Gregory P. Nowell  
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**POS 102 Comparative and International Politics (Class No. 7533)**  
Class meets: Tu, Th, 10:15-11:35 LC001 (sections on Fridays)  
Uptown office hours: Tu, Th 12-1 p.m.  
Books: textbooks at Mary Jane Books and campus bookstore; other texts at MJB only  
Midterm: Thursday March 14  
Final exam (in class): check the registrar's final exam schedule  
(exam week is Fri May 10 through Fri May 17)

Teaching Assistants: Steve Sin (ssin@albany.edu), Amira Jadoon (amirajadoon@gmail.com), Rob Spice (rspice@albany.edu)

The purpose of this class is to introduce basic principles of international relations and comparative politics for continued study within the “global” component of political science. The class is intended to foster systematic analytic thinking about major practical and theoretical problems in international relations.

The intellectual objectives of the class may therefore be stated:

1. An introduction to realism, liberal internationalism, radical political economy, and constructivism as core concepts in international relations; and further introduction to such concepts as development, democracy, authoritarianism, welfare state policies, political parties and ethnic and class conflict as components of the study of comparative and regional politics.

The academic objectives include:

2. In class writing assignments showing analytic skills, oral participation and group teamwork, satisfactory academic mastery of the topics in #1.

3. The assignments: a midterm exam, final exam, and three in-section quizzes of twenty minutes’ duration; watching the required movie (*Fail Safe*, 1964); participation in seminars and in lecture give-and-take.

The format of the class will usually be: Tuesdays and Thursdays, a lecture presentation on the assigned reading. Thursdays will have time reserved for questions.

Assigned materials for this class include two textbooks (Mingst and Sodaro) for general concepts, and three case studies, one in International Relations (Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*) and one in Comparative Politics (Gerschenkron, *Bread and
Democracy in Germany), and one work which fuses the two approaches, Mao Zedong’s On Protracted War. One movie is assigned, the 1964 version of Fail Safe.

4. Students who complete this class will have (a) learned basic vocabulary and concepts necessary to understanding international relations and comparative politics; (b) an introduction to basic college level in-class writing requirements; (c) conceptual linkage of theory to case studies as represented by a fictional international crisis leading to nuclear war, and three real historical cases (the peace settlement of WWI, the social constituency for fascism in Germany, China’s war against Japan).

Summary of work required:

1. A midterm exam.
2. A final exam.
3. Three in-section twenty minute quizzes to be scheduled by your TA’s.
4. Five or more ungraded pop quizzes of five to ten minutes that will be reviewed by the TA’s to see how students are doing with reading comprehension and keeping up.

Grading: Nominally 35% for the final, and 20% for the midterm, and 45% for the three quizzes. TA’s or instructor may adjust final grades up or down by as much as 20% based on participation and attendance.

Exam format: questions will be handed out in advance, but exams must be written in class. Make-up exams require documented medical excuses (which includes the campus counseling center). Normally make-up exams and section quizzes will be oral examinations of up to half an hour’s duration with the TA or the instructor.

Exam Content: The exams will be constructed around the Gen Ed “social science” objectives as listed in an appendix to this syllabus, with specific content adopted from the course.

Special needs students: Must make their situation known and will be accommodated per university policy: “The University is obligated to make reasonable accommodation only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified disabled student,” and, such students must “identify themselves as needing accommodation in a timely fashion.” That means, in plain English: at the beginning of the semester.

Summary of Due Dates and Things You Have to Do:

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED date is announced by the university here: registrar’s final exam schedule

Midterm: Thursday March 14
Pop quizzes: cannot be scheduled because they are pop. There are five.
In-section 20 minute quizzes: Three of them, they will be scheduled by TA’s.
Week-by-week summary

Week 1 General Concepts in International Relations Theory
Thursday January 24

Reading: Mingst, chapters 8, 1 and 2
Watch Movie: Fail-Safe (1964).

Link:

http://tinyurl.com/fail-safe-2012
or
http://media.albany.edu:8080/ramgen/cellar/political_science/nowell/fail_safe2.rm

The link is maintained by ITLAL and should play automatically. You may need to download Realplayer which exists in windows and XP versions: paste the link into the realplayer browser. Please watch the movie through on your own time; it will be shown again in class with pauses for discussion.

Discussion: Is the “balance of power” an inevitable feature of the international system? Does it make the world safer?

Week 2 Screening of Fail-Safe.

Contending Theoretical Perspectives, and the IR “system”

Tuesday January 29
Thursday January 31


Mingst, chapters 8, 1 and 2

Discuss: Nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction, rogue states, terrorist groups, etc.

Week 3 Contending Theoretical Perspectives, and the IR “system”;
Tuesday  5 February  
Thursday 7  February  

Reading: Mingst, Chapters 3 and 4  
Discussion: What sorts of theories describe the international system? Why are there different theories?  

Realism? “The Peloponnesian War, which sealed the destruction of Hellenism, had so trivial an origin that no one has ever been able to determine what it was….The simple truth is that any pretext was good enough to set the Greeks to destroying one another….The foolish strategy of Pericles, which dedicated Athens to a sterile defensive, led the city to its ruin—to the misfortune both of the conquered and the conquerors….The truth is that these men, who had so much reason to close their ranks and to unite in consecrating themselves to the common task of liberating human intelligence, prized more than anything else the pleasure of mutual massacre. In a word, the Greeks, though so finely intellectual, had no sentiment of a common fatherland.”  

(Clemenceau, Demosthenes, 1926, pp. 22-23)  

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Week 4  
The State and Foreign Policy  

Tuesday February 12  
Thursday February 14  

Reading:  Mingst, Chapters 5, 6  
Discussion: What is the state? How do we theorize it?  

Magna Carta 1215: “If we [=the king], or in our absence abroad the chief justice, make no redress within forty days, reckoning from the day on which the offence was declared to us or to him, the four barons shall refer the matter to the rest of the twenty-five barons, who may distrain upon and assail us in every way possible, with the support of the whole community of the land, by seizing our castles, lands, possessions, or anything else saving only our own person and those of the queen and our children, until they have secured such redress as they have determined upon. Having secured the redress, they may then resume their normal obedience to us.”  

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Week 5  
Political economy: tariffs, free trade, mercantilism, Marxist theory, &c.  

Tuesday, February 19  
Thursday, February 21  

Reading: Mingst, Chapter 9  

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Week 6  
Case Study: WWI peace settlement & liberal internationalism  

Tuesday February 26
Thursday February 28

Reading: Reading: *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, pp. 1st half (pp. 3-112)

[link to Economic Consequences of the Peace](Internet): hard copies ordered at Mary Jane Books.

Sodaro: Chapter 18

Discuss: “The projects and politics of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries, of monopolies, restrictions, and exclusion, which were to play the serpent to this paradise, were little more than the amusements of his daily newspaper, and appeared to exercise almost no influence at all on the ordinary course of social and economic life, the internationalization of which was nearly complete in practice.” (Keynes p. 12)

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Case study: WWII peace settlement & liberal internationalism

Week 7

Tuesday 5 March
Thursday 7 March

Reading: Keynes, *Economic Consequences*, 2nd half

Discuss: “A general bonfire is so great a necessity that unless we can make of it an orderly and good-tempered affair in which no serious injustice is done to any one, it will, when it comes at last, grow into a conflagration that may destroy much else as well. As regards internal debt, I am one of those who believe that a capital levy for the extinction of debt is an absolute prerequisite of sound finance in every one of the European belligerent countries. But the continuance on a huge scale of indebtedness between Governments has special dangers of its own.” (p. 280)

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Liberal Internationalism (continued)

Week 8

Tuesday March 12
Thursday March 14 MIDTERM

Discuss: Fourteen points for peace, self-determination, human rights, women’s rights, etc.
Week 9 NO CLASS

Tuesday March 19 NO CLASS
Thursday March 21 NO CLASS

Week 10 The State

Tuesday March 26
Thursday March 28

Reading: Wilson’s Fourteen Points for Peace, Star Trek’s Prime Directive, the Valladolid debate

Reading: Sodaro chapters 3, 5, 6
Discuss: hypothesis testing, nation building, institutions

Week 11 Democracy

Tuesday 2 April (Steve Sin)
Thursday 4 April (Steve Sin)

Reading: Sodaro chapters 9, 10, 19
Discuss: “Everywhere do I perceive a certain conspiracy of rich men seeking their own advantage under that name and pretext of the commonwealth.” (Thomas More, 1478-1535)

Week 12 Democracy

Tuesday April 9
Thursday April 11 Simulation 1.

Reading: Sodaro Chapters 9, 10, 22

Week 13 Political Economy – Democratic Development
Tuesday April 16
Thursday April 18 Simulation 2.

Reading: Gerschenkron, Bread and Democracy, pp. 1-89, Sodaro chapter 14 Gerschenkron pdfs
Week 14  Political Economy and Democratic Development

Tuesday April 23
Thursday April 25 Simulation 3.

Reading: Sodaro Chapter 15
Reading: Gerschenkron, pp. 163-224 Sodaro Chapter 20

Gerschenkron pdfs

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Week 15 Revolutionary politics

Tuesday April 30
Thursday May 2

Reading: Sodaro Chapters 19, 21 Mao Zedong On Protracted War (1938).
Thursday: Simulation 4.

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Week 16  Tuesday May 7
LAST DAY OF CLASS. Discussion of exam.

Course Readings


Please note that there are a few other Internet links to smaller readings in the day-by-day syllabus.
Global Learning Objectives for Social Science

1. **An understanding that human conduct and behavior more generally are subject to scientific inquiry:** in this class, this means examining competing theoretical explanations of state development and behavior, which will be tested in relation to specific theories, for example, the Realist versus the Liberal Internationalist perspective on war and peace; or Mercantilist versus Marxist theories of economic development.

2. **An understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena;** In this class, the related work will compare Gerschenkron’s and Keynes’ ideas about conditions of peace.

3. **An understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions:** In this class, much of the relevant discussion will be drawn from the textbooks.

4. **Knowledge of the major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences;** In this class, the concept of testing an hypothesis against an actual historical case, for example, deterrence and Sagan’s article on Japan.

5. **An understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, such as observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, employment of mathematical analysis, employment of interpretive analysis.** In this class, cases will be drawn from Mao Zedong, Keynes, Gerschenkron, Sagan, and the textbooks to show both theory and practice in the social sciences.