Term: Fall 2019

Instructor: Matteo Giglioli

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Course Title: 91195 – Forecasting and Analyzing Conflict and Instability

Sessions: Tuesdays, 1-3 (*aula Farneti*)
Wednesdays, 9-11 (*aula Farneti*)

Office hours: Wednesdays, 11-1, by appointment
Via de' Bersaglieri 4 (ground floor)

Description: The overarching goal of social-scientific research is to inform the choices society faces in dealing with complex challenges, and no topic is as pressing as the need to confront political instability, conflict, and violence. The present course aims to expose students to the latest social-scientific literature on forecasting the various drivers of political conflict. The perspective adopted aims to transcend traditional State-centric distinctions and to conceive of political instability and conflict as unified phenomena, with a variety of forms and actors giving rise to a plurality of equilibriums and outcomes. The course aims to enable students to understand the multifaceted nature of contemporary political instability, form reasonable and fact-based expectations of future developments, and thereby contribute to managing risk in a variety of institutional settings. Among the topics covered, along with traditional issues such as resource curses, corruption, and foreign encroachment, are emerging threats such as climate change and cybersecurity.

Readings: ***Non-attendees*** will be responsible for the close reading of two books: a) Michael C. Desch, *The Cult of the Irrelevant: The Waning Influence of Social Science on National Security*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019; b) Cecilia Emma Sottilotta, *Rethinking Political Risk: Concepts, Theories, Challenges*, London, Routledge, 2017. ***Attendees*** will study class materials (slides and notes), as well as background texts posted weekly on the *Insegnamenti OnLine* (IOL) platform (approximately 2 journal article-length pieces per week). Examples are: Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede & Michael D. Ward (2012), "Forecasting Is Difficult, Especially about the Future: Using Contentious Issues to Forecast Interstate Disputes," *Journal of Peace Research* 50:17-31; Farrell, Henry & Bruce Schneier (2018), "Common-Knowledge Attacks on Democracy," Research Publication no. 2018-7, Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University; Mariya Y. Omelicheva (2011), "Natural Disasters: Triggers of Political Instability?," *International Interactions* 37:441-65.

Assessment: ***Non-attendees*** will sit an in-class, closed-book, written final exam, worth 100% of their overall grade. The final exam will cover all material included in the two required books for the course and will consist of a series of short essay questions. Sample final exams will be made available on the IOL

platform. The final exam will be offered at various different dates within the official exam periods. ***Attendees*** will need to declare their intention to follow the course by week 2. They will be required to be present in class at all lectures. The maximum number of sessions that may be missed (barring documented emergencies) in order to maintain attendee status is 2. Attendees will be graded on the basis of three separate tests. The first is a midterm, which will be held on the Wednesday of week 5 (October 23rd). This will be an in-class, closed-book, written exam, whose aim is to test the knowledge of the theoretical material presented in the first half of the course. The second assessment method is an in-class presentation, to be given following a schedule T.B.D. in the second half of the course. Its aim is to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in the first part of the course to an empirical case-study. The topic of the presentation must be approved by the instructor by week 7. The third assessment method is a final exam, which will take the form of a policy simulation, in-class, open-book, with electronic submission, and will take place on the Wednesday of week 11 (December 4th). There will be no make-up sessions for the attendee midterm exam and final policy simulation. Each of the three attendee assessment methods will count toward 30% of the overall course grade. The last 10% will match the highest grade awarded in any of the three.

DRAFT COURSE CALENDAR:

		Tuesdays	Wednesdays
Week 1	Sept. 24 & 25	Course introduction	Lecture
Week 2	Oct. 1 & 2	Lecture	Lecture
Deadline to confirm attendee status			
Week 3	Oct. 8 & 9	Lecture	Lecture
Week 4	Oct. 15 & 16	Lecture	Lecture
Week 5	Oct. 22 & 23	Review session	**Midterm**
Week 6	*Oct. 29 & 30*	****Fall Break: No Classes****	
Week 7	Nov. 5 & 6	Lecture	Lecture
Deadline to confirm presentation topic			
Week 8	Nov. 12 & 13	Lecture	Presentations TBD
Week 9	Nov. 19 & 20	Lecture	Presentations TBD
Week 10	Nov. 26 & 27	Lecture	Presentations TBD
Week 11	Dec. 3 & 4	Course roundup	**Final**