IR 621
Current Debates in International Relations Theory
Fall 2005

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Aims
This course is designed as a post-graduate level introduction to current debates in 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 debate. The main aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the major debates in International Relations theory.

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’

1) understanding of what is meant by theory and why theorising is an important enterprise;
2) knowledge and understanding of the key literature in the discipline;
3) knowledge and understanding of International Relations beyond their immediate area of interest;
4) ability to locate their area of interest within the discipline;
5) ability to analyse practices of world politics from a conceptual perspective;
6) ability to discuss in depth some of the main issues in International Relations theory.
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 following 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 recommended readings for each week. Our discussions will be based mostly on the required readings.¹ 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. You are advised to do your readings in the order they are presented.

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 40% 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.

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.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all books are available at the reserve desk in the library. All journals are available on-line. If you have trouble in getting hold of a reading, please let me know a.s.a.p.
Assessment

40% of your assessment will be based on in-class participation. This will take the form of participating in class discussions. You will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having read and thought about that week’s topic.

30% of your assessment will be based on assignment 2 (due 7.11.2005, 17:30). You are asked to write a 2000-word essay in response the following question:

After five decades of efforts to develop theories of International Relations, scholars have produced precious little in the way of useful, high confidence results that would meet the scientific tests of validity. There is no reason to suppose that another 50 years of research would result in anything resembling a valid theory that meets scientific standards. IR scholars should give up trying to create a science of International Relations. Agree or disagree.

30% of your assessment will be based on assignment 3 (due 30.12.2005, 17:30). You are asked to write a 2000-word essay in response to the following question:

Has International Relations progressed from Kal Holsti’s 1985 characterization of the field as a “divided discipline”? Identify some of the field’s divisions regarding framework of analysis, methodology and subject matter. Which theoretical/conceptual framework and which methodology has generated the most robust findings, on what substantive aspects of International Relations?
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.

Essay presentation

- Each essay 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 and 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.

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Week 1
Introduction

Week 2
Current Debates in International Relations Theory: an Overview

Required

Recommended
- James N. Rosenau, ‘Thinking Theory Thoroughly,’ in International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond, Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997) 29-37.
Week 3
Explaining or Understanding International Relations?

Required

Recommended
- Jim George, Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994).
Week 4
Realism

Required


Recommended

Week 5
Neorealism

Required

Recommended
Week 6
The English School

Required

Recommended
Week 7
Liberalism and Neo-liberalism

Required


Recommended

- Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi, International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997) 199-232.
Week 8
Marxist-inspired Theories of World Politics

Required
- Fred Halliday, 'A Necessary Encounter: Historical Materialism and International Relations,' in Rethinking International Relations (London: Macmillan, 1994).

Recommended
- Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi, 'Globalism: Dependency and the Capitalist World-System,' in International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997) 341-364.
Week 9
Critical Theory (Frankfurt School)

Required

Recommended
Week 10
Post-structuralism

Required

Recommended
- Jenny Edkins, Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back in (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).
- Roxanne Lynn Doty, Imperial Encounters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) 1-72, 163-171.
Week 11
Constructivism

Required


Recommended

- Jutta Weldes et al, eds. Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
Week 12 (15.12.2004)
Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations

Required

Recommended
Week 13
International Relations: ‘Not so International a Discipline’?

Required

Recommended