THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GV-902

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Office hours: Thursday 12-14, or by appointment
GV-902: THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Course Description:
This course offers an introduction to theories of International Relations (IR). The principal aims of the course are: (a) to familiarize students with theories and conceptual tools used to analyze world politics, and (b) to explore how different theories and conceptual tools speak to contemporary debates and events.

The first part of the course focuses on key concepts, approaches to the study of IR, and trends in IR theory. We will explore enduring issues in both early theoretical contributions to the study of IR and contemporary research. We will also examine the relationship of International Relations as discipline to Political Science and the social sciences more broadly.

The second part of the course offers a theoretically informed examination of the analysis of specific issues and debates in contemporary international relations theory.

Course Eligibility:
This is the core course for the MA International Relations and required for all students in this MA program. The course is in principle open to students from other MAs, with the course supervisor’s permission, and provided we have sufficient space to accommodate other students. Since this is an MA course I will assume a basic knowledge of IR theory and international history. More specifically, students are expected to have read something akin to one of the general undergraduate textbooks indicated under the reading list prior to the course. Students unfamiliar with material or concepts must consult one of these textbooks. The reading list provides references to alternative introductory text. However, these should be used as supplements, rather than replacements for the recommended textbooks.

Administration:
The course administrator is Mrs. Claire Chell. She can be found in the Graduate Office in 5B.314, tel. extension 2751, email: clchell@essex.ac.uk. The office is open Monday to Friday 10:00-13:00 and 14:00-16:00.

Course Objectives:
The objective of the course is to provide students with an overview of a wide and intellectually demanding range of IR literature and the ability to use this material to analyze world politics. The course aims to provide a sound basis for studying politics from different theoretical and methodological viewpoints. By the end of the course the students should: (i) have a strong understanding of the origins, historical evolution, and current debates and challenges of the discipline of International Relations, (ii) have an in-depth and systematic knowledge of IR scholarship, and be able to critically evaluate this scholarship and explore new insights and working hypotheses in the study of world politics, (iii) understand the relationship between theory and practice in world politics, (iv) be able to engage in current debates on the analysis world politics.
Key Skills:
This course will help students to develop the following skills: (i) Communication, presentation and argumentation skills, (ii) team-work skills in joint presentations and small discussion groups, (iii) writing and research skills through essays, assignments, and presentations, (iv) improving their own learning and performance by responding to comments, including criticism, (v) information technology skills through using research tools, (vi) self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, (vii) development of qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment, requiring the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility.

Course Assessment:
The course grade will be composed of four elements:
- an assignment on an hypothesis in International Relations, due in Week 4, worth 10%
- a review of the literature on a research question in International Relations. A brief statement of the topic (no more than half a page) must be submitted by Week 5 for approval. The review itself is due in Week 10, and worth 20%. The word limit is 2,500-3,000 words
- an essay assignment, due in Week 25, worth 20%. The word limit is 2,500-3,000 words.
- an unseen three-hour examination, in the Summer term, worth 50%. The examinations office will notify you of the precise time and location closer to the date itself.

Notes on Assignments:
(i) Students should hand in all assignments on time. Late submission of written work will be heavily penalized. In accordance with Department of Government rules, late assignments will incur a penalty of 3 marks for each working day they are late. Since this is a Department-wide rule, it will be applied without exception in this course.

(ii) Extensions to the given deadlines will be granted only under exceptional circumstances and only before the essay is due. Requests must be made in writing (not by email) and supported by documented evidence, such as a letter from a doctor explaining the relevant circumstances. For further details on extensions, see the relevant sections of Postgraduate Handbook.

(iii) Essays are marked on the basis of their focus on the question/topic, argument, use of evidence, analysis, clarity, structure, command and use of literature, bibliographical research, imagination and originality.

(iv) Essays should be fully referenced, citing the source of ideas or facts contained in them. Students can use any established system of referencing used by a journal, but the references must be consistent.

(iv) Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. You commit plagiarism if you submit work in which text has been copied from another source, whether a book, an article, or another student, without acknowledging the source. The penalties for plagiarism are very severe. The Postgraduate Handbook provides more details on plagiarism.
Teaching Method & Expectations:

*In general:* The course will be taught in 20 two-hour seminars. The seminars are based on students’ active participation. It is essential that students read at least the core readings *before* each seminar.

*On the Required Readings:* The readings attached to each topic are not exhaustive. Students are expected to use references and suggested supplementary readings to guide their own exploration of the literature.

Books for the Course:

Although students will be required to consult a range of sources, all students should consider purchasing the following texts:

- Vasquez, John A. 1996. *Classics of International Relations.* Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall, ISBN: 0131466488 (excerpts from classical texts. This is out of print according to the campus bookstore, but you may be able to find second hand copies on the internet.)

The following books are also recommended for purchase:

- Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, ISBN: 0075548526. (This is book is certainly a classic, but due to the outrageous price demanded for this relatively short paperback you are probably better off borrowing a copy.)

You should also read, or be familiar with, ONE of the following textbooks:


Other texts that you may wish to consult include:


Journals
For contemporary developments in the discipline you should pay particular attention to journals and periodicals. Some of the leading journals/periodicals you should review regularly include:

American Political Science Review
American Journal of Political Science
British Journal of Politics and International Relations
British Journal of Political Science
European Journal of International Relations
International Organization
International Security
International Studies Quarterly
International Studies Review
Journal of Conflict Resolution
Journal of Peace Research
Review of International Studies
World Politics

A number of these (and many other) journals are now available electronically. Please consult the library home page for details on connections from on and off campus.

Professional Associations

Graduate students may join the International Studies Association, the British International Studies Association, or the Peace Science Society (International) for a nominal charge. Membership entitles you to free copies of their journals, and many postgraduate students attend their annual conferences.
Lecture Topics and Readings:

1. Introduction to the Study of International Relations

Week 2: Introduction/organization + brief history of IR

Weekly objective: This session will provide an overview of the course, explaining assessments and administrative procedures to be followed. We will also review key varieties of international relations theory, the origins of the field, and the influence of some important historical events.

Required:
- Schmidt, Brian C. “On the History and Historiography of International Relations” in Carlsnaes et al.

Supplementary:
- Wæver, Ole “The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations” in Katzenstein et al.

Week 3: Explaining international events

Weekly objective: We will review the distinction between description and explanation, as well as central concepts such as puzzles, theory, mechanisms, and hypotheses, using the Peloponnesian war and Thucydides as an example.

Required
- Thucydides “The Melian Dialogue”, In Vasquez, or online (e.g., http://www.wsu.edu:8001/~dee/GREECE/MELIAN.HTM)
- At least one reading on theory and hypotheses, either Elster, Hempel, or Little

Supplementary:
• Goldstein, Chapter 2.

**Week 4: Does sovereignty make international politics inherently distinct?**

Weekly objective: Much of IR theory holds that international relations (or politics between states) is fundamentally different from politics within states, and emphasize the differences between IR and other areas of political science. We will review what is entailed by the concept of state sovereignty, the evolution of states and changing conceptions of sovereignty, as well as key arguments and counterarguments about the alleged distinctiveness of IR.

Required:
• Biersteker, Thomas J. “State, Sovereignty and Territory” in Carlsnaes et al.
• Hobbes, Thomas “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind. . . “, in Vasquez
• Machiavelli, Niccolo. “From *The Prince*” in Vasquez

Supplementary:
• Eichengreen, Barry “Dental Hygiene and Nuclear War: How International Relations Look from Economics” in Katzenstein et al.
• Goldstein, Joshua, pp. 1-34, 128-139, 183-194.
• Milner, Helen K. “Rationalizing Politics: The Emerging Synthesis of International, American, and Comparative Politics” in Katzenstein et al.

2. **Theoretical Frameworks in the Study of International Relations**
Week 5: Realism and structural theories of IR

Weekly objective: Realism emphasizes how inherent features of IR shape the behavior of states. We will explore what is meant by structural theories, review the main arguments set forward by realism on how system structure affects behavior, differences between common or possible system structures (e.g., bi-polarity vs. multi-polarity), and the concept of power as capabilities.

Required:
- Morgenthau, Hans J. “Political Power” and “A Realist Theory of International Politics” in Vasquez

Supplementary:
- Baldwin, David. “Power and International Relations” in Carlsnaes et al.

Week 6: Liberalism and world order

Weekly objective: This session provides an introduction to alternative views on international relations. Some identify particular fundamental challenges to peace and advance proposals to overcome these. Others point to limitations of the state centric view of IR.
Week 7: Theories of international regimes

Weekly objective: Is anarchy really as fundamental an obstacle to cooperation as realists insist? We will consider why many are more optimistic about the prospects for cooperation - even within the basic premises assumed by realists - based on the idea that the shadow of the future can help sustain cooperation.

Required:

- Keohane, Robert “From After Hegemony” in Vasquez

Supplementary:

• Simmons, Beth and Lisa Martin “International Organizations and Institutions” in Carlsnaes et al.

**Week 8: Decision theoretic approaches to IR**

Weekly objective: Introduction to analysis of conflict focusing on pairs of states and greater emphasis on individual decision making in accounting for behavior. We will consider some simple formal treatments of the decision to resort to force and highlight their differences with structural realism.

**Required**

- Kahler, Miles “Rationality in International Relations” in Katzenstein et al. OR Morrow, James “The Ongoing Game-Theoretic Revolution” in Midlarsky OR c) Snidal, Duncan “Rational Choice and International Relations” in Carlsnes et al.

Students are also encouraged to skim the following article, now somewhat dates:


**Supplementary:**

Week 9: Hierarchical and radical perspectives

Weekly objective: We will consider different theoretical perspectives that see the international system as a hierarchy rather than an anarchy, differences in their organizing principles, the variety of different relationship between actors within the system, and the forces for change in system structure over time.

Required:

Supplementary:

Week 10: Psychological approaches to international politics

Weekly objective: Are decision makers really as rational as often assumed, or is rational choice theory too parsimonious? We will consider some of criticisms of rational choice and expected utility theory from a behavioral perspective, as well as some potential insights on decision making from experimental psychology.

Required:


Supplementary:
- Goertz, Gary and Paul F. Diehl “(Enduring) Rivalries” in Midlarsky

**Week 11: Norms and culture in global society**

Weekly objective: Modern IR theory attributes much importance to preferences, but has little to say about where preferences come from, and tends to treat actors and ideas as given and fixed over time. We will consider contributions that treat actors/identity as malleable and socially constructed, as well as perspectives that consider the international system as a society in its own right.

Required:
- Finnemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change” in Katzenstein et al.

Supplementary:
- Adler, Emmanuel “Constructivism in International Relations” in Carlsnaes et al.


Fearon, James and Alexander Wendt “Rationalism vs. Constructivism: A Sceptical View” in Carlsnaes et al.


Risse, Thomas “Transnational Actors and World Politics” in Carlsnaes et al.


Tickner, J. Ann “Feminist Perspective on International Relations” in Carlsnaes et al.


SPRING TERM:

II. Controversies in International Relations Theory

Week 16: Alignment & Alliances

Weekly objective: Alliances are an important form of security cooperation, acknowledged even by scholars generally skeptical of the possibility of international cooperation. We will consider the rationale for alliances, theories of alliance formation, the commitment problem inherent in promises of military aid, and how formalization can help overcome problems of cooperation in alliances between allies.

Required:


Supplementary
• Müller, Harald. “Security Cooperation” in Carlsnaes et al.

Week 17: Domestic institutions and international behavior

Weekly objective: To what extent do domestic politics influence the international behavior of states? We will consider the role of domestic organization and public opinion on foreign policy formation, and evaluate to what the extent this may undermine the validity of the assumption of states as unitary actors. We will also consider how international forces may affect cleavages within societies.

Required:

Supplementary:


**Week 18: A Liberal Peace?**

Weekly objective: The democratic peace – or the empirical finding that no two democracies have ever fought one another – is increasingly regarded as an empirical fact, but there is little consensus on how democratic institutions may constrain the risk of war. We will consider explanations based on normative features and institutional characteristics, as well as the possible additional implications of arguments relating democracy and peace.

Required:


• Russett, Bruce M. and Harvey Starr “From Democratic Peace to Kantian Peace: Democracy and Conflict in the International System” in Midlarsky

**Supplementary:**


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**Week 19: International organization and international law**

Weekly objective: Many traditional IR approaches tend to argue that institutions are either completely effective or completely ineffective in fostering cooperation. We will consider differences among types of institutions, when we can expect them to be more or less effective, as well as the relationship between features of issues areas and the appropriate design of institutions.

**Required:**


• Raustiala, Kal and Anne-Marie Slaughter “International Law, International Relations, and Compliance” in Carlsnaes et al.


**Supplementary:**


• Choi, Young Jong and James A. Caporaso “Comparative Regional Integration” in Carlsnaes et al.


• Schmitz, Hans Peter and Kathryn Sikkink “International Human Rights” in Carlsnaes et al.


**Week 20: Is intrastate conflict different?**

Weekly objective: IR theory has traditionally assumed that conflict within states is qualitatively different from conflict between sovereign states. To what extent do generalizations about the risk of war between states that we have seen transfer to understanding conflict within states? What wider international security implications may arise out of conflicts within states?

**Required:**
- Cederman, Lars-Erik “Nationalism and Ethnicity” in Carlsnaes et al.

**Supplementary:**
Week 21: Conflict and cooperation in international trade and finance

Weekly objective: Many approaches to IR theory treat politics and economics as separate domains. We will consider whether problems of conflict and cooperation can be understood in terms of the general tools and concepts reviewed earlier in the course, focusing specifically on finance and trade.

Required:

Supplementary:
- Cohen, Benjamin “International Finance” in Carlsnaes et al.
- Milner, Helen V. “International Trade” in Carlsnaes et al.
- Li, Quan and Adam Resnick. 2003. “Reversal of Fortunes: Democratic Institutions and Foreign Direct Investment Inflows to Developing Countries”, *International Organization* 57 (1): 175-211.

Week 22: Globalization, development, and the environment

Weekly objective: We will consider the concept of globalization, to what extent the current international system can be said to be “more globalized”. We will also consider the impact of globalization on the environment and development, and the possible implications for conflict and security.

Required:


Supplementary:


• Mitchell, Ronald B. “International Environment” in Carlsnaes et al.
Week 23: Peacemaking and Peacekeeping

Weekly objective: The end of the Cold War has given rise to a proliferation of peacekeeping efforts by the United Nations and other regional organizations. What (if any) is the theoretical rational for these efforts, and what challenges may prevent them from succeeding in practice?

Required:


Supplementary:

- Gilady, Lilach “Peace-making and Conflict Resolution” in Carlsnaes et al.

Week 24: Assessing Progress in International Relations

Weekly objective: Much have changed in the study of international conflict since Thucydides. Yet, many IR theorists feel that little worthwhile has been added, and that much of current work in IR simply repackages old wine in new bottles. In this session, we will look retrospectively and consider what has been in learned in the study of IR relative to different criteria of progress in science.
Required:

- Wight, Colin “Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations” in Carlsnaes et al

Supplementary:


**Week 25: Review & Open Session**

No readings assigned