**PS 5302 Seminar in International Relations**
Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Yen-Hsin Chen
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Email: Yen-Hsin.Chen@sulross.edu (Please give me 24 hours to respond)
Office hours:
- Monday & Wednesday: 9 AM-10 AM and 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
- Tuesday & Thursday: 11 AM- 12:00 PM

## Course Objectives

This course will introduce students to studies of the nature of international politics, particularly international conflicts and alliances. Topics include important IR theories, the termination of war, the causes of war, crisis management, conflict escalation, and the role of alliances in international relations. At the end of the course, students should be able to understand international politics, analyze international events, and develop theoretical explanations for the study of international relations.

## Program Learning Outcomes

| Public Administration | Political Science |
|---|---|
| The graduating student will:<br>• Demonstrate the ability to critique significant theoretical approaches of public administration.<br>• Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international administrative processes.<br>• Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis. | The graduating student will:<br>• Demonstrate the ability to analyze significant theoretical approaches of political science.<br>• Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international political processes.<br>• Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis. |

## Marketable Skills

| Public Administration | Political Science |
|---|---|
| • Students can organize and execute presentations relevant to public administration.<br>• Students understand and can execute a program evaluation.<br>• Students can conduct statistical analyses that are useful to the work of public administrators.<br>• Students can read and interpret an organization budget. | • Students can organize and execute verbal and written presentations of complex social issues.<br>• Students can tackle social and political problems by acquiring relevant data and using insight and technical skills to analyze data and develop logical solutions.<br>• Students understand the roles and responsibilities of institutional authority within local, state, national, and international communities.<br>• Students understand and can execute a policy analysis. |

Modified on January 13, 2026

## Assignments and Grading

Your course grade is calculated based on the following four parts:

1. **Discussion Leader** (10% of your course grade)
   Each student will choose weeks, and you will serve as a discussant responsible for introducing and commenting on the required readings for your weeks. There are two things that the discussion leader needs to do:
   (1) You will record and post your discussion video on Blackboard by the Sunday before your week.
   (2) You are required to make five multiple-choice questions for each of your discussion videos.

   For example, if you are the discussion leader of "Week 5 (2/9)", you need to post your discussion video on Blackboard and send me your five multiple-choice questions by February 8th (Sunday). Therefore, your classmates have the week of February 9th to complete watching your discussion video and the five quizzes you wrote.

2. **Weekly Quiz** (40% of your course grade)
   After receiving the multiple-choice questions from each week's discussion leaders, I will check, edit, and post them on Blackboard for the class to take as weekly quizzes. Students are required to watch each weekly discussion video as soon as it is posted and then take the corresponding weekly quiz.

3. **Research Paper** (20% of your grade)
   Each student will write a research paper on international relations. This paper aims to develop your ability to think and write critically and analytically. It requires that you develop specific skills and familiarity with the research production process.
   Students are required to schedule a virtual meeting with me **by** February 1st (Sunday). Subsequently, students will review current theories on their selected topic and then develop their own. In addition to the first one, two more meetings are required to help you and me ensure that you are on the correct track. Please note that these meetings are not optional.
   (1) First meeting by February 1st
   (2) Second meeting by March 1st
   (3) Third meeting by March 29th
   This research paper must have at least 8 double-spaced pages and no more than 10 double-spaced pages. This paper is due on **April 17th** (Friday). Please note that I do not accept late papers except in exceptional circumstances. Further details will be provided in a separate handout.

4. **Final Exam** (30%)
   There is one take-home final exam consisting of essay questions. The exam will be distributed on **April 20th** (Monday) and due on **April 26th** (Sunday). You are free to use any books, notes, or journal articles that you have, but you are not to confer with other students on the test questions. Additionally, students cannot use AI generators to produce answers to exam questions

## Grade Scale

Your course grade is determined based on the following grading scale:

| Points | Letter Grade |
|---|---|
| 90.0 and more | A |
| 80.0-89.9 | B |
| 70.0-79.9 | C |
| 60.0-69.9 | D |
| 59.9 or less | F |

Modified on January 13, 2026

## Assigned Readings

The four required textbooks for this course are:

- James M. Scott, Yasemin Akbaba, Ralph G. Carter, and A. Cooper Drury. 2024. *International Relations: Seeking Security, Prosperity, and Quality of Life in a Changing World Fifth Edition*
  ISBN: 978-1071937303
  This text is referred to in the course schedule as **Scott**.

- Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson. 2010. *Causes of War*
  ISBN: 978-1442253285
  This text is referred to in the course schedule as **Levy**.

- John A. Vasquez. 2000. *What Do We Know About War?*
  ISBN: 978-0847699278
  This text is referred to in the course schedule as **Vasquez**.

- Stephen M. Walt. 1990. *The Origins of Alliances*
  ISBN: 978-0801494185
  This text is referred to in the course schedule as **Walt**.

## Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to read the assigned chapters regardless of whether they are the discussion leaders. All additional readings will be on Blackboard and through the library website. In addition, students are required to watch all discussion videos and participate in class discussions.

## Tentative Course Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments for the course. Thus, items on this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. If I deem it necessary to change the schedule, I will announce it on Blackboard.

**A. In the following weeks, we will discuss the general ideas about international relations and why they are essential to everyone. I will serve as the discussion leader for the next three weeks.**

**Week 1** (1/14)
- Scott, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

**Week 2** (1/19)
- Scott, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

**Week 3** (1/26)
- Scott, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

**B. In the following weeks, we will discuss what we know about wars.**

**Week 4** (2/2)
- Levy, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3

**Week 5** (2/9)
- Levy, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5

**Week 6** (2/16)
- Levy, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7

Modified on January 13, 2026

**Week 7** (2/23)
- Vasquez, Chapter 2 and Chapter 4

**Week 8 (**3/2)
- Vasquez, Chapter 12 and Chapter 14

**C. In the following weeks, we will discuss what we know about the origins and consequences of alliances.**

**Week 9** (3/9)
- Spring Break!

**Week 10** (3/16)
- Vasquez, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7

**Week 11** (3/23)
- Walt, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

**Week 12** (3/30)
- Walt, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

**Week 13** (4/6)
- Walt, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

**Week 14** (4/13)
- Research week. **Research paper due on 4/17 (Friday)**

**Week 15** (4/20):
- Final exam week. The final exam will be distributed on **April 20** and due on **April 26**.

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### Other Course Policies & Resources

### Academic Integrity

Intellectual development requires hard work. Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

The policy can be found at: https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/ In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments.

## Course Blackboard Resources

There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class.

## Blackboard Technical Support

SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support Online Support Desk Contact Info: Toll Free: 888.837.6055. Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

## SUSR Library Services

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may also use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for Inter Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery from the Alpine campus.

## ADA Statement

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartze Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email mschwartze@sulross.edu Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall – room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

## Supportive Statement

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. I understand that the recent pandemic, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events may impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create a supportive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

## SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

Modified on January 13, 2026