UCONN
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

POLS 3402
Contemporary Theories of International Relations

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Office Hours: W., 9–11:00am, by appointment

Description

This course provides students with an overview of the contemporary theoretical debates in the field of international relations. Each week focuses on a discrete topic which collectively give students a sense of past, present, and future trends in international relations theory. We will critique classic assumptions about the actors and organizing principles of international politics, as well as review recent debates on the construction of national interests, like whether status matters in international relations, why states break international laws, and the role of emotions in decision-making.

One important goal of the course is for students to continually reflect on the core assumptions and theoretical frameworks that define the field of international relations such as by asking:

- Who are the main actors in international politics?
- What motivates these actors' behavior?
- How do these actors interact with one another?
- What is the purpose of theory in international politics?
- Is theoretical pluralism good or bad?

This course is structured as a reading seminar. Normally the first 20-30 minutes will be devoted to a brief overview of the week's topics. This will be followed a presentation by a student who will summarize the required readings assigned for that week, link them analytically and critically to the required background readings, and provide questions for class discussion. Students will then answer these questions, as well as discuss other reactions they had to the required readings.

Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Critique major theories and assumptions related to international relations theory
2. Explain the key trends and debates in contemporary international relations theory.
3. Identify gaps, problems, and puzzles in the major areas of international relations.

Readings

Reading is an essential component of this course. Students are expected to complete each week's reading prior to attending class. Classes will tend to be heavily discussion- based. It is therefore imperative to come to class prepared and with questions. All readings will be available through HuskyCT.

Time Commitment

You should expect to dedicate 3 to 5 hours a week to this course. This expectation is based on the various course activities, assignments, and assessments and the University of Connecticut's policy regarding credit hours. More information related to hours per week per credit can be accessed at the Online Student website.

Assignments

Active Reading (30%): Engaging with the readings is critical to succeeding in the course and will evaluated using the Perusall tool, a community reading forum where students can annotate the assigned readings and comment and discuss each others' annotations. You will (privately) receive a score based on your engagement with each reading. This score will be based on your annotations, completion of the reading, time-spent actively, and engagement with your classmates.

Discussion Participation (20%): Each student is required to attend all seminar sessions and actively contribute to discussion. Participation is not just about how much you speak, but about the quality of the contributions, how it helps the discussion, etc. Thus, asking a good question is of equal value to airing an opinion or bringing new information to our collective attention. Every week students should be prepared to bring and discuss one news story that they found relevant to the week's readings.

Leadership (10%): Each student in the class must sign up for one class for which they will be a discussion leader. Discussion leaders offer 3-5 questions for class discussion. These questions should be uploaded to HuskyCT to me by midnight Monday, the day before they are expected to lead class.

Speeches (40%): Throughout the semester, each student will assume the role of the President of the International Studies Association and write two 5-7 min. persuasive speeches in agreement or disagreement with a prompt about the state of international relations theory. These speeches represent your attempt to deliver an effective persuasive message, using all the knowledge you gained from reading and class. You need to develop arguments that are designed to sway audience members who may initially disagree with your position. Specific criteria will be discussed in class. Students will submit a transcript along with a works cited on Husky CT (~5-7pp, double-spaced). The works cited should be in Chicago format), and include 5 academic sources, only 2 of which may be from class. Students will also present their speech before the class or may upload an audio recording of it to HuskyCT.

- *Speech 1 Prompt: "Sovereignty is the most significant organizing principle for understanding in international politics."*
- *Speech 2 Prompt: "International relations theory is dead and no longer useful understanding in international politics."*

Writing Center

The Writing Center is open to all students for individualized assistance and tutorials. They can help at any stage of the writing process from your beginning ideas to finishing a term paper. They will not do your work for you but will guide you along and give assistance. Do not hesitate to make an appointment to seek their help and guidance, preferably from a tutor with political science expertise. For hours, locations, and more information, please go to writingcenter.uconn.edu, and

Due Dates and Late Policy

All course due dates are identified in the course calendar and blackboard. Deadlines are based on Eastern Time; if you are in a different time zone, please adjust your submittal times accordingly. Late assignments will incur a full letter grade deduction for each day over the due late. *I reserve the right to change dates accordingly as the semester progresses. All changes will be communicated in an appropriate manner.*

Feedback and Grades

The best option for discussing course material and assignments is to email me. I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades in a timely manner. In general, I will do my best to respond to all student questions within 24 hours, and return course assignment within a week. Please keep in mind that I will not respond to emails after 5 PM or anytime on the weekends.

In the event that a student wishes to dispute their grade on an assignment, the following procedure may be used. First, students must wait at least 48 hours after the assignment has been handed back. Second, students can email me to set up an appointment. This email should include a separate, typed summary of why they believe the grade is unfair. After meeting in person to discuss the assignment, I will then reevaluate the grade. However, revised grades may be higher or lower than the original, and this new grade will be final.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to act in accordance with the Student Conduct Code as well as the Guidelines for Academic Integrity at the University of Connecticut. I expect students to take this course seriously and to behave in a mature, appropriate manner during class. Students are allowed to use laptops and tablets for notetaking only. It is very obvious when students are distracted by other activities, and if students are caught repeatedly abusing this privilege then they will lose the ability to use their devices in class.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or

http://csd.uconn.edu/.

Course Overview

Week 1: The Purpose of IR theory

Part 1: What are the organizing principles of the international system?
Week 2: Sovereignty
Week 3: Hierarchy
Week 4: Race
Week 5: Gender

Part 2: What are the main units of the international system?
Week 6: States
Week 7: Civilizations
Week 8: People
Week 9: Spring Break

Part 3: What motivates behavior in the international system?
Week 10: Power
Week 11: Status
Week 12: Identity
Week 13: Emotions

Week 14: The End of IR theory
Week 15: Experiment

Course Schedule

Week 1: What is the Purpose of IR Theory?

Gaddis, John Lewis. "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War." International Security 17, no. 3 (1992): 5-58.

Acharya, Amitav, and Barry Buzan. "Why is there no non-Western international relations theory? An introduction." International Relations of the Asia-Pacific 7, no. 3 (2007): 287-312.

Week 2: Sovereignty as an Organizing Principle

Morgenthau, Hans J. "Problem of Sovereignty Reconsidered, The." *Columbia Law Review* 48 (1948): 341-361.

Krasner, Stephen D. "Organized Hypocrisy in Nineteenth-Century East Asia." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 1, no. 2 (2001): 173–97.

Branch, Jordan. "'Colonial reflection' and territoriality: The peripheral origins of sovereign statehood." *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 2 (2012): 277-297.

Week 3: Hierarchy as an Organizing Principle

Lake, David A. "The new sovereignty in international relations." International studies review 5, no. 3 (2003): 303-323.

Kang, David. "Hierarchy and legitimacy in international systems: The tribute system in early modern East Asia." Security Studies 19(4): 591–622.

Nexon, Daniel H., and Thomas Wright. 2007. "What's at stake in the American empire debate." American Political Science Review 101(2): 253-271.

Week 4: Race as the Organizing Principle

DuBois, W.E.B. "Worlds of color." *Foreign Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1925): 423-444.

Búzás, Zoltán I. "Racism and Antiracism in the Liberal International Order." *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021): 440-463.

Vitalis, Robert. "The graceful and generous liberal gesture: Making racism invisible in American international relations." *Millennium* 29(2) (2000): 331-356.

Week 5: Gender as an Organizing Principle

Tickner, J. Ann. "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and IR Theorists." International Studies Quarterly 41, no. 4 (1997): 611-32.

Reiter, Dan. "The positivist study of gender and international relations." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 7 (2015): 1301-1326.

Cohn, Carol. "Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals." Signs: Journal of women in culture and society 12, no. 4 (1987): 687-718.

Week 6: States as Units

Wendt, Alexander. "The state as person in international theory." Review of international Studies 30, no. 2 (2004): 289-316.

Wight, Colin. "State Agency: Social Action without Human Activity?" Review of International Studies 30, no. 2 (2004): 269-80.

Fleming, Sean. "Artificial Persons and Attributed Actions: How to Interpret Action-Sentences about States." *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 4 (December 2017): 930–50.

Week 7: Civilizations as Units
*<mark>*Speech 1 due midnight by Mar. 5*</mark>*

Huntington, Samuel (1993). The Clash of Civilizations. Foreign Affairs, 72, 22-49.

Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus. "Defending the West: Occidentalism and the Formation of NATO." Journal of Political Philosophy 11, no. 3 (2003): 223-252.

Bettiza, Gregorio. "Civilizational Analysis in International Relations: Mapping the Field and Advancing a 'Civilizational Politics' Line of Research." International Studies Review 16, no. 1 (2014): 1–28.

Week 8: Individuals as Units

Byman, Daniel L., and Kenneth M. Pollack. "Let us now praise great men: Bringing the statesman back in." International security 25, no. 4 (2001): 107-146

Morrison, James Ashley. "Before hegemony: Adam Smith, American independence, and the origins of the first era of globalization." International Organization 66, no. 3 (2012): 395-428.

Grynaviski, Eric. "Brokering Cooperation: Intermediaries and US Cooperation with Non-State Allies, 1776–1945." *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 3 (September 2015): 691–717.

Week 9: Spring Break

No readings

Week 10: Power as Motive

Mearsheimer, John J. "The False Promise of International Institutions." International Security 19, no. 3 (1994): 5–49.

Rathbun, Brian. "The Rarity of Realpolitik: What Bismarck's Rationality Reveals about International Politics." *International Security* 43, 1 (2018): 7–55

Goddard, Stacie E., and Daniel H. Nexon. "The Dynamics of Global Power Politics: A Framework for Analysis." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 4-18.

Week 11: Status as Motive

MacDonald, Paul K., and Joseph M. Parent. "The Status of Status in World Politics." *World Politics* 73, no. 2 (2021): 358-391.

Murray, Michelle. "Identity, insecurity, and great power politics: the tragedy of German naval ambition before the First World War." Security Studies 19.4 (2010): 656-688.

Ward, Steven. "Race, status, and Japanese revisionism in the early 1930s." *Security Studies* 22, no. 4 (2013): 607-639

Week 12: Identity as Motive

Kowert, Paul A. (1998) National identity: Inside and out, Security Studies, 8 no.3 (1998): 1-34.

Mitzen, Jennifer. "Ontological security in world politics: State identity and the security dilemma." European Journal of International Relations 12, no. 3 (2006): 341-370.

Allan, Bentley B., Srdjan Vucetic, and Ted Hopf. "The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects." International Organization 72, no. 4 (2018): 839–69.

Week 13: Emotions as Motive

McDermott, Rose. "The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science," Perspectives on Politics 2 no. 4 (2004): 691-704

Herrmann, Richard K. "How Attachments to the Nation Shape Beliefs About the World: A Theory of Motivated Reasoning." International Organization 71, no. S1 (2017): S61–S84.

Holmes, Marcus. "The Force of Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Mirror Neurons and the Problem of Intentions." International Organization 67, no. 4 (2013): 829–61.

Week 14: Has IR theory lost its purpose?

Dunne, Tim, Lene Hansen, and Colin Wight. "The End of International Relations Theory?" European Journal of International Relations 19, no. 3 (2013): 405–25.

Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. "Leaving Theory behind: Why Simplistic Hypothesis Testing Is Bad for International Relations." European Journal of International Relations 19, no. 3 (2013): 427–57.

Jahn, Beate. "Theorizing the political relevance of international relations theory." International Studies Quarterly 61, no. 1 (2017): 64-77.

Week 15: In-Class Experiment

No readings

Speech 2 due by midnight May 6th