

GV103: Introduction to International Relations

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Puzzles of International Relations

Introduction

- Three goals for this lecture
 - 1 Discuss what sorts of questions we'll be asking
 - 2 Introduce puzzle of foregone benefits of cooperation
 - 3 Introduce puzzle of avoidable costs of conflict

What is International Relations?

- Often referred to as IR for short
- Also called international or world politics
- Concerns the way states interact with one another
- As well as attempts by non-state actors to influence (foreign) policies of (foreign) governments

Caveats

- Focus is on **why** the world is as it is, not how it **should** be
- I will sometimes discuss historical and contemporary examples, but goal is to familiarize you w/ **generalizable** explanations
- Arguments developed w/ game theory, evaluated statistically
- You will NOT be assessed on basis of **mathematical ability**
- But you will need to demonstrate understanding of assumptions, implications, and the evidence in support thereof
- Likely impossible if you shut down at first sight of notation

Why Isn't There More Cooperation?

- Wrong answer: anarchic nature of international system forces all states to look out for themselves, trusting no one
- Two important observations
 - ① Cooperation b/w rivals rarer than b/w allies, but still common
 - ② Nature of system basically constant; level of cooperation is not

Basic Facts

- Top 3 trade partners for US: Canada, China, Mexico
- Wartime suspension of trade less common than believed
- Global trade grew $\approx 2700\%$ from 1950–2005
- But some sectors still heavily protected

Why Isn't There Less Conflict?

- Wrong answer: human beings are, by nature, violent, greedy, short-sighted, territorial, and intolerant
- Two important observations
 - ① Armed conflict much, much rarer than most people appreciate
 - ② Human nature basically constant; frequency of conflict is not

Basic Facts

- >2500 MIDs occurred b/w 1816 & 2010
- <100 of these escalated to war

