IR 501

International Relations Theory

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Aims

This course is designed as a post-graduate level introduction to International Relations theory. The content and nature of International Relations theory is by no means fixed. Indeed, International Relations theory has been the subject of intense academic, intellectual and political debates. The main aim of this course is to introduce students to main concepts of and major debates in International Relations theory and deepen their insight into the dynamics of theory/practice.

Objectives

The objectives of this course are both subject-specific and general. General objectives include the development of oral, written and research skills as the course requires students to become able to read, absorb and critically assess a significant amount of complex (and at times contradictory) material. The subject-specific objectives include developing students’

- understanding of what is meant by theory and why theorising is an important enterprise;
- knowledge and understanding of the key literature in the discipline;
- knowledge and understanding of International Relations beyond their immediate area of interest;
- ability to locate their area of interest within the discipline;
- ability to analyse practices of world politics from a conceptual perspective;
- ability to discuss in depth some of the main issues in International Relations in theory and practice.
Teaching

Since the course is taught as a post-graduate level seminar, the onus is on you to read widely around the topics. The seminars on occasions may include mini lectures designed to introduce and/or contextualise that week’s topic, but you will be doing most of the work. My role will be to provide a basic overview of that week’s topic, offer you contending perspectives on the issues concerned, and seek to generate a discussion structured around a set of questions. The aim is to encourage you to think independently and critically whilst remaining firmly grounded in the knowledge provided by the readings.

The reading list is by no means exhaustive. It should rather be viewed as a representative sample of theoretical works. In the pages that follow, you will find a list of required and further readings for each week. Our discussions will be based mostly on the required readings. The lists of recommended texts are there to provide a broader context as well as more detail, which may be useful as a starting point and reference for written assignments or future studies.

What you should remember at all times is that good discussions depend on serious preparation by students. You are strongly encouraged to read the texts carefully and prepare written answers to the questions to ensure thorough preparation especially in the first few weeks of the course when you are less experienced in participating in seminars. It is critical that you do all your readings and come in ready to take active part in class discussions. This is critical not only for your own intellectual development but also because participation is 30% of your overall grade.

Please be reminded that you will only be in a position to do well in your assignments if you have attended the classes and read the literature (all of the required texts plus some of the recommended ones). Coming to the classes prepared is necessary not only because this constitutes a part of your assessment, but also because this will help you understand the course material much better so that you would be in a very strong position to do well in your exams/assignments.
Assessment

30% of your assessment will be based on **in-class participation.** You will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having read and thought about that week’s topic. Your participation will be assessed on a weekly basis.

You are required to attend all the classes (in accordance with the University regulations). If you cannot attend please let me know beforehand, or contact me (immediately) afterwards to provide a ‘legitimate’ excuse for your absence. Attendance will be taken and absences will be noted.

70% of your assessment will be based on a **written assignment.** This assignment will have two parts, one theory-based, one empirical. The theory-based part (30%) is due November 15, 2010, 17:30. The empirical part (30%) is due January 3, 2011, 17:30. There will be a one-day workshop during the week of January 3, where all assignments will be discussed and peer reviewed. Your participation in and contributions to this workshop will also be assessed (10%). Revised written assignments (parts 1 and 2 combined) are due January 10, 2011 17:30.

Since no more than one student will be allowed to sign up for each theory, you are strongly encouraged to make your choices and e-mail me pbilgin@bilkent.edu.tr. The theory-part of the assignment is a literature review of the chosen theory (maximum 1500 words). The empirical part of the assignment is structured in two parts: 1. A concise literature review of applications of chosen theory (maximum 1500 words); 2. A short analysis of an empirical case from the perspective of chosen theory (maximum 1000 words).
Please try to follow the requirements listed below when preparing your assignments:

Be careful not to copy out great chunks from the assigned text or other articles/books. This is at best weak and at worst plagiarism. Plagiarism consists of any form of passing off, or attempting to pass off, the knowledge or work of other people as one’s own. It is a form of cheating and is considered an academic offence. The following are simple guidelines to help you avoid such problems:

- Surround all direct quotations with inverted commas and cite the precise source (including page numbers) in a footnote.
- Use quotations sparingly and make sure that the bulk of the essay is in your own words.
- Remember that it is ’what you say’ that gives an essay merit.
- Make sure you give references to your source(s) throughout the text, not just when you give direct quotations but also when you paraphrase or give your version.

Presentation

- Each assignment should be typed.
- State the number of words used at the end. The word limit is there to make you decide what is or is not important to say. The ability to say what you want in a limited number of words is also a skill you need to gain. Essays that are over length will be penalised.
- Appropriate footnotes and/or bibliography should be supplied.
- Do not use single-spacing
- Leave a sufficient margin for comments.
- Pay attention to how you write the essay (your style) as well as its content. It is important to develop your 'writing skills' as a student of International Relations.

Course Plan

Week 1

Week 2
Introduction: What is IR Theory (for)?

Required reading: (Sterling-Folker, 2006g, Smith, 2007)


Week 3
(Neo)classical realism and its critics


¹ All required readings are available at the reserve desk of BU library. For edited books, ask for the book, not the author of the chapter. All required articles are available on electronic reserve of BU library. Recommended texts are available at BU Library. Please search the Library catalogue or Electronic Sources to access them.
Week 4  
The English School and its critics


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Week 5  
Liberalism and its critics


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Week 6  
Structural realism and its critics


Week 7
Neoliberalism and its critics


Week 8
Critical theory and its critics


Week 9
Constructivism and beyond?


Week 10
Feminism in IR


Week 11
Postmodernism/poststructuralism and its critics


Week 12
Globalisation and IR theory


Week 13
Political theory, the political and international relations

*Required reading:* (Brown, 2007, Grovogui, 2007)


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Week 13
IR: Still a discipline?

*Required reading:* (Waever, 2007, Bilgin, 2008)


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Week 14
International Relations and Social Science

*Required reading:* (Hollis and Smith, 1990, Kurki and Wight, 2007)

Bibliography


Weldes, J. (1999) Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.


