(**Due:** May 5 [5:50pm EST])

# 1    INTRODUCTION

In order to receive credit for the course, students will be required to submit a final paper. The topic of the paper will be determined by the student. However, I reserve the right, after reading paper proposals, to object any topic on the basis of feasibility, appropriateness, etc. This is really just a step to help guide you away from paper topics that might be too broad to complete during one semester, or other topics that just won't work for the assignment. Overall, however, students are expected to pick a final paper topic that addresses some issue related to conflict management/resolution in international relations; this idea can come from the readings on the syllabus or topics/issues from other international relations courses you may have taken in the past. At the end of the day, you have the opportunity to write about whatever topic you like, as long as it generally fits within the parameters of the course. Feel free to run a paper topic/idea by me if you're in doubt.

Students must have a clear research question or puzzle that drives their paper, and are expected to produce a causal argument that results in clear, testable hypotheses. **This is not a "research paper,"** rather, you are expected to follow the scientific method of building a theory and deriving hypotheses from your own argument. The goal is to produce a paper that tries to answer a specific puzzle or question; the answer will be framed around what other scholars have said regarding your topic, but will also require you to think through your own explanation for the topic of interest. The assignments during this semester will focus on putting together a final paper based on argument and evidence.

# 2    WHAT SHOULD THE PAPER LOOK LIKE?

You should start the paper by outlining your research question. Essentially, tell the reader why your research question is interesting; why should they continue reading your paper? Why is your paper important for the study of **[fill in the blank]**. This is how you pitch your paper, and how you write the first paragraphs of the assignment. You should end this part by introducing what you are arguing. Similar to the critical review paper later this semester, you should say something like: "In this paper, I will argue that **[Again, you fill in the blank]**."

After the introduction, you are expected to survey some of the literature on your research topic. What do others say about the topic and argument you are working on. Citations are expected (see below for citation guideline). There's no set number of sources you will need to refer to in the paper. I don't want you to focus exclusively on what others have said, specifically because this is a hypothesis paper, rather than a review or summary of topic

**[Insert topic here]**. Your literature review should survey research from other authors on issues relevant to your topic.

Following this, you will need to lay out your argument. Tell me a causal story between two variables, where one variable affects another variable. As an example, suppose you are writing about the relationship between military strength and war involvement. Here, military strength **(X)** affects conflict involvement **(Y)**. Perhaps being militarily stronger makes you more likely to be involved in wars; tell me why, and be very elaborate about this. This should be the bulk of your paper.

The discipline of political science is interested in following the scientific method as a framework for research, and you will be expected to write your paper in a way that will suggest testable hypotheses. If you've taken, for example, Introduction to World Politics, chances are that you've encountered a *hypothesis* paper. You will be expected to show at least **2 hypotheses** that can be derived from your theory. For the convenience of the reader, I require that you do something similar to the following for each hypothesis:
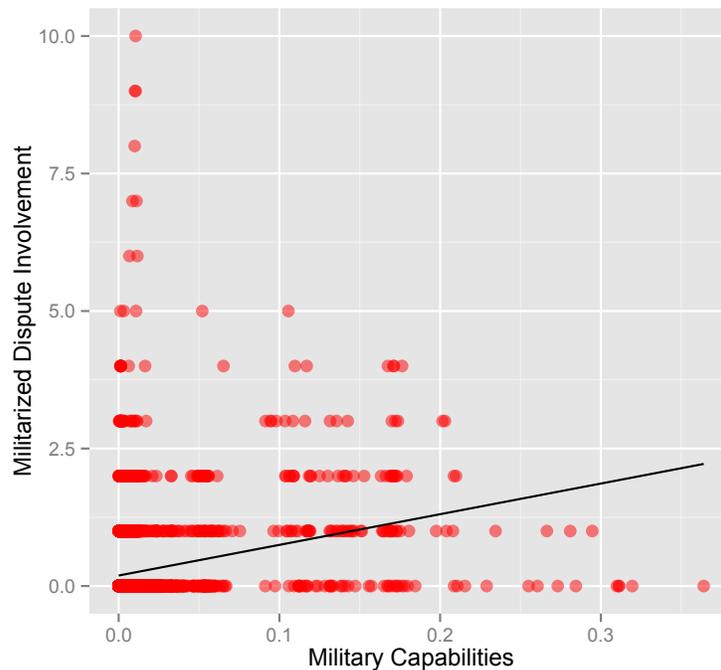
**Hypothesis 1** *More military strength leads to more militarized dispute involvement.*

I want you to clearly denote your hypotheses visually in the paper. Your hypotheses should not come at the beginning of the paper; they should be at the end of your argument section.

Next you are expected to have a section that moves away from the argument and shifts to focus on the evidence. In the example above about capabilities and war involvement, I would discuss how I need to collect data on military strength. For one, I need to be really clear about what I mean by "military strength." For simplicity, I define military strength as a state's probability of victory in war—more military strength meaning a higher probability of winning a war, all else equal. Therefore, I would go out and find some data on military strength that will capture how likely a state is to win, should they find themselves involved in a war. First, I would do some research for indicators of military strength; one of the best indicators comes from the National Military Capability data from the Correlates of War Project. So, I would go to the data source and describe the data provided by that particular source. You would do the exact same thing for the other variable (war). Essentially, you would look for a variable that measures war involvement. Again, another good source for this is the Correlates of War. I want you to be very descriptive of your data.

Following this, you will analyze your data; tell me patterns in it, trends, etc. Think about your hypotheses. Above, I hypothesized that increases in military strength make a state more likely to find themselves in a militarized dispute. Therefore, I need to think about an appropriate way to test that claim. Suppose I collect data on military capabilities (X) and on dispute involvement (Y), I could plot both variables with a scatter plot and see if there's a clear trend in the data. You can do this with Excel. Figure 1 indicates that there appears to be a clear trend in the data I've collected that provides evidence for my hypothesis; more power results in more militarized disputes. This is just one way to visualize your data to analyze your argument, and we'll talk about this in greater detail in the lecture "Dealing with Data." The assignment requires that you place all tables and figures at the end of the

Figure 1: Military Strength and Dispute Involvement



document, but in the text clearly refer to each figure (such as "As you can see in figure 2..." or "Table 1 illustrates that...").

You should use the scholarly literature you encounter in this class to structure the sections in your paper. All of the papers you encounter have a similar pattern when it comes to the sections. First, the paper will usually have an introduction that outlines the puzzle, an overview of the argument, and the broader intellectual merit of the research question (aka, why their paper is worth spending the time to read). Then, the author does a survey of what others have argued about their topic. Following this, the author presents you with their original argument. For papers that evaluate the author's argument with data, the author has a section that discusses all the details about their data. After this, the author evaluates the merit of their argument by analyzing their data in some way. Finally, the author concludes with their findings and further discusses the importance of their findings (in other words, why we now know a lot more about **[insert topic here]**).

I expect that you will be able to complete this assignment in less than 20 pages. There's no clear page minimum, but you will be expected to have the following in your paper to fulfill the requirements of the assignment:

- A clear statement of how some variable **(X)** causes some other variable **(Y)** to vary.

- A clear description of some of the existing literature on the topic. What do we know about the topic from what others have argued.

- A clear and elaborate argument about why the relationship between **X** and **Y** exists.

- **2** clear, testable hypotheses that follow from your argument.

- A clear description of the data you will need to collect to adequately assess your hypotheses—how the data are measured, where you will get your data from.

- An analysis of what the data tells you in regards to your hypotheses. I should see tables and graphs.

- Describe what you see in your graphs, or what your tables tell the reader.

- A conclusion of what you argued and the intellectual merit of the research project. Essentially, tell me why your research is important for what we know about your topic.

## 3   GRADING SCALE

Letter grades on the final paper will correspond with the following numeric final grade points:

| **A** (400) | **A−** (364) | **B+** (352) | **B** (340) | **B−** (324) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C+** (312) | **C** (300) | **C−** (284) | **D** (272) | **F** (240) |

## 4   BUILDING A FINAL PRODUCT

As mentioned above, the assignments throughout the semester are designed to construct a solid final paper. Each assignment will place an emphasis on some important element that will go into the final product, and the purpose of including assignments that target different sections of the final paper is to emphasize a process of writing and revision. Writing a final paper is difficult; it is not easy to put together over night, and I do not want anyone to put off the project until the last minute. As you will see, one of the best ways to write a solid paper is by going through the (sometimes painful) process of writing and revision. That said, the assignment structure for the semester will look as follows:

| Assignment | Length | Deadline |
|---|---|---|
| Final Paper Proposal | 2pgs. | February 17 |
| Final Paper Bibliography | 3pgs. | March 3 |
| Data Paper | ≤5pgs. | March 17 |
| Rough Draft of Paper Due | > 0 | March 31 |
| Final Paper | ≤20pgs. | May 5 |

### 4.1   Final Paper Proposal

Students are expected, before they write their final paper, to submit a research paper proposal. The proposal will be no less than 2 pages in length (double space, 12pt font, 1 inch margins, Times New Roman). Include a separate page for citations (see citation style below). Base your proposal on the following:

- Discuss the research question that drives your paper. Why are you writing this paper; why is it an interesting topic? Why should others care about your paper?

- Discuss how your question fits in the literature you have read for this class. What is your contribution to the existing literature? We'll be early in the semester, so don't worry about getting at everything. If you can tie this to literature from another political science course, talk about that.

- Discuss the broader merit of this research project—why is this paper topic important? It's *important* to know why your research paper is *important*. If you can't answer this question, the paper will be hard to write (I know this from experience).

- In a couple sentences, tell me what you're arguing in the final paper.

## 4.2 Final Paper Bibliography

Every good scientific paper is framed around some important question or puzzle, but there's no reason to believe that you're the only person to ever ask that question before. Put differently, while you may have an original argument, others have most likely written about your topic before, offering a different perspective. The purpose of the bibliography assignment is for you to start looking to what others have said about your research topic in the existing literature. The bibliography assignment will get you to start sorting through the diverse arguments related to your research topic, and help you figure out your contribution to that literature.

Books are a good place to start looking, but there are likely to be countless articles from scholarly sources that will be appropriate for writing a review of the literature. The library at Binghamton is an excellent source of scholarly material that you can include in your final paper. I advise you to avoid articles from online websites, especially sources like Wikipedia (regardless of what people say, it is **NOT AT ALL A CREDIBLE SOURCE**).

JSTOR is a credible and reliable source for accessing scholarly literature from many fields, especially political science. You can access JSTOR and other sources from the Binghamton Online Libraries website, and we'll talk about this in greater detail. The library even compiles a series of tutorials to help guide students through finding academic research material.

## 4.3 Data Paper

You are expected to evaluate the hypotheses you derive from your theoretical argument with real data. You are expected to collect data from reputable sources on 100 observations. Additionally, you will write a data paper where you provide the reader with an analysis of the data you've collected. The assignment is concerned with evaluating patterns in your data that you can discuss in the final paper. You will essentially be an expert on the data you collect. Tell me where your data comes from, how it's measured, and how it fits with your argument. Essentially, you will jam with your data. Give me charts, graphs, interpretive dance, etc. Not all of the material in the data paper will make it to the final paper, nor should it. The expectations of this paper are simple: know your data.

## 5  ROUGH DRAFTS

I am happy to read drafts of the final paper. In fact, it is encouraged that you send a draft of your paper to me. I'll tell you my thoughts, and give you suggestions/advice. This is a habit that I suggest you become accustomed to doing in this class and in the future. I do have 2, and only 2, requirements that you must do before sending me a draft.

1. Read over your paper first before sending it to me.
2. Do not send a draft to me within 72 hours of the final paper due date.

## 6  CITATIONS

Students will be expected to cite sources when taking material from other readings. Plagiarism will receive severe punishments, and will result in *at least* a grade of **0** for the paper, if not worse (see the syllabus). You will be expected to use in-text citations and have a reference page that follows the style described below. I will give examples for articles, books, and chapters in what follows (please ask me for further citation styles if necessary):

### 6.1  In-Text Citation

- **Article:** (Fearon 1995) or Fearon (1995)

- **Book:** (Reiter 2009) or Reiter (2009)

- **Chapter in Edited Book:** (Frieden & Lake 2000) or Frieden & Lake (2000)

## REFERENCES

Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3):379–414.

Frieden, Jeffry A. & David A. Lake. 2000. "Introduction: International Politics and International Economics." In *International Political Economy: Perspectives on Global Power*, ed. Jeffry A. Frieden & David A. Lake. 4th ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Chapter 1, pp. 1–16.

Reiter, Dan. 2009. *How Wars End*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.