

The Politics of Decision-making: American Presidents, and Israeli Prime Ministers in Crisis

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Course description

Leaders make decisions based on a complex interplay of political, psychological, cultural, social, and organizational factors that often determine the effectiveness of the policies and the actions that may result from them. Domestic and international crisis also affect the decisions in ways that may assist or constrain leaders.

This course will focus on the connections between the dynamics of foreign policy decisions and the substance of specific foreign policy crisis. In this course, students will learn the relationships among the various decision types, how they are and how they were chosen, the constraints that work for or against effective decisions, the environmental influences affecting said decisions, and the substance of actual, historical foreign policy decisions. There will be case studies. Each case study is a crisis. Those that have been chosen have been done either for their decision type and how the leader with or without other policymakers concluded the crisis. While some case studies are well known others may not be.

Course objectives

This course aims to provide the student with an understanding of decision types and how political, psychological, cultural, social, and organizational factors influence said decision during crisis. Therefore, providing comprehension on various themes, historical events, and personalities of American and Israeli leaders. The course is intended to provide students with the tools needed to follow with a critical eye historical and present events that prove to be a crisis.

The structure of the course is simple and concise. An initial overview of a topic will be followed by interesting case studies, focused on a key decision-making type. Many of these studies center upon crisis situations, which tested the leaders and often defined them or the relationship between the two nations. After these case studies, discussion on some controversial contemporary aspects of the subject will occur.

Finally, as students you will upon completion:

1. Analyze selected case studies using knowledge of theory, history and the political process.
2. Demonstrate research, analytical, writing, and presentation skills.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Describe the development of both the American presidency and Israeli premiership to evaluate the consequences and outcomes of the decision making process during crisis;
- Explain the formal and informal mechanisms that leaders can use to achieve objectives in a crisis when interacting with other branches of government, the bureaucracy, and the public;
- Identify institutional and political constraints that limit the leaders ability to achieve decision making;
- Analyze the major factors affecting the successful outcome of crisis;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different decision making type approaches.

Requirements

The following course requires: (1) assigned readings; (2) class attendance and appropriate contributions to section discussions; (3) two short-essay analysis papers; and (4) a final examination or research paper.

Classroom Code of Conduct

To pass this course, a student must attend all class sessions, do all assigned readings, actively listen to and focus on lecture material, take notes, and don't be afraid to ask questions or participate in discussions.

I use "cold calling", i.e. calling on students regardless of whether they have raised their hands or not, in order to encourage class discussion, so be attentive and familiar with the reading materials.

Mobile phones are NOT allowed in class.

Laptops and tablets should ONLY be used for academic purposes, and not for emails, browsing the internet, social media and other non-course related activities. I will occasionally walk around during class. Any violation of this request will result in the complete prohibition of the use of laptops and tablets.

Lastly, be courteous and respect the opinions of your classmates.

Plagiarism Statement

Plagiarism means the use of the thoughts ideas words, phrases or research of another person or source as one's own without explicit acknowledgment.

In keeping with this definition, all work, whether written or oral, submitted or presented by students as part of course assignments must be the original work of the student unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

Cheating on examinations of any kind (midterms and finals) includes copying another student's answers, exchanging information, using notes or books unless expressly permitted to do so by the instructor, or gaining access to examinations prior to the actual taking of such examinations.

Other examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, copying or preparing another person's work; buying prepared papers.

Helping anyone to engage in any of the violations described above qualifies as academic dishonesty.

Late Submission Policy

I prefer that students submit their assignments on time unless they have a concrete and relevant reason (illness, family crisis etc.) that was brought to my attention as early as possible.

To avoid different types of plagiarism discussed in the previous section, I will accept late submissions. Yet papers submitted after due date will result in 1 full grade penalty.

Grading

- 20 percent on participation.
- 40 percent for each of the two short papers.
- 40 percent on the final examination.

Online Teaching

The instructor will make an effort to be physically present. Due to

Required Readings

For this course, the readings will range widely. There is no one textbook. There are several. I have select chapters assigned. Also, I have select PDF and various journal and OpEd articles, taken from a wide range of authors.

Course Materials

Below are book titles and PDF. The instructor reserves the right to edit required readings.

Books and PDF

Yehuda Avner. 2014. *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*. Toby.

Ivo Daalder and I.M. Destler. 2009. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*. Simon & Schuster.

Alexander L. George. 1980. *Presidential Decision-making in Foreign Policy*. Westview Press, ch 2, "Psychological Aspects of Decision-making,"

Irving L. Janis. 1989. *Crucial Decisions: Leadership in Policymaking and Crisis Management* The Free Press.

Alex Mintz. 2010. *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Cambridge University Press.

Richard E. Neustadt. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, The Free Press.

Nadav Safran. 1979. *Israel: The Embattled Ally*. Harvard University Press.

Israeli Decision-Making (PDF): http://www.alzaytouna.net/english/books/Israeli_Decision_Making.pdf

Israeli Decision-Making in 1967 and 1973 (PDF): <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/16/pre-emption-and-israeli-decision-making-in-1967-and-1973/>

Israel and Crisis (PDF): http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/freilich_mej_autumn_2006.pdf

Themes

The Nature of Executive Power

James Fallows, "Obama, Explained," [The Atlantic](#), March 2012.

Fathom. Life and Legacy of Yitzhak Rabin (PDF): <http://fathomjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Rabin-ebook-edited.pdf>

The Federalist Papers #47 and #70.

Dan Korn (2010). The Presidentialization of Politics: The Power and Constraints of the Israeli Prime Minister (PDF): <http://israelstudies.umd.edu/articles/research-paper-2.pdf>

Ezra Klein (2012), "The Unpersuaded," [The New Yorker](#), March 19, 2012

Ryan Lizza (2012), "The Obama Memos," [The New Yorker](#), January 30, 2012

John E. Owens, Riccardo Pelizz. *The War on Terror and the Growth of Executive Power?: A Comparative Analysis*. Chapter 7. [[Google Book](#)]

Rhetorical Power

Interpreting Israeli decision-making (PDF): <http://www.wikistrat.com/interpreting-israeli-decision-making/>

Decision Making Approaches and Models

Christopher Bolan. 2009. "Risk In American Foreign Military Interventions" [PhD Thesis] chapters 1, 5, 7 (PDF): <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/553074/bolanChristopher.pdf?sequence=1>

Irving L. Janis, *Crucial Decisions: Leadership in Policymaking and Crisis Management* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), chs. 2 & 3. pp. 27-63.

Israeli decision making (PDF): http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/1304694112ICSR_AtkinPaperSeries_GilMurciano.pdf

Israeli Studies. https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/israel_studies/v003/3.2schulze.html

Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power, chapter 7, pp. 128-151. [[notes](#)]

Caitlin Smith. "Personality in Foreign Policy Decision Making". <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/16/personality-in-foreign-policy-decision-making/>

The Psychology of Israeli Decision Making (PDF): <http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2013/02/08/benjamin-netanyahu-v-yair-lapid-and-the-psychology-of-israeli-decision-making/>

National Security Policy

Edwards and Wayne, "Foreign and Defense Policy Making," Presidential Leadership, chapter 13, pp. 461-486. [[notes](#)]

William G. Howell and Jon C. Rogowski (2013), "War, the Presidency, and Legislative Voting Behavior," American Journal of Political Science (PDF): http://home.uchicago.edu/~whowell/papers/AJPS_2013

Benny Morris. "Camp David and After" [New York Times Review of Books](#).

James Pfiffner, "Presidential Leadership and Advice About Going to War," pp. 135-157 in Terry L. Price and J. Thomas Wren eds., The Values of Presidential Leadership, 2007. (PDF): http://pfiffner.gmu.edu/files/pdfs/Book_Chapters/Pres%20DM%20&%20War,%20Jepson%20Ch.pdf

The Price Israel Pays (PDF): <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/06/the-price-israel-pays-for-its-poor-national-security-decision-making/276706/>

