

XH397: GRAND STRATEGY FIELD STUDY  
THE RISE AND FALL OF GREAT POWERS:  
A STUDY OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN THE MODERN ERA  
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Summer 2019 Syllabus

## Overview

Scholars, pundits, and practitioners now agree that international politics is characterized by the increasing importance of competition between multiple great powers. This rise of “peer competitors” is a major focus of President Trump’s 2017 National Security Strategy, as countries like Russia and China seem more willing and able to challenge the leadership of the United States. The purpose of this class is to investigate what this means for the future of international relations and American grand strategy. We will do this by examining great power relations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is the most recent period of competition between multiple great powers, and it saw destruction on a scale unprecedented in human history. Many theorists predict that a world with multiple great powers will be more violent and unstable. What can we expect from great power politics in the near future? What are the major risks during periods of shifting power? What do great powers fight over? We will answer these questions and more by examining the causes of war and peace between the great powers of Europe in the past, beginning with the Napoleonic wars and ending with World War II and the post-war American-led order.

Over the course of this trip, we will travel through Belgium, France, and England and discuss several great power conflicts, including the Franco-Prussian War, World War I, and World War II. Because many important events happened in the same geographic location but at different times, we will not be able to take a chronological approach to the course. Instead, we will engage with different theories that each provide a possible lens with which to understand the events we are studying. As a result, there are no discrete “blocks” for this course. Each day constitutes a distinct lesson, with its own theory and history that contributes to the overarching theme of the course. No prior knowledge of European history or international relations is necessary for this course, but you should be prepared to immerse yourself in it this summer. I expect everyone to stay engaged and do their best to learn the relevant history and theory of great power politics. To help guide us each day, I provide lesson titles and objectives to go along with our daily itinerary.

## Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand core theories that explain the prevalence and severity of great power competition.
2. Develop their knowledge of contemporary European history.
3. Deepen their critical reading skills and ability to critically analyze theories
4. Compare and analyze case studies to develop policy prescriptions that engage with contemporary debates about the future of American grand strategy.
5. Develop critical writing, leadership, and communication skills to contribute successfully to individual and group learning.
6. Develop the ability navigate independently in a foreign country and acclimate to new cultures.

## Requirements

I expect you to be engaged and professional throughout our trip. Make sure you study both the lesson plan guide below and the detailed itinerary so you know what to expect each day and what your role is. Please refer to the packing list to know what you need to bring with you. Bring your laptop, but before we leave you should download the readings from the dropbox folder I sent you (link: <https://tinyurl.com/y5pv3r95>). I will not allow you to use your laptops during the seminar discussions, so make sure you take notes on the readings.

The only readings not on the dropbox are those from John Mearsheimer's book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. **You should purchase this book from Amazon before we leave and bring it with you.** Any edition is fine, but please let me know which one you have so I can confirm page numbers.

This course adopts the standard SOSH department grading scale, ranging from A+ to F. Grades will be based on the following:

AIAD Participation	200 points
Cadet Seminar Leadership	200 points
Journal Entries	300 points
TEE	300 points
TOTAL	1,000 points

Your grade on each assignment will reflect how well you demonstrate mastery of course concepts as demonstrated through readings, seminar discussions, and daily activities.

### AIAD Participation

Your success in this course is contingent on your active engagement. You will get out not only what you put in, but what your classmates put in. The relationship between the history we are learning about at different sites and the future of great power competition will not be readily apparent without the readings. Similarly, you will need some of the readings to provide context for some of our daily activities. As a result, it is vital that you **do the readings closely the night before each lesson.** I expect you to take a critical approach to the readings: do not necessarily take the author at his or her word. I want to hear your well-thought out and supported ideas about whether the author's theory or explanation is a good one. I also want to hear your questions about the authors' arguments, historical events, and how to apply one to the other. You will be graded not only on your active participation during our daily seminar meetings (1-2 hours each), but on how engaged you are during our daily activities.

**You should also note that on most days one of you has been assigned as our Operations Officer.** You can find your Operations Officer assignments on the detailed itinerary, which follows the lesson plan in the syllabus. On that day you will be responsible for developing a plan for the day's activities: where and when should we do our seminar (over a meal is usually an option), how will we get to the day's activities, where should we eat, etc. You must run the plan

by the OiCs the night before your assigned day as Operations Officer. This is also part of your participation grade.

### Cadet Seminar Leadership

Each of you will be responsible for leading two discussion seminars. You can find your lesson assignment in the Lesson Plans table under Lesson Information, below. You should begin each seminar with a brief (5 minute) discussion on the theme and lesson objective of the day. Discuss how you view our day's activity as relevant to the theme, what the readings say about it, and how it relates to the rest of the course or broader debates about grand strategy. Your goal here is to set up the day's discussion and create opportunities for your classmates to contribute. In addition to your brief, come up with at least three questions that will help your classmates understand key issues or that raise points for additional analysis. Refer to the guidance for the AIAD participation: be critical, be thoughtful, and be curious.

### Journal Entries

You must complete daily journal entries that reflect on the lessons for the day and synthesize course material with daily activities. Each journal entry should contain questions or topics you would like to focus on in more detail based on our discussions, readings, and activities. Describe your reactions to the activities and how the events of that day are impacting your understanding of grand strategy and great power competition. It is okay to express uncertainty in your journal entries: you are being graded on your engagement.

### TEE

The Term End Exam is a cumulative, essay-based exam that will test your comprehension of the theory and history we have covered in this course. You may use any handwritten notes that you have from this course.

### **Policies**

This is a for-credit class that meets the requirements of the capstone for the minor in Grand Strategy. As a result, all usual policies about absences, documentation, plagiarism, and lateness apply. You must cite any sources you use in assignments (using any proper citation format). There is no need to cite seminar discussion comments. Please keep me informed if you are ill and unable to participate in the day's activities. Journal entries are due by email or hand-written hard copy (your preference) to me at the time of the TEE. You will be docked twenty percentage points every day they are late. Communication is the most important thing on this AIAD, so please let me or the Cadet-in-Charge know if you have any concerns.

## Lesson Plans and Itinerary

Date	Lesson Information	Readings	Activity Summary
Monday July 22 Lesson 1	<u>Introduction to Great Power Competition</u> 1. Understand what it means to describe a state as a “great power” 2. Understand different ideas regarding the concept of competition and how great power wars differ from other conflicts 3. Develop familiarity with the broad strokes of European history and great power relations at the beginning of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century.	1. Stephen Walt, “Great Powers Are Defined by Their Great Wars,” <i>Foreign Policy</i> , September 21, 2017 2. Jack Levy, <i>War in the Modern Great Power System</i> (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1983): Chapter 2 (pages 8-19, 24-43) 3. Michael Mazaar et al, “Report, “Understanding the Emerging Era of International Competition,” RAND Research Report, 2018: pages 1-13.  35 pages	Arrive and Acclimate to Brussels
Tuesday July 23 Lesson 2	<u>Realist Assumptions About Great Power Interests</u> 1. What are the Realist assumptions about what great powers care about, and why? 2. What does Mearsheimer’s theory say about the possibility of cooperation or avoiding conflict? 3. Does this describe the world today?	1. John Mearsheimer, <i>The Tragedy of Great Power Politics</i> (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001): Chapter 1 (pages 1-14), Chapter 2 (pages 29-54), and Chapter 9 (pages 334-347)  54 Pages	Belgian History Museum
Wednesday July 24 Lesson 3	<u>Napoleonic France as a Great Power and Post-War Order</u> 1. How did the European Powers respond to the threat from Napoleon? 2. How did the victors of the Napoleonic Wars attempt to shape great power competition? 3. Did the behavior of European powers during and after the Napoleonic Wars correspond to the predictions of Mearsheimer’s theory?	1. Jeremy Black, <i>War in the Nineteenth Century</i> (Cambridge: Polity, 2009): pages 11-26 2. Jennifer Mitzen, <i>Power in Concert</i> (University of Chicago, 2013): pages 18-28 and 102-105  31 Pages	Waterloo Battlefield visit
Thursday July 25 Lesson 4	<u>Strategies for Managing Great Power Competition</u> 1. What are the different strategies states can adopt in response to the rising power of other states?	1. Mearsheimer, <i>The Tragedy of Great Power Politics</i> , Chapter 5  30 Pages	Depart Brussels for Liege  Explore area and

	2. How did the European powers prepare for World War I? How might the strategies they adopted have contributed to the outbreak of conflict?		visit the Citadel
Friday July 26 Lesson 5	<u>Geography and Great Power Conflict: Part I</u>  1. Why has Belgium been a focal point of so many great power conflicts? 2. Does location play a role in explaining how great powers interact with each other?	1. Alistair Horne, <i>To Lose a Battle</i> (London: Penguin, 2007): pages 70-85 2. William McRaven, <i>Spec Ops</i> (New York: Random House, 1995): pages 29-36 and 55-59) 3. Tanisha Fazal, "Death in the International System," <i>International Organization</i> 58 (2004): pages 313-322 and 339-341  41 Pages	Visit Fort Eben Emael
Saturday July 27 Lesson 6	<u>Geography and Great Power Conflict: Part II</u>  1. Understand what it was like to be a soldier during a Great Power conflict 2. Identify the reasons why Germany chose to invade France through the Ardennes. Was this a good idea? 3. What are the strategic implications of the operational/tactical decision to invade through Belgium?	1. Horne, <i>To Lose a Battle</i> , pages 207-213 and 241-253 2. John Keegan, <i>The Second World War</i> (New York: Penguin, 1989): pages 436-447 3. Watch "Bastogne" episode of HBO's <i>Band of Brothers</i>  28 Pages	Depart Liege for Sedan  See the Ardennes  Visit Bastogne
Sunday July 28 Lesson 7	<u>Great Power Rivalry</u>  1. What makes states rivals, and how does war between rivals differ from other kinds of conflict? 2. Is the United States in a rivalry today? 3. How can states deescalate or terminate rivalries?	1. Paul Hensel, "The Evolution of the Franco-German Rivalry," in <i>Great Power Rivalries</i> , edited by William Thompson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999): pages 93-120 2. Karen Rasler, William Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly, <i>How Rivalries End</i> (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press): pages 12-20  36 Pages	Tour of the Maginot Line and historical sites around Sedan
Monday July 29 Lesson 8	<u>Great Power Interests: Non-Realist Approaches</u>  1. How do these approaches to state interests differ from the approach	1. Michelle Murray, <i>The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): Chapter 1	Visit additional sites in Sedan

	<p>provided by Mearsheimer? What is the relative value of each approach?</p> <p>2. How might conflicts motivated by different interests play out differently?</p>	<p>2. Mark Haas, <i>The Ideological Origins of Great Power Conflict</i> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005): pages 4-20</p> <p>45 Pages</p>	<p>Depart Sedan for Paris</p>
<p>Tuesday</p> <p>July 30</p> <p>Lesson 9</p>	<p><u>Under-balancing: Part I. Organizational and Bureaucratic Approaches</u></p> <p>1. Why was France so unprepared for the German invasion in May 1940?</p> <p>2. What are the domestic political obstacles to successful balancing?</p>	<p>1. Elizabeth Kier, <i>Imagining War</i> (Princeton University Press, 1997): pages 39-57</p> <p>2. Alistair Horne, <i>To Lose a Battle</i>, pages 109-119 and 125-137</p> <p>42 Pages</p>	<p>Visit Les Invalides, including the Tomb of Napoleon and military museums</p>
<p>Wednesday</p> <p>July 31</p> <p>Lesson 10</p>	<p><u>Under-balancing: Part II. Realist Approaches</u></p> <p>1. How does a Realist like Mearsheimer explain the absence of balancing?</p> <p>2. How well do Realist explanations fare compared to the ones we discussed on Lesson 9?</p>	<p>1. Mearsheimer, <i>The Tragedy of Great Power Politics</i>, pages 267-288, 297-322</p> <p>47 Pages</p>	<p>Explore Paris</p>
<p>Thursday</p> <p>August 1</p> <p>Lesson 11</p>	<p><u>Under-balancing: Part III. Constructivist Approaches</u></p> <p>1. How can rhetoric and different justifications for war affect relations between great powers?</p> <p>2. How does Goddard's argument compare to the Realistic and Domestic Politics approaches as an explanation for WWII?</p> <p>3. Compare the origins and effectiveness of the Post-Napoleonic order with the Post-World War I order</p>	<p>1. Stacie Goddard, "The Rhetoric of Appeasement," <i>Security Studies</i> 24:1 (2015), 95-130.</p> <p>36 Pages</p>	<p>Visit Versailles</p>
<p>Friday</p> <p>August 2</p> <p>Lesson 12</p>	<p><u>Power Transitions</u></p> <p>1. How can we view World War II as a preventive war?</p> <p>2. How does Copeland's Theory of preventive war differ from Gilpin's arguments about hegemonic transition?</p>	<p>1. Robert Gilpin, "Theory of Hegemonic War," <i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i> 18:4 (1988), 591-613</p> <p>2. Copeland, <i>The Origins of Major Wars</i> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000): pages 4-7 and 118-145</p>	<p>Depart Paris and Visit Normandy</p>

	3. How do states respond to shifting power dynamics?	55 Pages	
Saturday August 3 Lesson 13	<u>British Grand Strategy</u> 1. What allowed the UK to remain influential on the world stage for so long? 2. What led to British decline, and what, if anything could British leaders have done about it?	1. Mearsheimer, <i>The Tragedy of Great Power Politics</i> , pages 234-238 and 261-266. 2. Jack Snyder, <i>Myths of Empire</i> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991): 1-2, 153-158, 203-211  26 Pages	Depart Normandy for London.
Sunday August 4 Lesson 14	<u>Peaceful Power Transitions: Part I</u> 1. Understand the difference between revisionist and status quo policies and strategies. Why might states adopt one or the other? 2. Was the Cold War inevitable? Is a new Cold War inevitable?	1. Shifrinson, <i>Falling Giants, Rising Titans</i> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018): pages 1-4, 16-38, 63-64, and 83-98  43 Pages	Imperial War Museum and Churchill War Rooms
Monday August 5 Lesson 15	<u>Peaceful Power Transitions: Part II</u> 1. Why was there so little conflict between the UK and US over the course of this power transition?	1. Kori Schake, <i>Safe Passage</i> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017): Chapters 11-12  40 Pages	Explore London
Tuesday August 6 Lesson 16	<u>Multipolarity in the Future</u> 1. What strategies can the United States adopt to maintain its interests in a new era of multipolarity? 2. What states are the greatest threats (or greatest allies) in pursuit of those interests?	1. T.V. Paul, "Recasting Statecraft: International Relations and Strategies of Peaceful Change," <i>International Studies Quarterly</i> 61 (2017), 1-13 2. Richard Evans, "What Pre-WWI Europe Can Tell us About Today," <i>New Statesman</i> , January 25, 2014 3. Kelly Grieco, "Fighting and Learning in the Great War," <i>Parameters</i> 48:3 (2018), 27-36 4. Hal Brands, "Six Propositions About Great-Power Competition and Revisionism in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century," The Future of the Global Order Colloquium, Fall 2017  34 Pages	Explore London and Choose another Museum

<p>Wednesday</p> <p>August 7</p> <p>Lesson 17</p>	<p><u>The United States and China's Rise</u></p> <p>1. What do the theories and cases we have studied say about the likelihood of conflict between the US and China in the next 5 years? 25 years?</p> <p>2. What strategies can the US adopt to limit tensions with rising powers?</p>	<p>1. Lyle Goldstein and Brad Carson, "Rethinking our Assumptions about Chinese Aggression," War on the Rocks Podcast, January 8, 2019.</p> <p>2. David Edelstein, "Cooperation, Uncertainty, and the Rise of China: It's About Time," <i>The Washington Quarterly</i> 41 (2018), 155-171.</p> <p>30 Pages</p>	<p>Research Workshop at the National Archives</p>
<p>Thursday</p> <p>August 8</p> <p>Lesson 18</p>	<p><u>The Future of the World Order</u></p> <p>1. What is the value of an institutionalist and multilateral approach to American grand strategy in a new era of peer competition?</p> <p>2. How might great powers best manage competition in the future?</p>	<p>1. Richard Haas, "How a World Order Ends," <i>Foreign Affairs</i> 98:1 (2019), 22-30</p> <p>2. Helen Milner, "The Enduring Legacy of Robert Gilpin," <i>Foreign Affairs</i>, August 15, 2018</p> <p>3. John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West," <i>Foreign Affairs</i> 87 (2008), 23-37</p> <p>4. Mira Rapp-Hooper and Rebecca Friedman Lissner, "The Open World: What American Can Achieve After Trump," <i>Foreign Affairs</i> 98:3 (2019)</p> <p>32 Pages</p>	<p>Seminar with Dr. Kori Schake at the International Institute for Strategic Studies</p>
<p>Friday</p> <p>August 9</p> <p>Lesson 19</p>	<p><u>Term End Exam</u></p> <p>1. Ace the TEE!</p> <p>2. Don't miss our flight</p>	<p>No readings</p>	<p>TEE and Depart for New York</p>