* (1991).
R. Smoke, *War: Controlling Escalation* (1977).
B. de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (1980).
K.J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order* (1991).
K.W. Schweizer, *War, Politics and Diplomacy* (2001).
K.W. Schweizer (and M. Keens Soper), *The Art of Diplomacy* (1994).
K.W. Schweizer (and M. Schumann), *The Seven Years War: A Transatlantic History* (2008).
H. Saganimi, *On the Causes of War* (1996).
G. Blainey, *The Causes of War* (NY, 1988).
J.S. Levy, *War in the Great Power System 1495-1975* (1983).
A.J.P. Taylor, *How Wars Begin* (1980).
J. Keegan, *The Mask of Command*, (1987).
J. Nathan, *Soldiers, Statecraft and History* (2002).
R. O'Connell, *Soul of the Sword*, (2002).
W. H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power* (1981).
J. Black, *European Warfare, 1660-1815* (1994).
M. Van Crefeld, *Technology and War* (1988).
J. Stone, *Military Strategy* (2011).
J. Riley, *Decisive Battles* (2010).
F. McDonough, *Origins of the Second World War: An International Perspective* (2011).
J. Stoessinger, *Why Nations go to War* (1974).
A. Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (various editions).

Policies:

- This is an **intellectually demanding course** and all students will be expected to do all the readings listed in the syllabus and start work on their written assignments before the submission date, (ideally three weeks after start of course).
- Assignments **MUST** be submitted on time. **The research paper will be due one week before the last day of class.** Excuses for work submitted late will **not** be accepted (medical reasons, death in family apart) and there will be **no** exceptions. Late submissions will have grades deducted (one grade per day of lateness) unless a valid reason given (i.e. illness, supported by a doctor's note). This point **must** be clearly understood before students **agree** to take this class. Last minute pleas based on undocumented reasons **will** be rejected.
- Assignments submitted **must** conform to the specific category stated in this syllabus i.e. an essay is an essay, not a book review. Essay topics are **chosen by the student, subject to Professor's approval.** For the book review, autobiographies or works of fiction are not acceptable.
- It is the **student's** responsibility to ascertain that all assignments have been duly submitted and all required term work completed **prior** to the end of the semester. By signing the attendance sheets students explicitly **acknowledge** their understanding and **acceptance** of this condition.
- Students **must not** put assignments under the professor's office door. Hard copy must be submitted on the due date at the beginning of the class or taken to the History office where the secretary will date stamp them.
- Plagiarism in any written assignment will result in an automatic failure and will be reported to the Dean of Students. Book reviews should be 5-6 pages in length (title **must be approved** by instructor) and research papers between 15-20 pages, excluding bibliography. Web sources for the essay **must** be kept to a minimum (no more than **two**).
- When submitting the final paper, students must also hand in the first/second draft plus a copy of the notes used for the construction of the essay.
- There will be no "re-writing" of assignments (book review and/or essay). Students having problems with written English must consult the Humanities Dept. Writing Center (Cullimore, 4th floor) prior to handing in assignments.
- There will be no "make-up" exam. If you miss the final exam for any reasons other than those applying to written assignments listed above, you will receive an F.
- All submitted work must contain the following signed statement: **I have fully complied with the NJIT Honor Code. Signed: Your Name.**

