

## Preface

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The purpose of this book is to introduce students to the major concepts of international relations. The readings in this volume develop political scientists' basic arguments and theories about how nations and states interact in the modern world. In editing this book we have kept two goals in mind. In the first place, this book is designed to provide students with the tools necessary for understanding the international events that are likely to shape their lives. This book is intended to make the nightly news make more sense—not by providing historical background or an overview of current events but by exposing the basic logic, tensions, and dilemmas of international politics. In the second place, this book aims to provide the solid theoretical foundation essential for advanced coursework in international relations. It lays the groundwork and sets the stage for more detailed studies of American foreign policy, defense policy, international political economy, international law, international organization, and the causes of war.

This book is organized into four sections. The first develops the central concepts of modern international relations: the state, the international system, and international society. Along the way it explores the ideas of anarchy, power, regimes, law, gender and identity, and morality and how they may affect international behavior. The second section turns to the central intellectual problem of international politics: war. It examines how the characteristics of the international system and society may provoke or prevent war, how various attributes of particular states or nations may make conflict more or less likely, and how the basic nature of human

beings may play an important role in explaining the occurrence of war.

The third section explores challenges to the international system emerging in today's world. Changes in the relationships among sovereign states, between people and states, and among individuals from different states raise questions about how order and security will be provided in the future. Many of these changes seem to simultaneously strengthen and weaken the capacity of the state system. Transnational networks, for example, may increase state capabilities to cooperate while at the same time increasing the power of groups that compete with states and diminish state authority. A brief fourth section raises the fundamental epistemological problems inevitably encountered in the study of international relations: how do we know what we (think we) know, how do we go about thinking conceptually about world affairs, and how are we to understand "history"?

As our students will recognize, this book is a direct product of our experiences in the classroom with them. These are the readings that we have found generally provide the insights that allow our students to answer for themselves the questions that inevitably arise about the nature of international politics. The selections included in this volume have the enormous merit of achieving tremendous clarity without resorting to oversimplicity. In many cases, they are excerpts from classics in the political science literature and, like a deep well, they offer new insights on each reading or re-reading. They do not provide easy, pat answers. But they do suggest valuable ways of thinking about the problems.