

INTA 4101/8803 Vietnam War Politics, Spring 2025

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

VIETNAM WAR POLITICS

INTA 4101/8803, Spring 2025

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Room: East Architecture 309

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Description

What explains the differing foreign policies of states, including the United States, China, the Soviet Union, and North Vietnam during the Vietnam War? More broadly, how do states make foreign policy decisions? What kinds of factors most influence states' international behavior on security, economic, and foreign aid questions? This course

asks students to approach these fascinating questions from a social scientific perspective. It carefully analyzes the logic of theories and evaluates evidence in support of different explanations for how states behave internationally from the case of the Vietnam War.

The course is organized into two parts. Part I introduces and evaluates competing theories of foreign policy formation. We will discuss the influence of a number of potential determinants of foreign policy, including:

- Anarchy and states' desire to survive
- Domestic political institutions
- Cognitive and emotional factors
- Individual leaders' capabilities and personality traits
- Identity, international law, and norms ^[L]_[SEP]

Part II applies these theoretical ideas to understand and explain the foreign policies of Vietnam War participants.

To help you broaden your understanding of foreign policy, you will follow the contemporary foreign policy of the warring parties in the Vietnam War—the United States, China, Russia, and Vietnam—on a rotating base throughout the entire semester. Every Wednesday, we will start the class by having each of you brief the class on new developments in your respective country's foreign relations in the past week. Half-way through the semester, you will submit an individual memo analyzing some of the most important foreign policy issues facing your country by applying the theoretical perspectives developed in Part I.

Reading Materials

Books available through Georgia Tech course resources:

Dalton Lin, *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy: The Wary Patron, the Autonomous Client, and the Vietnam War* (New York: Routledge, 2025), available through the Georgia Tech Library

Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996. Out of print and will be provided on Canvas

Books available through purchase:

Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Other readings are also available on Canvas or through the Georgia Tech Library online resources.

Requirements and Evaluation

The class will be conducted in seminar style, and a successful seminar requires completion of all readings before each session and active and engaged participation in class.

Students enrolled in the class will be evaluated by their performances in the following responsibilities:

(1) a response paper (no more than 3 pages) on the readings of one theoretical topic; 15%

(2) foreign policy briefings throughout the semester; 20%

(3) actively participate in class discussion. 30%

(4) completing a substantial policy report (no more than 5,000 words) on one current foreign policy issue related to the warring parties of the Vietnam War; 35%

An outstanding example of foreign policy analysis is:

M. Taylor Fravel and Charles L. Glaser, "How Much Risk Should the United States Run in the South China Sea?" *International Security* Vol. 47, No. 2 (Fall 2022), pp. 88-134.

A good sample format of a policy report is:

Department of Homeland Security Report on Reducing the Risks at the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Threats (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, April 26, 2024), available on Canvas.

Foreign Policy Report is due on April 25th

The policy report asks you to analyze one the most important foreign policy issues facing your chosen country. In the report, you will need to (1) Clearly describe the issue; (2) Describe the current policy measures; (3) Analytically evaluate the status quo (i.e., current) policy by applying the theories learned in Part I; (4) Make recommendations

based on your analysis. You should at least consider two policy recommendations: “no policy change” and “a policy change.” It is critical that the recommendation follows naturally from your evaluation of the status quo policy.

Length guidelines: The 5,000 words limit does not include references. Your foreign policy report must be double-spaced, your pages must be numbered, and you must include a word count. I will randomly select pages to read from papers that exceed word limits.

Choose an issue of interest to the United States, China, Russia, or Vietnam and you. The range of possibilities is huge: The Ukraine War, U.S.-NATO relations, BRICS, South China Sea, U.S. alliances in East Asia, China’s BRI in Southeast Asia, etc. are a few examples. A topic might be intriguing because you think the involved country is ignoring, mishandling, or addressing well an issue. Your assignment is to produce a well-researched analytical paper on the issue.

Your grade will mainly reflect: (1) your demonstrated research effort, and (2) your success in presenting and supporting a clear analytical assessment with abundant specific evidence from relevant sources. Substantively excellent policy analysis with significant problems of style will not be awarded a grade in the A range, however.

Learning Outcomes

Problem Solving in International Affairs. Students will be able to use their knowledge of international affairs in a practical problem-solving way to address issues of immediate international concern. This includes knowledge of key issues, familiarity with methods to assess solutions, data-gathering research skills through which to put different methods into place.

*****Note: Syllabus subject to change******

Schedule

January 6: Introduction

Part I: Theories of Foreign Policy Formation

January 8: Levels of Analysis

- Jack S. Levy, "Theories of Interstate and Intrastate War: A Levels-of-Analysis Approach," in Chester Crocker et al, *Turbulent Peace*, (2001), pp. 3-27.

January 13: Theoretical Approaches

- Scott Sagan. "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb." *International Security*, 21:3, 1996.

January 15: Structural Theories and "Realist" Approaches to State Behavior

- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-54).
- Kenneth Waltz, "The Anarchic Structure of World Politics," in Robert Art and Robert Jervis (ed.), *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, 10th ed. New York: Longman, 2010.

January 20: Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday – No class

January 22: Balance of Interests versus Balance of Threat

- Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994), pp. 72-107.
- Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* Vol. 9, no. 4 (1985), pp. 3-43.

January 27: Strategic Triangle

- Lowell Dittmer, "The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis," *World Politics* 33, no. 4 (1981), pp. 485-515.

January 29: The Role of Domestic Institutional Structures

- Jessica Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Regime Type and the Initiation of International Conflict." *American Political Science Review* 106, No. 2 (2012), pp. 326-347.
- H. E. Goemans, *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Chapter 2: A Theory of War Termination, pp. 19-52. Canvas.

February 3: When Do Individual Leaders Matter?

- Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack. "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In." *International Security*: 25, Spring 2001.
- Robert S. Ross, "From Lin Biao to Deng Xiaoping: Elite Instability and China's U.S. Policy," *The China Quarterly*, no. 118 (1989), pp. 265-299.

February 5: Geopolitics and Statecraft

- Dalton Lin, *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy: The Wary Patron, the Autonomous Client, and the Vietnam War* (New York: Routledge, 2025), Chapter 1 "Introduction" and Chapter 2 "Geopolitics, Statecraft, and Patronage Transfers"

February 10: The Politics of Foreign Aid

- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 3 "A Theory of Patronage Transfers in Geopolitical Competition"

February 12: Public Opinion and the Media

- John H. Aldrich, Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, Jason Reifler, and Kristin Thompson Sharp, "Foreign Policy and the Electoral Connection," *Annual Review of Political Science*, pp. 477-502, 2006.
- Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, and Jason Reifler, "Success Matters: Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq," *International Security* 30:3, 2005/2006, pp. 7-46.
- Robert Y Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, "Foreign Policy, Meet the People," *The National Interest*. Washington: Sep/Oct 2008.

February 17: The Art of Writing Policy Memos and Report

Guest speaker TBD

February 19: Presentation of Policy Report Topics

Part II: The Cases of the Vietnam War

February 24-26: Lead-up to the War (1960-1964)

Documentary: *Riding the Tiger* (1961-1963)—in class

- *Hanoi's War* Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 to p. 68
- Ilya V. Gaiduk, "Containing the Warriors: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1960-65," in Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted Gittinger (ed.), *International Perspectives on Vietnam*, Texas A&M University Press, 2000, pp. 58-76.
- *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapter 5
- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 4 "Breaking Encirclement," pp. 87-109.

March 3: Outbreak of the War (1964-1965)

Documentary: *The River Styx* (January 1964-December 1965)—in class (first half)

- *Hanoi's War* Chapter 2 from p. 68 to the end
- *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapter 6 pp. 130-139
- *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, Chapter 1-3

March 5: Communist Aid

Documentary: The River Styx (January 1964-December 1965)—in class (second half)

- *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, Chapter 4
- *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapter 6 pp. 139-156
- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 4 "Breaking Encirclement," from p. 109 to the end of the chapter.

March 10-12: Initial Peace Attempts (1965-1967)

Documentary: Resolve (January 1966-June 1967)—in class

- *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, Chapter 5
- *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapter 7
- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 5 "Pounding with Two Fists," pp. 136-148.

March 17-21: Spring Break -- No Class

March 24, 26, 31: The Lead-up to and the Aftermath of the Tet Offensive (1967-1968)

Documentary: This Is What We Do (July 1967-December 1967) and Things Fall Apart (January 1968-July 1968)—in class

- *Hanoi's War* Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 to p. 129
- *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 to p. 144
- *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapter 8 to p. 179
- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 5 "Pounding with Two Fists," pp. 148-171.

April 2-7: Nixon's Grand Plan and the War in Laos and Cambodia (1969-1970)

Documentary: The Veneer of Civilization (June 1968-May 1969)—in class

- *Hanoi's War* Chapter 4 p. 129 to the end and Chapter 5
- *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapter 8 from p. 179 to the end
- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 5 "Pounding with Two Fists," p. 171 to the end of the chapter.

April 9-14: Early Stages of the Paris Peace Talks (1968-1970)

Documentary: The History of the World (April 1969-May 1970)—in class

- *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, Chapter 7 p. 145 to the end and Chapter 8-9
- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 6 "Romantic Triangle," pp. 193-211.

April 16-21: Sino-U.S. Rapprochement (1969-1972), Superpower Détente (1972), and the Paris Peace Agreement (1973)

Documentary: A Disrespectful Loyalty (May 1970-March 1973)—in class

- Jian Chen, "The Sino-American Rapprochement, 1969-1972," in Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2001, pp. 238-276.
- *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, Chapter 9 to p. 208
- *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, Chapter 10
- *Hanoi's War* Chapter 6-8
- *Geopolitics and China's Patronage Strategy*, Chapter 6 "Romantic Triangle," p. 211 to the end of the chapter