RPOS 370: International Relations Theory

Professor: Bryan R. Early  
Class #: 9947  
Class Times: TU-TH 8:45 AM -10:05 AM  
Room: SS 256  
Email: bearly@albany.edu  
Office Hours: Uptown, Humanities Building B16 – Thursdays, 10:15-11:15 AM  
Downtown, Milne Hall 300A – Thursdays, 12:00 PM-1:00 PM

Course Description

This course will explore the foundational assumptions employed within international relations theory, the major theoretical perspectives within the discipline, and several prominent issue areas within international relations. Students will read some of the major theoretical works within international relations and discuss them in interactive lectures. Students will also explore the strengths, weaknesses, similarities, and differences of these works in their writing assignments. The class will also involve an intensive simulation of global politics in which students will be called upon to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical foreign policy situations.

Expectations

This is a reading intensive course and students will be expected to attend every class having read and prepared to discuss the assigned texts. Attendance is mandatory and will be especially important during the simulations. Students will be expected to turn in assigned work on time. Late work will face significant deductions.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Explain the major theories of international relations
- Describe the major similarities and differences between the major IR theories
- Identify leading authors in the IR field and the theories they are associated with
- Understand the historical evolution of IR theory over time
- Apply theoretical frameworks to understanding practical international relations issues
- Assess the behavior of actors in international politics in light of IR theories
Grading

**Theoretical Critiques – 20% and 30%**

Students will write two critical analyses of grand international relations theories covered within the class (e.g., classical realism, liberalism, hegemonic leadership, neo-realism, neo-liberalism, constructivism, offensive realism). For each paper, students will be expected to provide a detailed description of a theory’s core elements, identify and explain the contributions of various works of scholarship that have employed it, and discuss the theory’s explanatory gaps and weaknesses. The papers’ length should be between 6-10 pages long. The first paper will be worth 20% and the second paper will be worth 30% of students’ final grades. The instructor will provide more details and a grading rubric.

- Theoretical Critique 1 is due 10/14/14
- Theoretical Critique 2 is due 11/13/14

**Simulation Participation – 12.5%**

Students will participate in a team-based learning simulation using the *International Relations in Action (IRA)* book. Attendance and full participation in the simulations is mandatory. Each unexcused absence during the simulation will result in a two-letter grade deduction from a student’s simulation participation grade.

**Simulation Write-Up – 7.5%**

Students will write a brief 2-3 page paper describing how IR theory informed the choices their country made during the simulation or analyzing how an IR theory could explain countries’ or leaders’ behaviors in a particular case during the simulation.

- Simulation Write-Up is due 12/8/14

**Final Exam – 30%**

This will be a cumulative exam that will cover the entire semester’s course material. It will be almost impossible to pass for students that do not keep up with their weekly readings and attend lectures. Students should take detailed notes throughout the semester on their readings and during their lectures. Building a running study guide throughout the semester is also suggested.

**Grading Policy**

Tests and papers will be graded blind by the instructor and/or teaching assistant. If a student wishes to challenge how his or her exam or paper was graded, the student must submit a written statement describing what part of their assignment was improperly evaluated and why they think that was the case. This must be done within five days of having the assignment returned. Both the instructor and assistant will re-grade the entire project, compare their assessments, and mutually decide on a final grade. This grade may be higher or lower than the original grade given and will be final. Any clear mistakes or errors made by the instructor will be promptly corrected and need only be brought to the instructor’s attention.
Policy on Academic Honesty

Please familiarize yourself with the undergraduate bulletin’s descriptions of cheating and plagiarism. If you are involved in plagiarism or cheating on an exam or research paper, the instructor reserves the right to issue a 0 on the assignment, give a failing grade to the student for the course, and/or submit a “Violation of Academic Integrity Report.” If you are not sure if something violates standards – feel free to ask ahead of time. In general, it’s always better to err on the side of citing too much than too little in your research papers. The university’s official policy can be found at: http://www.albany.edu/studentconduct/appendix-c.php. Lastly, never cite Wikipedia as source.

Accommodations

“Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). The office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.” For the University’s policy, see: http://www.albany.edu/disability/docs/RAP.pdf. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

Resources

Required Books


Required Articles and Chapters

All course readings that are not in the books or linked to a website will be posted on the class Blackboard Page in the “Course Readings” Folder.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (8/25):
- 8/26: Introduction to International Relations Theory

- **8/28: Levels of Analysis and the Assumption of Anarchy**

**Week 2 (9/1):**

- **9/2: Theories of Decision-Making: Rationality and Social-Constructivism**

- **9/4: Theories of Decision-Making: Cognitive Theories and Decision-Making Pathologies**

**Week 3 (9/8):**

- **9/9: Origins of Classical Realism and Realist Theories**
- 9/11: Classical Realism  

Week 4 (9/15):
- 9/16: Power and the Balance of Power  

- 9/18: Classical Liberalism  

Week 5 (9/22):
- 9/23: Social Scientific Classical Liberalism  

- 9/25 (No Class)

Week 6 (9/29):
- 9/30: Neo-Realism  

- 10/2: Neo-Realism (cont.)  

**Week 7 (10/6):**
- 10/7: *Theories of Hegemony*

- 10/9: *Unipolarity and Decline*

**Week 8 (10/13):**
- 10/14: *Neoliberal Institutionalism*

- 10/16: *Neoliberal Institutionalism vs. Neo-Realism*

**Week 9 (10/20):**
- 10/21: *Constructivism*

- **10/23:** *Constructivism (Cont.)*

**Week 10 (10/27):**
- **10/28:** *Offensive Realism*
- **10/30:** *Offensive Realism*

**Week 11 (11/3):**
- **11/4:** *Domestic Politics: Bureaucratic Politics Model and Two-Level Games*

- **11/6:** *Domestic Politics: Public Opinion and Audience Costs*

**Week 12 (11/10):**
- **11/11:** *Global Governance*

- **11/13:** *Theorizing about the Future*
  - Simulation Prep
Week 13 (11/17):
  - 11/18: Simulation
    o Turns 1 & 2
  - 11/20: Simulation
    o Turns 3 & 4

Week 14 (11/24):
  - 11/25 (No Class)
  - 11/27 (No Class)

Week 15 (12/1):
  - 12/2: Simulation
    o Turns 5 & 6
  - 12/4: Simulation
    o Turns 7 & 8

Week 16 (12/8):
  - 12/9: Conclusion