This class focuses on decision making approaches to the explanation of foreign policy. We will discuss the rational actor model and its limitations, the implications of cognitive processes, group and organizational dynamics, and the role of situational factors in foreign policy analysis. Historical cases will be discussed throughout. The course will also introduce you more broadly to purposive explanation and its limitations in the social sciences and the discussion and reading will thus draw upon work in economics, sociology, psychology, as well as philosophy.

Requirements: Regular attendance at lectures and sections, knowledgeable participation, course readings, a midterm, and a final paper (based solely on course readings).

Books available for purchase at the UCLA book store:


All the other assigned readings are downloadable either directly from UCLA, usually through JSTOR, or from the list of links page on the course website. Note that I may make small changes in reading assignments during the quarter.

Your final paper will pick some policy discussed in the Mann book and assess whether the decision and the policy process reflected the criteria of rationality discussed in the course. Did the decision reflect a rational decision making process or did it result from defective decision making? The criteria that define rationality and its shortcomings constitute the focus of the lectures and the readings. In the paper you will be applying the analytical tools of the course to a foreign policy decision of the Obama administration.

You will use the Mann book and any assigned articles to provide you the information with which to answer the question. Focus on the descriptions he provides of meetings and decisions. Take notes as you read. You will find that you will have to reread portions, especially as you learn new perspectives throughout the quarter. Remember, when you write you will have to cite specifics. You will have to marshall evidence from the reading to make your case. The readings during the quarter provide many examples of authors supporting or attacking different analytic claims based on historical case materials.
The paper should be approximately 15 pages, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font. This total does not include title page and notes (whether endnotes or footnotes). Cite your sources, and make certain to provide page references to material you draw upon. You can use any citation style you like (in-line, footnotes, endnotes), but do not include them in your page count.

**The completed paper is tentatively due Wednesday, March 18, 2015, 5pm.**

For fun, at some point after the first few weeks in the quarter, rent and see the movie *Thirteen Days*. In conjunction with the movie, read Philip Brenner, “Turning History on its Head,” which you can find at [http://www.gwu.edu/ nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/brenner.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/ nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/brenner.htm)

**1. Introduction**

**2-4. Rational Actor Model**

Read these articles for their use of the rational actor model, and for how they explain decisions to use force or threaten the use of force.


This paper summarizes a larger project. Only some of this article is directly relevant to the issue of Iraqi decisionmaking. You may prefer to read chapters 1 and 2 in


Begin reading Mann, *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power*. 
5. The National Interest


6-8. Strategic Interaction: Prisoners’ Dilemma and Chicken


Keep reading Mann, The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power.

9-10. Strategic Interaction: Deterrence and Influence


Stein, Why Nations Cooperate, pp. 113-150.

Keep reading Mann, The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power.
**11-12. Cognition and Constraints to Rationality**


**13-14. Group Decision Making: Problems of Aggregation & Groupthink**


**15. Bureaucratic Politics**


16. Misperception


17. Crisis


18. History


19. Conclusion