

THE CAUSES OF WAR

Write a concise essay *discussing the limitations* of the following proposition:

The most important single precipitating factor in the outbreak of war is misperception. Such distortion may manifest itself in four different ways: in a leader's image of himself; in a leader's view of his adversary's character; in a leader's view of his adversary's intentions toward himself; and finally, in a leader's view of his adversary's capabilities and power.¹

I. INSTRUCTIONS

1. Your essay should be no longer than **five double-spaced** pages with a readable-size font (e.g. at least 11pt). Conversely, the essay should be as short as necessary to develop your arguments. Submit a cleanly printed copy.
2. Your essay should be structured according to the requirements of a good expository style. In your first paragraph, make your **thesis statement**, that is, summarize your answer to the essay question. The rest of the essay would then develop **arguments** supporting your thesis. Your arguments have to be **logically consistent**, both internally and with respect to each other (i.e. you cannot contradict an assertion made elsewhere in the paper). You should appeal to **evidence** in support of your major assertions.
3. You should draw upon **theoretical and empirical** material found in the lectures, lecture notes, readings, and your knowledge from sources outside the classroom. Your use of the material should demonstrate that you have thought about the arguments and you can use them to analyze the "real" world.
4. You may discuss your paper with me, your TA, or with your colleagues. However, your final essay should be your own work. If it is not, it will constitute plagiarism, perhaps the most serious academic offense. Whenever you use a source for information, argument, or data, make sure you credit it properly with a footnote citing the author, date, and name of the work you are referencing. If you are unsure whether you should credit a source, credit it.

¹John G. Stoessinger, 2005. *Why Nations Go To War*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 9th Edition. Pp. 315-16.

5. Before turning in your paper, save a copy for your files. Sometimes papers get lost in the shuffle, and this copy will be your only evidence of having written the paper.
6. The essay is due on Monday, April 26, at the end of class. Please, turn in your essay to the TA leading your discussion section.

This essay is worth 15% of your final grade. Treat it as part of your mid-term examination. Good luck!

II. WHAT ABOUT THE MID-TERM EXAMINATION?

The mid-term exam will cover everything from *The Scientific Method* through *Weapons of Mass Destruction, Arms Control*. These include the textbook readings from Chapter 1 through Chapter 8, inclusive, along with both essays by Schelling, and the readings by Fearon, Mueller, and Treverton. The exam will be in-class, closed book, and will consist of two parts. In each part you will be given multiple questions and allowed to choose a fixed number among them.

1. **Identification Questions.** The identification questions test your knowledge of major themes, concepts, and ideas taken from readings and lectures. For the lectures, make sure you refer to the notes posted on the course website as these contain additional explanation of material discussed in class (and some particularly important concepts are bolded). As you have probably noticed, the lectures are designed to supplement the material in the textbook, not simply rehash it, so you need both. Some of the IDs will be multiple-choice and true/false questions, and others will ask you chronological questions (e.g. order some events chronologically).
2. **Short-Answer Questions.** Some of these will ask you to write to agree or disagree with some statement and explain why. Your answers would be no more than two sentences each. Others will ask you to explain a particular concept and apply it in a provided situation. The answers to these should be about two paragraphs long.

To prepare for the exam, you should review the readings and the lecture notes, making sure you understand the concepts being developed by asking yourself how you would apply them, and what their shortcomings are. Think about causes and consequences. How do we test an argument claiming that *A* causes *B*? Are there alternative explanations for particular events or phenomena? How do the various arguments developed in class hang together? (Or maybe they don't?) How general do you think an argument is; that is, if it was developed for a particular phenomenon (e.g. nuclear deterrence), could the insights be applied to other settings?

I will give you more information about the midterm (perhaps even posting some sample questions on the website) as we come closer to the scheduled date (May 5). As a reminder, do not forget that you will need one bluebook.