

Foreign Policy Analysis: Cases from Southeast Asia (Fall 2026)

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Class Date/Period: 9:00-10:30am, Wednesday
& Friday

Classroom: TBD

Course Description/Synopsis:

What compels states to act as they do? Is it greed, resources, and power, or are there other explanations? International relations theory offers a wide range of reasons for state behavior, but three “realist” strategies are commonly employed by scholars. Using Southeast Asia for three unique case studies, this course explores the state strategies of balancing, accommodation, and hedging. To make things more complicated, it is often that nation states will employ *more* than one strategy at a time, depending on the nature of the issue (economic, security, political, social, cultural, etc.), the cost or the risk to its national security, and the relative strength and power of the state in question.

This course will explore the behaviors of Thailand and Cambodia in response to the rise of China and the difficult choices made by states of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) during the Myanmar crisis, when the Tatmadaw (military) overthrew the democratically-elected government in a *coup d'etat*. Structurally, this undergraduate foreign policy course is divided into two distinct parts. Part one will provide an analytical framework for discussion by exploring core concepts and theories in foreign policy. The second part explores essential case studies from Southeast Asia: Thailand, Cambodia-China relations, and ASEAN in the context of the Myanmar crisis, each of which present some contemporary historical context, current geopolitical conditions, and rational actor-based decision making. This class is aimed at second-year undergraduate students. Previous studies in political science, international relations, or social anthropology are not required, but are helpful.

Course Objectives:

This undergraduate course will explore foreign policy in Southeast Asia, through three major state strategies, backed by relevant historical and current case studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- **Understanding of Southeast Asian Foreign Policy:** Identifying and differentiating between state strategies for both the acquisition of power, survival or adaptation.
- **Compare and Contrast Rational-Actor Decision-Making:** In each unique context, a key objective is to compare/contrast decisions made by states as rational actors, make collective assumptions and draw conclusions.
- **Analyze the Country Context:** Distinguish histories and seminal events that explain political behavior in each Southeast Asian country (and beyond), from diplomatic relations, ideological struggles, past or current conflicts, or national identities.

Overall, by the end of this course, students should gain a basic understanding of (realist) foreign policy in the context of Southeast Asia and gain insight to structures and processes that often dictate, impede, or alter the geopolitical landscape.

Classroom, Literature and Materials:

This course combines formal lectures by the instructor with assigned group work and student-led in-class

activities. Before each class session, students are expected to have read the assigned reading before coming to class, where participation is both encouraged and expected. Reading newspapers, periodicals and other relevant material is encouraged. Student knowledge and analysis of the assigned material will be tested in class through substantive conversation, participation, debate, a mid-term examination, and a final exam. Students will also be required to participate actively and equally to small group activities and discussions. Each session will last 90 minutes, with classes held twice per week. Some classroom time will be allotted to small groups to discuss and prepare for assigned presentations.

Regular attendance *is* a requirement for this course, and is *strongly* encouraged. I will take attendance during the first 5 minutes of class. If you are late, you will need to come see me *after* class to make sure you are counted. I do acknowledge that life will find a way to interfere with classroom activities, from family visits, illnesses, pre-arranged travel, and other personal matters. Therefore, to avoid an unexcused absence, please notify me no later than 2 hours before class. Medical emergencies can be resolved later. Please use common sense. If you are ill, please do NOT come to class. If you must be absent, please notify me BEFORE class so I can help you catch up on missed discussions or lecture points that you will have missed. It is up to you to communicate with me on attendance and missed lecture material.

Course Readings: Readings for this course have been uploaded to [Blackboard](#). No textbook is required.

Course Schedule:

Introduction	
1 - 9/4	Introductions & Syllabus ❖ Please review the course syllabus, become familiar with Blackboard, access all required course readings and familiarize yourself with the KGU Library.
2 - 9/9	What is Foreign Policy? A Neorealist Approach ❖ Telhami, S. (2003). An Essay on Neorealism and Foreign Policy. In A. K. Hanami (Ed.), <i>Perspectives on Structural Realism</i> (pp. 105–118). Palgrave Macmillan.
3 - (On Demand)	The Case for a Realist Foreign Policy - On-Demand Activity #1 ❖ Listen/watch online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpxyruAjCAY
Balancing, Accommodation, and Hedging	
4 - 9/11	Balancing Strategies in Foreign Policy ❖ Parent, J. M., & Rosato, S. (2015). Balancing in Neorealism. <i>International Security</i>, 40(2), 51–86.
5 - 9/16	Balancing Discussion and Synthesis (#1) ❖ To supplement the previous lecture on balancing behavior by states, questions will be distributed via small groups for reflection and further analysis. Attendance is strongly encouraged!
6 - 9/18	Accommodation Strategies in Foreign Policy ❖ Paul, T. V. (2016). The accommodation of rising powers in world politics. In T. V. Paul (Ed.), <i>Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future</i> (pp. 3–32). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
7 - 9/23 (Holiday) VIEW ONLINE	WATCH: The Case for a Realist Foreign Policy ❖ Listen/watch online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpxyruAjCAY

8 - 9/25	In-Class Writing Assignment ❖ A writing assignment will be distributed in class. While grammar is not a top concern, how you critically think is. Use the readings on accommodation as a basis for your response.
9 - 9/30	Hedging Strategies in Foreign Policy ❖ Kuik, C.-C. (2021). Getting hedging right: A small-state perspective. <i>China International Strategy Review</i>, 3(2), 300–315. ❖ Gerstl, A. (2024, August 12). Southeast Asia's Grand Strategy: Hedging. <i>Georgetown Journal of International Affairs</i>. Web.
10 - 10/2	Hedging Discussion and Synthesis (#2) ❖ To supplement the previous lecture on hedging behavior by states, questions will be distributed via small groups for reflection and further analysis. Attendance is strongly encouraged! NOTE: Small Groups for End-of Semester Group Presentations Created
11 - 10/7	Group Presentation Preparation Period #1 ❖ This class period is reserved for preparation for the group presentations held at the end of the semester. Attendance is mandatory, except with a valid prior excuse.
Case Study #1: Balancing or “Bending with the Wind” : Thailand’s Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia	
12 - 10/9	Bending with the Wind? ❖ Kislenko, A. (2002). Bending with the Wind: The Continuity and Flexibility of Thai Foreign Policy. <i>International Journal</i>, 57(4), 537–561. DUE: Presentation topics chosen and submitted by email for approval.
13 - 10/14	A Historic Alliance with the United States ❖ Prasirtsuk, K. (2017). An Ally at the Crossroads: Thailand in the US Alliance System. In M. Wesley (Ed.), <i>Global Allies</i> (pp. 115–132). ANU Press.
14 - 10/16	Balancing with/against China and the United States ❖ Audjarint, W. (2023, September 13). <i>Experts: Thailand's New Government Aims for Balance Amid US-China Rivalry</i>. Voice of America. Web. ❖ Cogan, M. S. (2021, February 22). Thailand's rising tension between public and state relations with China. <i>Southeast Asia Globe</i>. Web. ❖ Skaggs, R., Chukaew, N., & Stephens, J. (2024). Characterizing Chinese Influence in Thailand. <i>Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs</i>, January-February 2024, 7–30. ❖ Busbarat, P. (2024). “Bamboo Stuck in the Chinese Wind”: The Continuing Significance of the China Factor in Thailand’s Foreign Policy Orientation. <i>Contemporary Southeast Asia</i>, 46(2), 125–146.
15 - 10/21	Thailand Foreign Policy Discussion and Synthesis (#3) ❖ To supplement the previous lectures on Thailand’s foreign policy, questions will be distributed via small groups for reflection and further analysis.
16 - 10/23	Group Presentation Preparation Period #2 ❖ This class period is reserved for preparation for the group presentations held at the end of the semester. Attendance is mandatory, except with a valid prior excuse.

17 - 10/28	Reading Summary Quiz #1 ❖ A two-question quiz (essay format) will be distributed in class. You will have the entire class period to complete it. Your notes and class readings are allowed during the classroom period.
Case Study #2: Weak State Foreign Policy: Cambodia's Bandwagoning/Accommodation of China	
18 - 10/30	Cold War Cambodia: The Weak State ❖ Leifer, M. (1964). Cambodia: The Politics of Accommodation. <i>Asian Survey</i>, 4(1), 674–679.
19 - 11/4	Cambodia after the Civil War ❖ Po, S., & Primiano, C. B. (2020). An “Ironclad Friend”: Explaining Cambodia's Bandwagoning Policy towards China. <i>Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs</i>, 39(3), 444-464. ❖ Cock, A. R. (2010). External actors and the relative autonomy of the ruling elite in post-UNTAC Cambodia. <i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i>, 41(2), 241–265.
20 - 11/6	Modern Day Cambodia: Chinese Influence in Cambodia ❖ Mit, M. (2024). China's continuing influence over Cambodia's economy, <i>East Asia Forum</i>, Web. ❖ Ellis-Peterson, H. (2018). 'No Cambodia left': how Chinese money is changing Sihanoukville. <i>The Guardian</i>. Web. ❖ Dammed in the Mekong: Averting an Environmental Catastrophe, <i>International Crisis Group</i>, Report 343, October 7, 2024. (for reference) https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/343-mekong-environmental-catastrophe.pdf
21 - 11/11	Cambodia Discussion and Synthesis (#4) ❖ To supplement the previous lectures on Cambodia's accommodation of China, questions will be distributed via small groups for reflection and further analysis.
22 - 11/13	Group Presentation Preparation Period #3 ❖ This class period is reserved for preparation for the group presentations held at the end of the semester. Attendance is mandatory, except with a valid prior excuse.
23 - 11/18	Reading Summary Quiz #2 ❖ A two-question quiz (essay format) will be distributed in class. You will have the entire class period to complete it. Your notes and class readings are allowed during the classroom period.
Case Study #3: Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Myanmar	
24 - 11/20	ASEAN and the Principle of Non-Interference ❖ Ramcharan, R. (2000). ASEAN and Non-interference: A Principle Maintained. <i>Contemporary Southeast Asia</i>, 22(1), 60–88.
25 - 11/25	Consequences of the February 2021 Military Coup in Southeast Asia ❖ Adhikari, M. (2023). Framing ASEAN's Cooperation with India and China over Myanmar Post-coup. <i>Contemporary Southeast Asia</i>, 45(2), 216-245. ❖ Cogan, M.S. (2022) Hun Sen Has Botched Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship, <i>Geopolitical Monitor</i>, Web.

	❖ Cogan, M. S. (2023). Time Running Out on Indonesia's Myanmar Diplomacy, Institute for Security & Development Policy, Web. DUE: Final group presentation outline submitted by email for final review and approval.
26 -	Exposing the hidden horrors on Myanmar's battlefields - On-Demand Activity #2 ❖ Watch online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MC5_Li82ibk
27 - 11/27	Neighboring State Interests in Myanmar ❖ Cogan, M.S., Thuzar, M. & Riaz, A. (2025). The Rohingya: A perceived security threat and the dominant issue in Bangladesh-Myanmar relations. Asian Politics & Policy 17(4). ❖ Gupta, R. (2024). How China and India are handling Myanmar's crisis three years on, <i>ThinkChina</i>, Web. ❖ Hmung, Z. T, & Indergaard, J. (2023) Time is Running Out for India's Balancing Act on the Myanmar Border, United States Institute for Peace, Web.
Group Presentations	
28 - 12/2 29 - 12/4 30 - 12/9	Group Presentations ❖ These three (3) class periods are reserved for group presentations. Attendance is <i>mandatory</i>, regardless of whether you are presenting or not. Support your fellow classmates.

Class Etiquette:

- Come to class prepared to learn and engage.
- Falling asleep or deliberately tuning out class discussions is disrespectful. If you need a drink of water, coffee, or food to help you maintain your focus, please do so by all means.
- Cellular phones or other mobile devices must be put away, turned off, or put on silent.

Learning Assessment/Course Rubric:

Class Participation	10%
In-Class Writing Assignment	10%
Discussion Participation	30%
Reading Summary Quizzes (2)	15%
Group Presentations	25%
Final Exam	10%

Class Participation (10%): You will be graded in part on your class attendance. It will remain 100% if you follow the above rules on missed classes or excused absences. (See “Classroom, Literature and Materials” section.)

Writing Assignment (10%): Early in the semester, there will be a writing assignment designed to assess your comprehension of authoritarianism. Keeping up-to-date with all course readings will be key to doing well on this assignment.

Discussion Participation (30%): There will be five (5) class discussions of different types, each with different objectives. For the discussions, you will be divided into small groups and will be assessed on the following criteria: 1) Attendance; 2) Contribution to Group Discussions/Research; 3) Individual Contributions; 4) Analysis and Critical Thinking.

The Rubric for Class Participation is as follows:

Attendance	1 point for attendance (no deduction for excused absences, which voids grading) 0 points for an unexcused absence		
Contribution to Group Discussions/Research	<u>0 points:</u> Minimal participation in group discussion or research contribution.	<u>1 point:</u> Some participation in group discussions (required some direction, lack of facilitation).	<u>2 points:</u> Active participation in group discussions, self-directed, led or enhanced discussions.
Individual Contributions	<u>0 points:</u> Minimal or no participation in class discussion or lack of individual research contribution.	<u>1 point:</u> Some participation in class discussions (required prompts, research contribution was minimal)	<u>2 points:</u> Active participation in class discussions (self-directed, relevant research contribution)
Analysis and Critical Thinking	<u>0 points:</u> Critical thinking or analytical or research contribution is absent.	<u>1 point:</u> Some presentation or reference to course material or research contribution, but critical thinking largely absent.	<u>2 points:</u> Strong critical thinking and analysis of course materials (e.g. compare/contrast, questioning, relevant application of critical concepts & theories)

Reading Summary Quizzes (15%): Two Reading Summary quizzes will be distributed in class with two (2) essay questions covering key messages in the assigned readings or as presented during class lectures. You will have the length of the classroom period to complete each quiz.

Group Presentations (25%): You will be divided into small groups. Each group will give a 35-minute presentation analyzing the foreign policy behavior of a country of their choice in broader Asia. The goal is to demonstrate a mastery of the overall course objectives and frame the state's behavior in the context of realist strategies employed in class. Each group must provide an outline of their presentation by Session 23 for approval.

Final Exam (10%): The final exam will feature two (2) essay questions covering key messages in assigned readings or as presented during lectures. Again, you will be graded not only on your recollection of key arguments or concepts, but your ability to *critically* think about the course material. The date for the final exam will be announced later in the semester.

Classroom Policy Information:

- **Academic Ethics and Cheating Policy:** The use of ChatGPT, DeepSeek or other AI-based tools is prohibited and is an act of fraud. I employ a range of tools to detect AI. When that fails, I consult AI experts for analysis. Any use of AI tools will be taken seriously and anyone suspected of doing so will fail any assignment (with a 0% score). While second chances are possible, further exams will be conducted in person and under direct supervision. The use of AI tools on the final exam paper, like other assignments is prohibited, but will result in a 0% for the course.
- **Plagiarism,** the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own will not be tolerated. It is *your* responsibility to either paraphrase or quote research material directly with *specific* citations (author, page number) in a format of your choice (MLA, APA,

Harvard, Chicago, etc.). Bibliographies at the end of essay responses are appreciated, as are outside (additional) sources. No quoted material over 35 words, please.

- **Disability Statement:** *This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation.* Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible (within the first week of class). It is the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor then meet to determine reasonable accommodation based on the official documentation/accommodation list.
- **Syllabus:** I reserve the right to modify the course syllabus at any time, especially if I feel it enhances the learning experience or is necessary due to unforeseen circumstances. I will provide advanced warning of any changes.
- **Free Speech/Safe Space:** This course will likely cover difficult topics which will result in a wide range of personal opinions and emotions. It is important to come to class with an open mind and a respect for diversity of opinion. Discrimination, marginalization or other abhorrent behavior based on gender, sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation will not be tolerated. Violators will be asked to leave the classroom. In this classroom, we respect each other.