Description

This course examines concepts and arguments from various theoretical traditions in international relations. During the first half of the term we will explore one of the "great debates" in the study and practice of world politics—the debate between political realism and liberal internationalism. Although this contest has historical roots, it is very much present in contemporary disagreements over the proper conduct of American foreign policy as well as the policies pursued by other states and international actors.

The focus for the second half of the course is normative theory in international relations, including the just war tradition and theories of global civil society, as well as challenges to the mainstream schools of thought. Throughout the term we will explore the extent to which theoretical approaches apply (or can be adapted) to current developments in world politics, mostly on matters of war and peace.

Learning Objectives

The general objective of this course is to develop the student's capacity to critically examine theoretical propositions about world politics, consider the applicability of IR theory to real problems in contemporary world affairs, and communicate this analysis to others. This is to be accomplished by exposing students to a body of literature encompassing both positive and normative theory. By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- demonstrate mastery of the main theoretical approaches to the study of world politics;
- interpret historical and contemporary issues using appropriate theoretical frameworks;
- articulate normative positions on key ethical dilemmas in international relations; and
- locate, evaluate, and utilize online information pertaining to international relations theory.
Requirements and Evaluation

In this course, the main workload consists of assigned reading. Students are expected to read carefully and complete the assignments in a timely manner. Undergraduate grades are based on a midterm (40%) and a final (50%) examination. The remainder of your course grade (10%) will be based on your participation in class discussion. Attendance is required.

Course grades for graduate students are based on midterm and final exams, as well as class participation. Graduate students will also read from a supplemental reading list and participate in separately scheduled seminar discussions.

I hold on to students’ written work for one academic term after the end of the course, so if you want to keep your final exam, please retrieve it from me no later that the end of fall term 2016.

Readings

There are no required textbooks for this course. All assigned readings are available online. Unless a link is provided, students should access readings via the PSU library website (off-campus access requires logging in). If you haven't done this before, or are rusty, you can consult this help document.

In addition to the assigned readings, you should be reading, on a regular basis, the New York Times, the Washington Post, or some other newspaper with thorough international coverage. Your performance in the course will reflect your familiarity with current national security issues, and not just an understanding of lecture material and course readings.

All slides used during lectures will be made available online by adding a link to the list of weekly assignments.

Conduct and Courtesy

Students are responsible for being familiar with the PSU Student Code of Conduct, especially the section concerning academic misconduct—that is, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. If you are unsure of the definition or consequences of academic misconduct, consult your instructor.

Because they are distracting to others, cell phones (voice or text) and MP3 players may not be used during lecture and should be turned off at the start of class. Laptops and tablets may be used to take notes, but not for email, web browsing, or social media. Electronic devices may not be used to photograph, video, or stream course lectures or discussion, but lectures may be audio recorded with permission of the instructor.
WEEKLY SCHEDULE and ASSIGNMENTS

28 Mar – 1 Apr  What is IR Theory?

Readings
● David Kinsella, Bruce Russett, and Harvey Starr, World Politics: The Menu for Choice (Wadsworth, 2013), chap. 2. (online)

4-8 Apr  Realism

Readings
● E. H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939 : An Introduction to the Study of International Relations (Harper and Row, 1964), chaps. 4-5. (online)

11-15 Apr  Power and Structure in International Politics

Readings

18-22 Apr  Realism and International Order

Readings
25-29 Apr    Liberalism

Readings

2-4 May    Liberal International Order

Readings

6 May    Midterm Exam

9-13 May    Just War Theory

Readings

16-20 May    Global Society

Readings
23-27 May   Critical Perspectives

Readings

1-3 Jun   IR Theory and Policy

Readings

7 Jun      Final Exam, 8:00-9:50

Materials for this course are not available on D2L. This syllabus is available online at web.pdx.edu/~kinsella/ps442s16.pdf and all course materials can be linked from this address.

Last updated on 4 June 2016.