RPOS 570: International Relations Field Seminar

Professor: Bryan R. Early  
Class #: 3599  
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 provide a survey of the major concepts and theories employed in the study of international relations. It will provide students with a thorough grounding of the bedrock assumptions undergirding most theories of international relations, the actors and structures they rely upon, and the concepts they leverage. Students will receive an overview of the grand theories of international relations and be introduced to the study of foreign policy. Students will gain a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the major theoretical approaches of international relations, how the theories relate to one another, their intellectual origins, and their empirical track records. Students will also develop foundational skills in identifying areas in need of additional research to which IR theory can be applied. Emphasis within the class will be placed upon preparing students for the comprehensive examination in international relations.

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. Students should come to class able to explain each of key concepts listed in the week’s readings and with their completed essay for the week’s readings. Students are expected to participate multiple times during each seminar discussion. All work must be turned in by the assigned due date.

Course Objectives

- Students will be able to demonstrate a mastery over all of the key concepts listed on the syllabus
- Students will be able to rigorously analyze international relations (IR) theories
- Students will be able explain the core assumptions of each of the grand theories of IR
- Students will be able to explain the various strengths and weaknesses of each IR theory
- Students will recognize the key authors associated with each IR theory
- Students will understand how IR theory has evolved over time
- Students will be able to invoke and use IR theories in explaining international events
- Students will gain skills in identifying IR topics in need of original research
- Students will be equipped with the foundational knowledge of the IR field that they will need to pass their IR comprehensive exams
**Grading**

**Participation – 15%**

Students will be expected to attend and contribute to every seminar discussion. Students should come to class being able to explain to the class each of the core concepts listed on the week’s syllabus, as they will be asked to do so at the beginning of each seminar. Students should expect to contribute multiple times to each week’s seminar discussion.

**Weekly Essays – 25%**

Students will be expected to produce a two-page, single-spaced response paper each week. For the classes that address core concepts, students will be expected to respond to one of the listed key questions for the week. For the classes that address IR theories, students will be expected to use the theoretical evaluation criteria provided by the instructor to analyze one theory covered in the weekly readings. An assignment will provide the specific details. Students are required to write 10 essays over the course of the semester. Submissions are due at the start of class. Late essays will not be accepted and will result in 0s.

**Asking Research Questions in International Relations – 10%**

Students will be develop and contextualize a research question in need of additional study within the IR subfield. An assignment will provide the specific details. Due: 10/20.

**Identifying Puzzles in International Relations – 15%**

Students will identify and contextualize a puzzle in need of original study within the IR subfield. An assignment will provide the specific details. Due: 11/17.

**Visualizing the International Relations Subfield – 10%**

Students will produce a visual representation that maps the IR subfield’s theories, prominent authors, and concepts. Students can employ whatever organizational schema they desire, but it must be employed consistently within their visual maps. It is recommended that students use a poster board or software that can produce a poster-sized map. Students will present and explain their maps in 5-10 minute presentations on the final day of class. Due: 12/8.

**Final Exam – 25%**

Students will be given an open-book, timed exam in which they will be asked two questions modeled after the IR comprehensive exam’s major questions.

**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

- Students should purchase an undergraduate Intro. to IR textbook.
- Students should purchase one of the IR Handbooks published by Sage or Oxford to help study for their comprehensive exams and provide additional background if needed during the course.
Recommended Books

- A number of the readings within the syllabus are excerpts from books. While students are not expected to read the full books for the class, they are strongly encouraged to read each of the full texts listed in preparation for their comprehensive exams.

Required Articles and Book 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.

Course Schedule

Part I: Introduction

Week 1 (8/25): Theory and International Relations

- Key Questions:
  - Why do scholars of international relations need theory?
  - What are the core elements of international relations theory?
  - How can theories of international relations be evaluated?
  - What kinds of questions do scholars of international relations ask?

- Required Readings:

- Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams
Part II: Core Concepts in International Relations

Week 2 (9/1): Actors and Units of Analysis

• Key Questions:
  o What are the crucial units of analysis employed with international relations theory and what simplifying assumptions do they require?
  o How does the choice of units of analysis influence what theories can explain?
  o What are the tradeoffs associated with selecting individual units of analysis and/or in developing theories that operate on multiple levels?

• Key Concepts:
  o Individuals; Groups; States; Networks; International System

• Required Readings:

• Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams

Week 3 (9/8): Decision-Making

• Key Questions:
  o Why do so many international relations theories employ the simplifying assumption of rationality?
  o How does the choice of decision-making assumptions match up with choices about units of analysis in international relations theories?
  o Are the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness complementary or mutually exclusive?
What are the tradeoffs associated with employing more complex models of decision-making versus more parsimonious ones?

- **Key Concepts:**
  - Rationalist Approaches; Rational Choice; Psychological Approaches; Cognitive Approaches; Constructivist Approaches;

- **Required Readings:**

- **Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams**

**Week 4 (9/15): Anarchy, Hierarchy, and Global Governance**

- **Key Questions:**
  - Is the assumption of an anarchy best viewed as a simplifying assumption or as an accurate description of the international system?
  - What are the implications of assuming that the international system is hierarchical instead of anarchical?
  - How does the global governance concept differ from the concepts of anarchy and hierarchy?

- **Key Concepts:**
  - Anarchy; the Security Dilemma; Hierarchy; Global Governance

- **Required Readings:**
Week 5 (9/22): No Class

Week 6 (9/29): Power

- Key Questions:
  - What role does power play within international relations?
  - How is the concept of power best defined and operationalized?
  - Is it analytically useful to distinguish between different types of power and how does that influence theorizing?
  - Has the role of power changed over time in international relations? How?

- Key Concepts:
  - National Material Capabilities and Power; Comparing Conventional Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction; Comparing Psychological Power and the Use of Force; Balance of Power; Soft Power

- Key Readings:

- Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams
Week 7 (10/6): International Norms, Regimes, Institutions, and Networks

- Key Questions:
  - What are the differences between the various types of international structures?
  - How does the level of formality within international structures influence the effects they have?
  - What are the tradeoffs between adopting rationalist versus socially-constructed approaches towards understanding the role played by structures in international relations?

- Key Concepts:
  - Norms; Regimes; International Laws; International Organizations; Networks

- Required Readings:

- Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams

Part III: International Relations Theories and Perspectives

- Theoretical Response Papers:
  - For each week’s readings, pick one theory and evaluate it using the analytical criteria provided by the instructor.

Week 8 (10/13): Research Approaches in International Relations (No Essay)

- Key Concepts: Opportunity, Willingness, Foreign Policy Substitutability, Necessity, Sufficiency

- Required Readings:


Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams


**Week 9 (10/20): Classical Realism and Marxism**

**Key Authors:**

**Key Concepts:**
- Balancing; Balance of Power; Relative Gains; Security Dilemma; Power-Maximization

**Key Readings:**

*Classical Realism*

*Marxism*
Week 10 (10/27): Liberalism and the Democratic Peace

- Key Authors:
  - Immanuel Kant, Michael Doyle, Joseph Nye, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and Andrew Moravcsik

- Key Concepts:
  - Preferences; Regime Type; Interdependence; Spillover; Issue-Linkage; Absolute Gains

- Required Readings:

*Skeptical View*


- Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams

Week 11 (11/3): Neo-Realism and Offensive Realism
• Key Authors:
  o Kenneth Waltz, Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer, Joseph Grieco

• Key Concepts:
  o Internal vs External Balancing; System Polarity; Relative Gains; Buck-Passing; Chain-Ganging; Buck-Passing

• Key Readings:

  **Neo-Realism**

  **Offensive Realism**

• Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams

**Week 12 (11/10): Hegemony and Neo-Liberal Institutionalism**

• Key Authors:
  o Charles Kindleberger, Robert Axlerod, Robert Keohane, Lisa Martin, Beth Simmons

• Key Concepts:
  o Hegemony; Hegemonic Leadership; Prisoner’s Dilemma; Harmony; Discord; Cooperation; Tit for Tat; Shadow of the Future; Reciprocity; Issue Linkage

  **Hegemonic Stability Theory / Hegemonic Leadership**
Neo-Liberal Institutionalism


- Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams

Week 13 (11/17): English School and Constructivism

- Key Authors:
  - Hedley Bull, Alexander Wendt, Ted Hopf, Martha Finnemore, Michael Barnett, and Jeffrey Checkel

- Key Concepts:
  - International Society; World Society; Norms; Identity; Agent-Structure Relationship; Logic of Consequences versus Logic of Appropriateness

- Required Readings:

  *English School*

  *Constructivism*

- Additional Recommended Readings for Comprehensive Exams

**Week 14 (11/24): No Class**

**Week 15 (12/1): Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics**
- **Key Authors:**
  - Graham Allison, James Fearon, Valerie Hudson, and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita

- **Key Concepts:**
  - Public Opinion; Bureaucratic Politics; Foreign Policy Analysis; Domestic Audience Costs

- **Required Readings:**

**Conclusion**

**Week 16 (12/8):**
- **Required Readings:**
Simplistic Hypothesis Testing Is Bad for International Relations.” European

International Relations 19(3): 483-497.

Debates and the Rise of Eclecticism in International Relations.” European

Other Resources

Helpful Websites

- Correlates of War: www.correlatesofwar.org/
- The Issues Correlates of War: http://www.paulhensel.org/icow.html
- Quality of Government Institute: http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/
- Harvard Dataverse Network: http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/
- EUGene Data Generation Program: http://www.eugenesoftware.org/
- Political Science Journals Acceptance Rates and Turnaround Times:
  http://www.reviewmyreview.eu/
- Rankings of Journals by Giles and Garand (2011):
  http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPSC%2FPSC40_04%2FS1049096
  507071181a.pdf&code=449e7309b75e61f51d84a553e6b92ef1

Major IR Journals

- Conflict Management and Peace Science (CMPS)
- European Journal of International Relations (EJIR)
- Foreign Affairs (FA)
- Foreign Policy (FP)
- Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)
- Global Governance (GG)
- International Affairs (IA)
- International Interactions (II)
- International Organization (IO)
- International Security (IS)
- International Studies Quarterly (ISQ)
- International Studies Review (ISR)
- Journal of Conflict Resolution (JCR)
- Journal of Peace Research (JPR)
- Journal of Strategic Studies (JSS)
- Millennium
- Review of International Studies (RIS)
- Security Studies (SS)
- World Politics (WP)