



**Rīga Stradiņš University**  
**Faculty of European Studies**  
**Department of Political Science**

# **GREAT POWERS, WAR AND DIPLOMACY:** **A PRIMER IN INTERNATIONAL HISTORY**

**Lecturer: Dr. *Edijs Bošs***

## **AIMS OF THE COURSE**

The course will provide students with an overview of the development of the European and global state-system from the end of the Middle Ages until the end of the Cold War and will serve as an advanced introductory course to students of international relations. We will analyse the basic patterns of conflict and cooperation among the Great Powers by focusing on the functioning of the balance of power and on other ideas about 'international order'. We will examine the advances in military technology and strategy in various historical periods and its influence on international affairs. Against this background we will also observe the development of diplomacy as a profession and introduce some of the most remarkable policy-makers in the history of international relations.

## **Course outline:**

### **Session 1 – seminar**

Introduction to the course and concepts; outline of the evolution of a euro-centric international system; discussion about the pre-modern and modern concepts of international order

To prepare for the opening discussion, on the day of the first session students will have to submit a short essay based on the reading of four primary sources.

The four sources are: (1) Papal bull "Unam Sanctam" (1302) which argues for the universal sovereignty of the Pope; (2) Dante Alighieri's treatise "De Monarchia" (1312-1313) where he argues for a universal sovereignty of the (Holy) Roman emperor; (3) some passages from Niccolò Machiavelli's classic discussion of political realism in *The Prince* (1513); and (4) excerpts from Francesco Guicciardini's work *The History of Italy* (1537) where he introduces the idea of the balance of power as one of the cornerstones of relations among sovereign nations in a states-system.

Being as they are ancient texts, they might be a bit difficult to read, but, please, do try to get through them and develop at least a basic understanding of ideas expressed there. Feel free to search around the internet for additional information on these texts that might help you to contextualize them.

The essay should be titled “Early ideas about international politics” and should be 6 pages long.

To get you started, here are some of the questions you are expected to explore in your essay: How do these texts envision international order and the states-system? What seems to be the prerequisite for peace and stability in international affairs? Are any of these ideas relevant nowadays?

### **Literature:**

- *Unam Sanctam* (1302)
- excerpts from Dante Aligheri, *De Monarchia* (1312-1313)
- excerpts from Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)
- excerpts from Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy* (1537)

### **Session 2 – lecture**

Great powers of the 16th, 17th, and early 18th century: Habsburg bid for supremacy under Charles V, Philip II and Emperor Ferdinand II; the Thirty Years War and the Peace of Westphalia; French claim for dominance under Cardinal Richelieu and Louis XIV, the War of the Spanish Succession and the Peace of Utrecht.

### **Session 3 – lecture**

Rise of Britain; and Russia under Peter the Great; and Prussia under Frederick the Great; re-invention of Austria as a great power: the evolution of the ‘classical’ European balance-of-power system in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; ‘professionalisation’ of diplomacy and warfare in this period; the founding of the United States of America

### **Sessions 4 & 5 – seminar workshop**

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The European settlement at the Congress of Vienna; the great power management of international affairs through the Concert of Europe; methods of ‘classical’ old European diplomacy

### **Literature:**

1. Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), pp. 75-93.
2. Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy* (Oxford: OUP, 2013) ch.6, pp. 69-81.
3. Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 93-140.
4. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), ch 4.

### **Sessions 6 – lecture**

The Crimean War and growth of British colonial and naval supremacy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The challenge of consolidation of the 'European centre': the politics of German unification under Bismarck; Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars; Bismarckian management of European alliances

### **Session 7 – lecture**

The gradual breakdown of the Concert of Europe and escalation of the 'German problem' under William II. advances in military technology during the preceding century of industrialisation and its effects on international affairs

### **Sessions 8 & 9 – seminar workshop**

Towards World War I: political and military deadlocks in the European alliance systems.

#### **Literature:**

1. Kissinger, chapter 6
2. Howard, chapter 6, pp. 94-115.
3. Kissinger, chapter 7 & 8.

### **Session 10 – lecture**

The Versailles peace conference and the evolution of 'new' diplomacy; the role of Woodrow Wilson; balance-of-power considerations versus 'collective security' in the post-WWI European settlement; the eclipse of Europe's international dominance.

### **Session 11 – lecture**

Instability of the interwar period in Europe; weakness of the *status quo* powers and the upsurge of revisionism; the rise of extra-European powers. The collapse of the Versailles settlement.

### **Session 12 – lecture**

Hitler's bid for European hegemony and the failures of pre-war diplomacy; American re-entry on the European stage under Franklin Delano Roosevelt; the Baltic issue in Allied diplomacy.

### **Session 13 – lecture**

The politics of U.S.-Soviet bipolarity and the change of the geopolitical landscape in the Cold War period; the vocabulary and basic tenets of nuclear strategy.

### **Sessions 14 & 15 – seminar workshop**

Turning points of the Cold War: its origins, the Cuban Missile crisis and its end.

**Literature:**

1. Antonia Varsori, "Reflections on the Origins of the Cold War" in *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* ed. By Odd Arne Westad (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 281-325.
2. Thomas M. Nichols, *Nuclear Weapons and U.S. National Security* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), pp. 16-43
3. Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War From Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), ch. 5., pp. 123-153.
4. Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of The Cold War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), excerpts.

**Session 16 & 17 – lectures**

Europe between the superpowers; neutralisation of the 'German problem' through division and European integration; main directions of British, French and German foreign policies during the Cold War

**Sessions 18 & 19 & 20 – seminar workshop**

**Exploration of the stand-off with North-Korea. Topics and sources of student presentations will be announced separately**

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**GRADES:**

Performance in seminar and workshop discussions:	<b>5 x 10% =</b>	<b>50%</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> essay:		<b>5%</b>
Project presentation:		<b>15%</b>
Exam:		<b>30%</b>