

POLISCI 720

“Pro-Seminar in International Relations Theory”

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This IR Pro-Seminar provides students with an overview of the theoretical traditions inspiring current research in international relations. The course will focus on how theoretical debates inform key literature in major areas of international relations as a field of study. The course is designed to help students prepare for the IR comprehensive exam as well as to develop dissertation topics and research plans in international relations. As such, it is constructed in such a way as to familiarize students with canonical readings, debates and cleavages in the field, key substantive themes, and ways in which individual scholars might situate topically interesting work in such a way as to speak to the wider discipline.

This is a reading seminar. Normally the first 20-30 minutes will be devoted to a brief overview of the literature being covered that week. This will be followed a presentation by a student who will summarize the supplementary readings assigned for that week and link them analytically and critically to the required readings. A semi-structured discussion will follow these two presentations each week in which each student is expected to participate in an informed, thoughtful way. Students will discuss their reactions to the required literature. This format will commence in modules two and three after some introductory material in the first two weeks. In Module three, students will meet and get to know each member of the international relations faculty, each of whom will guest lecture in their area of expertise. The course will conclude with a discussion of navigating IR as a profession.

WHAT WE'RE READING

Students preparing for the comprehensive exam must master a wide reading list. This syllabus includes a few books and a breadth of articles from that list – think of it as a “pre-Comp” reading / skill-building club to get yourself started. As in all graduate seminars, the reading load for this course is heavy. **You are not required to read every word.** Use your time strategically, but try to understand the main points of all the readings as well as similarities and contrasts between the arguments made by different authors. Two helpful sources on how to read strategically are “[How to Read for Grad School](#)” and “[Sink or Skim?](#)”

Required Readings are the minimum essential to do well in the class and will form the basis of class discussions and exercises. You are expected to come to class having absorbed the basic substance of and prepared to raise questions about all the required readings. Ideally, you will obtain hard copies of the readings either by purchase, copying reserve readings, or downloading from the Internet, and bring them to class. I recommend reading both with a highlighter (to make visible the basic points of the articles and books for later re-skimming) and with a pen (for writing comments and questions to yourself in the margins).¹

¹Some students prefer to read electronically to save money, however based on the latest science regarding reading on screens v. paper this is not recommended.

Supplementary Readings are additional to the class readings for that week. They are not mandatory for all students, but will enhance your understanding of the material even if you simply find time to skim them. At a minimum, I recommend reviewing the abstracts and taking careful notes as your colleague summarizes. Every so often, it will be your turn to summarize the supplementary readings and link them analytically to the required readings, with some general questions to get discussion started.

Every student enrolled in this course should invest, at a minimum, in the following books:

Mark Viotti and Paul Kauppi. 2012. *International Relations Theory, 5th edition*. \$66.71

John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, 2nd Edition*. \$14.22

Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony, 2nd Edition*. \$26.71

Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*. \$22.95

J. Ann Tickner, *A Feminist Voyage Through International Relations*. \$27.30

In addition to these overviews of the field and canonical sole-authored books: the following readers from the IR Comp Reading List are also helpful enough in jump-starting study for the comp to justify purchase and we will read some chapters from them. However you can also find them on reserve at the library.

Avant and Westerwinter, 2016. *The New Power Politics: Networks and Transnational Security Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. \$11.18

Deborah Avant, Martha Finnemore and Susan Sell et al. 2010. *Who Governs the Globe?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. \$34.00

Helen Milner and Andrew Moravcsik, 2009. *Power, Interdependence and Non-State Actors*. \$35.51

Whether you purchase the readers or copy relevant chapters/print, the main thing to understand is that you are expected to bring hard copies of your readings, with your notes, to class each week.

In addition to these required and supplementary readings, students are strongly encouraged to stay abreast of the latest abstracts, and articles in their areas of interest, in the following flagship journals in the profession of international relations: *International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, and *International Security* and *European Journal of International Relations* as well as, ideally, more critical journals such as *Millennium* and *Security Dialogue*. It is also important to cultivate a habit of reading *The New York Times* or *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *al-Jazeera*, *The Economist*, and as many other sources of information on current foreign policy debates and discourse as possible.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Grading: Your final letter grade is based on a 100 pt. scale. 93-100 = A; 90-92.9 = A-; 87-89.9 = B+; 82-86.9 = B; 80-81.9 = B-; 77- 79.9=C+; 72-76.9=C; 70-72.9 = C-; 60-69 = D; less than 60 = F. Only exceptional work will receive grades of an A- or higher, but it is expected that all doctoral students will cultivate the skills necessary to produce such work. These include completing the readings; coming to class prepared to provide incisive commentary on the readings; meeting writing deadlines with polished, concise, well-organized prose; synthesizing existing literature into original arguments rather than simply regurgitating it; and linking theories to real-world evidence in order to critically assess them. I will provide

ample mentorship on all these skills as we go through the semester.

Attendance and Participation (40 pts):

The class and discussion sections will be highly interactive. Attendance and engaged participation is essential both to your ability to absorb the information and to the effective functioning of the classroom environment. You are required to come to each class prepared to discuss in depth each of the required readings listed on the syllabus. Participation means *bringing your readings with you in hard copy, as well as your notes, so we can efficiently access them for discussion as we move along*. If you write weekly summaries of the readings along with your questions and bring them to class, you will be best prepared and also have a nice archive of notes to help you study for comprehensive exams.

It should go without saying that in a graduate seminar of this type it is vital to attend all sessions, and to communicate in advance with the instructor should you require an excused absence. Events such as deaths in the family, documented illness of oneself or one's child, or emergencies of similar gravity qualify for excused absences. It is also important to be prepared to discuss the readings and link them to global issues.

Writing Assignments (60 pts): Students must turn in two types of writing assignments for the term.

Analytical Essays (30 points) First, each must turn in three reflective analytical essays drawing on / synthesizing the readings in each of the Modules, to make a concise argument:

- Essay #1 will discuss the student's own theoretical and epistemological orientation to IR as a field of study, in the context of a potential research puzzle expressed as "why x in the context of y?"
- Essay #2 will synthesize the Module 2 literature around an argument about the state of theory in IR.
- Essay #3 will address the state of substantive cross-cutting research agendas within IR, using one or more analytical concepts discussed in Modules 1 and 2.

Each essay should put the various works in the relevant Module into dialogue with one another, in a way that is organized around the author's original analytical argument about the state the scholarship in IR and the student's orientation to it. Each is due electronically the Sunday after the end of each module, to leave time to complete the readings before the next module begins the following Thursday – but you should be developing ideas for these essays as you go along. Each essay should be 3-5 single-spaced pages and is worth 10 points.

Final Exam (30 points) Each student must turn in an 8-10 pg (double-spaced) final exam designed to simulate a comprehensive exam question. These are due on the last day of class and further instructions will be provided as the end of the semester arrives.

**NOTE: PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED ON ANY WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT.²
PLAGIARIZED WORK OF ANY KIND OR ANY OTHER FORM OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

²University of Massachusetts-Amherst's plagiarism policy can be found at: <http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/resources/plagiarism.html>.

WILL RESULT IN AN *AUTOMATIC F* FOR THE ASSIGNMENT, AND DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES, FOR THE COURSE.

Students with Disabilities. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me as well as Disability Resources and Services (231 Whitmore Administration Building, 413-545-0892) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for the course.

TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE

MODULE ONE: INTRODUCTION TO IR THEORY AS A FIELD

September 7: NO CLASS.

Students must meet before September 14 for a private mentoring session with Professor Carpenter. Come prepared to discuss your goals and interests in IR, your background in IR theory to date, and your ideas for your Module One Essay.

720 Proseminar Syllabus.

Review IR Comprehensive Exam Reading List including preamble.

James Rosenau and Ersel Aydinli, "[Courage versus Caution: A Dialogue on Entering and Prospering in IR.](#)"

September 14: Welcome and Introduction

What does it mean to refer to international relations as a "field" of political science? What is the role of the IR scholar in the world? What is the relationship of responsible IR scholarship to foreign policy-making? What do research agendas in international relations look like and what do we bring to them? In what historical and sociological processes is the study of international relations rooted and how is it changing? By whom is it all written?

V/K, ch. 1, "Thinking About IR Theory"

Jack Snyder, "[One World Rival Theories](#)"

David Lake, "[White Man's IR.](#)"

Supplementary:

Ole Wæver, "[The Sociology of a Not-So-International Discipline](#)"

Arlene Tickner, "[Seeing IR Differently: The View from the Third World](#)"

September 21: Contested Concepts, Useful Jargon and some More Sociology of the Field

What do IR theorists mean by Power? Governance? Anarchy? Interests? Identity? Institutions? Norms? Levels of analysis? Epistemology v. Ontology v. Axiology? What are the 'Paradigms' and do they matter anymore? What "great debates" have informed, misinformed, and shaped IR as a discipline? What's new? Where do you see yourself in this landscape?

V/K, selected readings from Chapter 1: Rosenau, "Thinking Theory Thoroughly" and "The Perils of Paradigm Mentalities" and Chapter 2: Waltz, "The Levels of Analysis" and Nye, "Hard and Soft Power."

Franke Wilmer, "[IR Theory and the Problem of Violence](#)"

Barnett and Duvall, "[Power in Global Governance](#)"

Supplementary:

Patrick Jackson and Daniel Nexon. "[Paradigmatic Faults in IR Theory](#)"

Brian Rathbun, "[Politics and Paradigm Preferences](#)"

Module One Essay Due Sunday September 24, 5pm.

MODULE TWO: (SOME) "ISMS" IN THE CONTEMPORARY IR CANON.

What are the key schools of thought in the IR canon and how has this evolved over time? What are the key theoretical and epistemological cleavages within and across these schools? On what do assumptions do they base their views of the international system, and what are the implications of these great debates for the field? How helpful are these various theories in explaining or understanding world politics today?

September 28: "Rationalism" Part One: "Realism" and "Neo-Realism"

What accounts for patterns of war and peace among great powers? What are the characteristics of the international system, and to what extent do systemic factors determine state behavior? Given these factors, under what conditions is international stability likeliest? What are the policy implications of such ideas? What is gained and lost by thinking about the global system in this way?

Required Readings:

Viotti and Kauppi, ch 2., including these selected readings: (Thucydides, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Rousseau) John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, chs. 1, 2, 6, 9, 10; skim ch 4, 5, 7 and 8.

Supplementary Readings:

Legro and Moravcsik, "[Is Anybody Still a Realist?](#)"; Weaver, "[Brother Can You Spare a Paradigm?](#)"

October 5: "Rationalism" Part II: "Liberalism"/"Institutionalism"/"Neo-Liberal Institutionalism" *To what extent do domestic politics and institutions influence international behavior and why? Does economic interdependence affect state behavior under anarchy? Do international institutions and regimes matter independently of great power interests or are they simply side effects of those interests? Can cooperation be 'rational' under anarchy? Why have such questions often been dismissed as "idealist" by "realist" thinkers?*

Required Readings:

Viotti and Kauppi, ch. 3 plus Kant, "Morality, Politics and Perpetual Peace," ch 9.

Keohane, *After Hegemony*, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 11 and skim ch 5 and 6.

Milner, ch 1 in Moravcsik and Milner, *Power, Interdependence and Non-State Actors*, "Research Frontiers"

Buena de Mesquita, "[Game Theory, Political Economy and the Evolving Study of War and Peace](#)"

David Baldwin, "[Neorealism and Neoliberalism in World Politics](#)"

Supplementary:

Neta Crawford, "[A Security Regime Among Democracies: Cooperation Among Iroquois Nations](#)"

October 12: "Constructivism 1": Middle-Ground Approaches

Where do interests come from? What is identity? Why do self-interested actors so often follow "norms" that contradict their material interests? How do these norms evolve, how are they carried and how much power do they have? How does the new "behavioralism" integrate or marginalize constructivist theory? Do new emphases on "relationalism" or on "practices" in IR fit within these boxes?

Required Readings:

Viotti and Kauppi, ch. 6, "Constructivist Understandings" including Wendt, "Constructing Int'l Politics"

Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*.
Alexander Wendt, "[Anarchy is What States Make of It](#)"
John Ruggie, "[What Makes the World Hang Together?](#)"
Emilie Hafner-Burton et al, "[The Behavioral Revolution in IR.](#)"

Supplementary Readings:

David McCourt, "[Practice Theory and Relationalism in IR: The New Constructivism?](#)"

October 19: Constructivism II: Critical Theory/'Feminist' IR and Gender

How do the theoretical assumptions, normative biases and interpersonal subjectivities we bring to the research enterprise impact our understandings of the world, and through us, the world itself? Are IR theorists complicit in reproducing unjust social relations, such as gender hierarchies? How are these social relations inscribed upon disciplinary practices? What is the theorists' role in helping to illuminate and change such social relations? Is 'objective' science possible and defensible? Can positivist epistemologies where values are held 'neutral' in the research design also be used in the service of emancipatory politics? Does gender 'make the world go round?'

Required Readings:

Viotti and Kauppi, Ch. 7 "Critical Theory" and ch 8 "Feminist Theory"
Ann Tickner, *A Feminist Voyage Through IR*, chapters 1, 6, 7, 8, and 12 (and skim as interest suits 2, 5, 9)
Cynthia Enloe, "Gender Makes the World Go Round," from *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, ch 1, 2nd Edition
Charli Carpenter, "['Women and Children First': Gender, Norms and Humanitarian Evacuation](#)"

Supplementary:

Responses to Tickner's "You Just Don't Understand" by Robert Keohane, "[Beyond Dichotomy.](#)" and Marianne Marchand, "[Different Communities, Different Realities, Different Encounters](#)"; Charli Carpenter, "[Gender and IR: Contributions of a Non-Feminist Standpoint?](#)" and Terrell Carver et al, "[Forum: Gender and IR](#)"

Sunday, October 22th: Module Two Analytical Paper Due Electronically at 5pm.

MODULE THREE: THE STUDY OF IR IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

To what extent do global or transnational threats, structures and processes of governance – environmental crises, global economic interdependence, global cultural norms and transnational networks - represent or require a departure from Westphalian politics-as-usual? Can these 'post-Westphalian' processes be understood using conventional IR theories and epistemologies or do they necessitate / invite a modification in our theoretical perspectives? To what extent is the field of IR adapting to, staying abreast of or being affected by these processes?

October 26: Unbundling 'Sovereignty': Power and Governance in a Post-"Westphalian" World

Why have territorial states and sovereignty long been considered the constitutive units of world politics and IR as a discipline? What is happening to sovereignty as an ordering principle of the international system and to states as the constitutive units of international relations as a field? How does world politics look if we take states less seriously and think in terms of non-territorialized networks – of actors, ideas and issues?

Goddard, Stacie E., and Daniel H. Nexon. "[The Dynamics of Global Power Politics](#)"

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, ch. 1

Noelle Brigden, "[Improvised Transnationalism: Clandestine Migration... Anthropology and IR](#)"

Jennifer Hadden and Sidney Tarrow, “[Spillover or Spillout? Global Justice Movement in the US After 9/11](#)”

Supplementary: Osiander, “[Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth](#)” and maybe - just for fun: Wendt, “[Sovereignty and the UFO](#)”

November 2: International Law and Organizations

Guest Lecture: Professor MJ Peterson

Where do international laws and institutions come from, how if at all do they matter and how do we know? How has the study of international law / organizations changed and where is it going? What is its relationship to the wider field of IR, to other fields within political science and other disciplines, and to wider processes of global governance, such as those in the areas of human rights and environmental politics?

Lisa Martin and Beth Simmons, “[Theories and Empirical Studies of International Regimes](#)”

Barnett and Finnemore, “[The Politics, Power and Pathologies of International Organizations](#)”

MJ Peterson, “[Diverging Orbits](#)”

Ian Hurd, “[Is Humanitarian Intervention ‘Legal’?](#)”

Ron Mitchell, “The Influence of International Institutions” in Milner/Moravcik, ch. 4.

Deborah Avant, Martha Finnemore and Susan Sell, “Who Governs the Globe?” ch 1 plus *skim* chapters 2, 3, and 5.

Supplementary:

Mearsheimer, “[The False Promise of International Institutions](#)”

November 9: Globalization and International Political Economy

Guest Speaker: Professor Kevin Young

Viotti and Kauppi, ch. 5, “Economic Structuralism”

Leonard Seabrooke and **Kevin Young**, “[The Networks and Niches of IPE](#)”

Chaudoin, Stephen, Milner, Helen and Pang, Xun. 2015. “[International Systems and Domestic Politics.](#)”

Oatley, Thomas. 2011. “[The Reductionist Gamble: Open Economy Politics in the Global Economy](#)”

Daniel Drezner, 2012. “[The Irony of Global Governance: The System Worked](#)”

Starrs, Sean. 2013. “[American Economic Power Hasn’t Declined – It Globalized!](#)”

Supplementary: Arrighi, Giovanni and Silver, Beverly. “[Capitalism and World Disorder](#)”

November 16: Global Climate Crises and International Environmental Politics

Guest Speaker: Professor Peter Haas

Peter Haas, “[Introduction: Epistemic Communities](#)”

Ronald Mitchell, “[Regime Design Matters](#)”

G.W. Downs, “[Constructing Effective Environmental Regimes.](#)”

Robert Keohane and David Victor, “[The Regime Complex for Climate Change.](#)”

Paul Newell, “[The Political Economy of Global Environmental Governance.](#)”

Supplementary:

Auld, G., S. Bernstein, et al. "[The New Corporate Social Responsibility.](#)"

Jennifer Hadden, "[Explaining Variation in Transnational Climate Change Activism](#)"

Elisabeth DeSombre, "Power, Interdependence and Domestic Politics in International Environmental Cooperation" in Milner/Moravcsik, ch 8.

November 23: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS

November 30: Foreign Policy in a Globalized World

Guest Speaker: Professor Paul Musgrave

Valerie Hudson, "[Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of IR](#)"

Paul Musgrave and Dan Nexon. "Defending Hierarchy from the Moon to the Indian Ocean" plus DATA

Alexandra Guisinger, "[Determining Trade Policy: Do Voters Hold Politicians Accountable?](#)"

Sean Ehrlich and Eddie Hearn, "[Does Compensating Losers Increase Support for Trade?](#)"

Supplementary: Vitalis, "[Black Gold, White Crude: Race and the Making of the World Oil Frontier](#)" and

Immerwahr, "[The Greater United States: Territory and Empire in US History](#)"

December 7: From International to Human to Global Security and Beyond

How do global and transnational threats such as pandemics, environmental pressures, refugee flows, asymmetric warfare and technological change challenge the constitution of actors and their preferences on the global stage? How is the discipline of IR reacting to these changes? Can conventional theories of IR explain, predict and accommodate such historical events? Are conventional assumptions, theories and norms standing in the way of a more comprehensive response to such unconventional threats? Or is this all a distraction from the big questions of great power politics and nuclear war?

Required Readings:

Avant and Westerwinter, ch 1: "Networks and Transnational Security Governance," plus any two chapters from *The New Power Politics* (e.g. pirates, conflict diamonds, private military corps, nuclear non-proliferation, collateral damage etc.)

Carpenter, Charli. "[Rethinking the Political/Science/Fiction Nexus: Global Policymaking & Killer Robots](#)"

Alexander Cooley and James Ron. "[The NGO Scramble](#)"

Peter Andreas, "[The Clandestine Political Economy of War and Peace in Bosnia](#)"

Laura Sjoberg, et al. "[Jihadi Brides and Female Volunteers: Reading the Islamic State...](#)"

Ryan Maness and Brandon Valeriano, "[The Impact of Cyber Conflict on International Interactions](#)"

Supplementary: Stephen Walt, "[The Renaissance of Security Studies](#)"; **Carpenter**, Montgomery, Goldstein, Western: "[Forum: The Future of Global Security Studies](#)"

Sunday, December 10: Module 3 Analytical Paper Due Electronically at 5pm.

December 14: Review and Conclusion: On Surviving and Thriving in IR As a Vocation Practice Comp Question Distributed.

Amitav Acharya, "[Global IR and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies](#)"

Ann Tickner and Andrei Tsygankov, "[Responsible Scholarship in International Relations: A Symposium](#)"

Revisit Rosenau and Aydinli, "[Courage versus Caution: A Dialogue on Entering and Prospering in IR.](#)"

Wednesday, December 20: Electronic Copies of Practice Comp Due by 5pm.