

FYSM 1000-043

GAME OF THRONES  
&  
THE LOGIC OF POLITICAL SURVIVAL

FALL 2019

HOWEVER...  
WINTER  
= IS =  
COMING

**Course Maester: Professor SHIN**

**Time and Location:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30–4:45 p.m., DUAN G1B39

**Contact:** [adrian.shin@colorado.edu](mailto:adrian.shin@colorado.edu)

**Office Hours and Appointments:**

- Location: Ketchum 135, on the side of the Political Science main office (west wing)
- Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00–3:00 p.m.
- Appointments: Make a 15-minute appointment via <https://professorshin.youcanbook.me>

**Course Assistant:** Ms. Olwyn Doyle ([olwyn.doyle@colorado.edu](mailto:olwyn.doyle@colorado.edu))

## Course Objective

*“When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground.”* – Cersei Lannister (Season 1, Episode 7: *You Win or You Die*)

*“Dracarys.”* – Daenerys Targaryen (Season 3, Episode 4: *And Now His Watch Has Ended*)

All political leaders face the challenge of keeping their jobs or heads. Whether you are the prime minister of the United Kingdom or the ruler of King’s Landing, your desire to survive—often quite literally—motivates your policy choices and determines whom to reward or punish. To maximize your chance of survival, you must shape the rules of the game to your advantage and decide how to deal with foreign nations and enemies within. The logic behind your and everyone else’s desire to survive is the essence of politics and the central focus of Political Science. Using the American fantasy drama television series, *Game of Thrones* (GoT), this course introduces first-year students to some of the most important concepts in Political Science across the traditional subfields. Starting from Season 1, students will watch the episodes for homework in addition to reading assignments exploring the fundamental ideas and frameworks of Political Science. In class, we will make connections between *Game of Thrones* and Political Science and will evaluate each character’s survival strategy. This course is especially excellent for students who enjoy movies or television series depicting real or fantasy political events. *Game of Thrones* will help students internalize course concepts and class materials by providing a wealth of case studies for analyzing strategic interactions between political elites. To maintain coherent course content and reduce the reading load, we will not discuss George R. R. Martin’s books on which GoT is based.

## Course Materials

### Game of Thrones

- Option 1 (Recommended): HBO Now or Go Subscription
- Option 2: Game of Thrones: The Complete Seasons 1–8

### Required Textbooks

- [LOGIC] *The Logic of Political Survival*. 2003. (Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow)
- [HANDBOOK] *The Dictator's Handbook*. 2012. (Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith)
- [NATIONS] *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. 2013. (Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson)

## Evaluation

For a total possible score of **100,000 points**, your grade is made up of the following 5 components: (1) pop quizzes (2) 2 exams; (3) a group presentation; (4) a final paper or project; and (5) attendance and participation. The grade breakdown of these components, along with their respective dates, is shown below.

*You will automatically fail the entire course for plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, resubmission, aiding academic dishonesty, and other behaviors I find unacceptable according to the University's Honor Code. Additionally, I will report all Honor Code violations to the Honor Council, the Department, and the Dean of Students.*

- I. Pop Quizzes (**10,000 points**): At the end of class, there might be a pop quiz based on the reading assignments and class discussion. **No make-up quiz will be given for unexcused or excused absences.** Students will need to find other ways to earn points if they miss a quiz.
- II. You will have two in-class **essay** exams in this course. No final exam will be given for this course because you will have a final paper or a project to complete. On each exam, you will be given two questions, but you only need to answer one. The exams are closed-book; you are not allowed to use any unauthorized notes or books.
  - (a) Exam 1 (**15,000 points**) – Thursday, 10/3
  - (b) Exam 2 (**20,000 points**) – Thursday, 11/14
  - (c) Exam Policy
    - There will be no make-up exams offered for sickness/medical reasons/personal reasons, including a death in the family, unless students can satisfy the following two conditions: 1) provide documentation (e.g. a doctor's note from the Wardenburg Health Services), and 2) give me advance notice (if possible) that you will miss the exam. No-shows and non-submissions receive zero points.

- III. Team Presentation (**20,000 points**)

- Your team will lead a class session with a 15–30 minute presentation and **both learning-by-doing (LbD)** class activities prepared and implemented by the team. I will provide more information on LbD later.

IV. Final Paper or Project (**30,000 points**) – Tuesday, 12/17 (due via Canvas at 3:00 p.m.)

- **[OPTION 1]** You will choose two leaders from GoT to compare and contrast their political constraints and survival strategies. First, explain how their respective political constraints shape their political behaviors in general? In doing so, illustrate their political constraints (e.g., the winning coalition, the selectorate, etc.) and analyze their similarities and differences between the leaders. Additionally, show how their political constraints and their decisions affect the living standards of ordinary people and elites residing in their territories. Second, make an argument on who has made better political decisions given their political constraints? In doing so, make sure to distinguish between short-term and long-term goals. Moreover, avoid comparing apples to oranges. For instance, comparing Tywin Lannister to Robb Stark is probably not a good idea since Robb was the most extreme version of an idealist in the show. Finally, explain what a successful leader should do in order to survive both domestically and internationally. For instance, what type of winning coalition or selectorate is the best for a leader to stay alive and powerful? What are some of the specific actions they can take to shape the rules of the game to their advantage?
- **[OPTION 2]** Write a paper or create a project on a topic of your choice as long as it lies within the course content and GoT. *To select this option, you must come see me **by Thursday, November 21st** to get my approval.*
- You are encouraged to consult me during my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your paper or project.
- Late papers will lose **5,000** points per day (not per class). **Papers turned in after 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, 12/19 will not be accepted and receive a zero.**
- Formatting Requirements:
  - Maximum of 6 pages
  - 1 inch margins for all
  - Double-spaced
  - Times New Roman, 12-point
- *Non-compliant papers will lose **1,500** points per formatting violation.*
- You must submit this paper to Canvas electronically so that we can verify its originality using turnitin.com. You will not receive credit for this paper until your Canvas version has passed the originality test.
- You must use quotation marks and provide proper citations when you use exact words of another author. You also need to cite an author whose argument you summarize or paraphrase in your papers. Your papers must provide citations and a list of references for the sources of facts you use in them. Appropriate sources for papers will be discussed in class.

V. Participation (**15,000 points**): Since this is a seminar, it is important for you to be present in class to participate. Students should come to class having read the materials and should be prepared to 1) summarize the author(s)' arguments, 2) describe the evidence or theoretical

justification to support the arguments, and 3) provide three reading questions for each reading assignment. I will select students randomly to present their answers to the class and ask other students for their input. When students are not present to answer my questions in class, they will lose participation points. Only documented and excused absences, such as religious holidays, a death in the *immediate* family, medical emergency, etc., will not lose participation points.

VI. Attendance: Since attendance is the least students can do to learn in a seminar, students are expected to be present in all class sessions. Students can fail the course by missing six class sessions regardless of the work they have done. For *unexcused* absences, penalties will apply as follows:

- First Absence: -100 points
- Second Absence: -500 points
- Third Absence: -1,000 points
- Fourth Absence: -5,000 points
- Fifth Absence: -10,000 points
- Sixth Absence -50,000 points (At this point, you will be sure to fail the course.)

VII. Side Quests (Various Points): Throughout the semester, you will have a variety of opportunities to increase your points by completing extra assignments. The maximum possible reward for completing each quest will not exceed 3,000 points. Note that side quests have due dates. You will not be able to complete a side quest after its due date.

## GradeCraft™

GradeCraft™, a revolutionary online platform for the “gamification” of courses will power this seminar. You will be able to keep track of your course progress and check grades through this system. Instead of starting from 100 and defending their points, students will start from 0 and will have opportunities to “level up” throughout the course. This grading design provides students with a sense of growth and a fun way to take in course materials. One of my former students mentioned that GradeCraft with its gamification is “a heck of a drug” in the sense that they kept looking for additional assignments and activities to achieve a desired threshold. Driven by this powerful incentive tool, the course will feature a series of activities that stimulate student thinking through the 73 episodes of GoT. Since so many of the GoT episodes feature strategic interactions and political structures, students will engage in a semester-long question of how to survive politically. While the course will have a team project and an extended discussion of concepts, the incentive structure of the course and the epic GoT storylines will captivate students and will make learning irresistible throughout the semester. More information about how to register for and use GradeCraft will follow on Thursday, September 5.

## Points to Letter Grade Conversion

*I will **not** be rounding up any points at the end of the semester. An excellent way to score more points is to complete the side quests on time.*

A:  $\geq 94,000$

A-:  $\geq 90,000$

B+:  $\geq 87,000$

B:  $\geq 84,000$

B-:  $\geq 80,000$

C+:  $\geq 77,000$

C:  $\geq 74,000$

C-:  $\geq 70,000$

D+:  $\geq 67,000$

D:  $\geq 64,000$

F:  $< 64,000$

## Regrading Policy

In this class, all grades are final. There is no process for filing a grade grievance. However, if you find a computational error, please let me know as soon as possible.

## E-mail Etiquette

I have posted some useful resources on Canvas about how to write e-mails to professors. This is a valuable skill to have as you navigate through college and prepare for your career. Please include a subject. I prefer something like “[FYSM-GOT]” followed by something indicative about the purpose of your e-mail. For instance, if you want to discuss classroom accommodation due to your disability, the subject of your e-mail can be “[FYSM-GOT] Disability Accommodation and Extra Exam Time.”

Do not e-mail me for the following reasons:

1. You missed a class session and want notes from me.
  - Instead, consult your classmates.
2. You are going have unexcused absences and want to let me know.
  - Letting me know does not make a difference.
3. You want to get course information that is already in the syllabus (e.g., office hours, my office location, etc.).
  - The answer is in the syllabus.

## Course Outline

Students are required to complete the reading assignments **by** the associated date.

- [LOGIC] is *The Logic of Political Survival*.
- [HANDBOOK] is *The Dictator's Handbook*.
- [NATIONS] is *Why Nations Fail*.

All other reading assignments will be posted on Canvas.

### Part A: Power in Motion

#### • Week One

- Tuesday, 8/27
  - \* Read the syllabus.
- Thursday, 8/29
  - \* *Game of Thrones Meets International Relations – A Match Made In Heaven?* Available on Canvas
  - \* Bring your questions about college and classroom norms. For instance, how do you address professors? Is it Professor, Doctor, or Maester? May I go to the bathroom without the professor's permission during class? While these are simple questions, not all first-years know the answers to these questions on the first day of class.

#### • Week Two

- Tuesday, 9/3
  - \* Season 1: Episodes 1, 2, and 3
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 3–7
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Introduction
  - \* [NATIONS] : Preface
- Thursday, 9/5
  - \* Season 1: Episodes 4, 5, and 6
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 15–26
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 1

#### • Week Three

- Tuesday, 9/10
  - \* Season 1: Episodes 7, 8, and 9
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 26–35 and 37–41
- Thursday, 9/12
  - \* Season 1: Episode 10 & Season 2: Episodes 1 and 2
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 2

- **Week Four**

- Tuesday, 9/17
  - \* Season 2: Episodes 3, 4, and 5
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 41–57
- Thursday, 9/19
  - \* Season 2: Episodes 6, 7, and 8
  - \* [HANDBOOK] : Chapter 3

## Part B: Playing with Power

- **Week Five**

- Tuesday, 9/24
  - \* Season 2: Episodes 9 and 10 & Season 3: Episode 1
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 218–226
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 9
- Thursday, 9/26
  - \* Season 3: Episodes 2, 3, and 4
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 57–76 (Start reading at *Sources of Risks and Rewards*.)

- **Week Six: Review 1 (Tuesday, 10/1) and Exam 1 (Thursday, 10/3)**

- **Week Seven**

- Tuesday, 10/8
  - \* Season 3: Episodes 5, 6, and 7
  - \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 1
- Thursday, 10/10
  - \* Season 3: Episodes 8, 9, and 10
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 4

- **Week Eight**

- Tuesday, 10/15
  - \* Season 4: Episodes 1, 2, and 3
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 276–292
- Thursday, 10/17
  - \* Season 4: Episodes 4, 5, and 6
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 355–361
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 5

- **Week Nine**

- Tuesday, 10/22

- \* Season 4: Episodes 7, 8, and 9
- \* [LOGIC]: pp. 243–250
- \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 2
- Thursday, 10/24
  - \* Season 4: Episode 10 & Season 5: Episodes 1 and 2
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 361–372
  - \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 6

## Part C: Lost in Power

- **Week Ten**

- Tuesday, 10/29
  - \* Season 5: Episodes 3, 4, and 5
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 6
- Thursday, 10/31
  - \* Season 5: Episodes 6, 7, and 8
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 8

- **Week Eleven**

- Tuesday, 11/5
  - \* Season 5: Episodes 9 and 10 & Season 6: Episode 1
  - \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 3
- Thursday, 11/7
  - \* Season 6: Episodes 2, 3, and 4
  - \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 8

- **Week Twelve: Review 2 (Tuesday, 11/12) and Exam 2 (Thursday, 11/14)**

- **Week Thirteen**

- Tuesday, 11/19
  - \* Season 6: Episodes 5, 6, and 7
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 382–403
- Thursday, 11/21
  - \* Season 6: Episodes 8, 9, and 10
  - \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 4

- **Week Fourteen: Fall Break (Tuesday, 11/26) and Thanksgiving Holiday (Thursday, 11/28)**

- **Week Fifteen**

- Tuesday, 12/3
  - \* Season 7: Episodes 1, 2, 3, and 4

- \* [LOGIC] pp. 236–243 and 406–425
- Thursday, 12/5
  - \* Season 7: Episodes 5, 6, and 7
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 7

- **Week Sixteen**

- Tuesday, 12/10
  - \* Season 8: Episodes 1, 2, and 3
  - \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 13
- Thursday, 12/12
  - \* Season 8: Episodes 4, 5, and 6
  - \* [LOGIC]: pp. 400–403
  - \* [HANDBOOK]: Chapter 10
  - \* [NATIONS]: Chapter 14

## University Policies

### Accommodation for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

### Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteranstatus, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and [the Student Code of Conduct](#).

### Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved,

and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

### **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

### **Religious Holidays**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you have a potential class conflict because of religious observance, you must inform me of that conflict within two weeks prior to your absence. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.