RPOS 370: International Relations Theory

Professor: Bryan R. Early
Class Times: MWF 11:30 AM -12:25 PM
Room: ES 147
Email: barely@albany.edu
Office Hours: Uptown, Humanities Building B16 – Mondays, 9:15-11:15AM

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

Attendance – 10%

Attendance will be taken five times during the semester by the instructor. If a student is absent without excuse on one of those days, the student will lose 20% of his or her possible attendance grade. Students should notify the instructor of absences due to illness, family emergencies, or religious observances, which will be excused on a case-by-case basis.

Theoretical Critiques – 15% and 25%

Students will write two critical analyses of individual theories covered within the class (e.g., classical realism, liberalism, hegemonic leadership, neo-realism, neo-liberalism, constructivism, post-classical 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 15% and the second paper will be worth 25% of students’ final grades. The instructor will provide more details and a grading rubric.

- Theoretical Critique 1 is due 3/24/14
- Theoretical Critique 2 is due 4/23/14

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 4% 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 5/7/14

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 penalty will be failure in the course and you will be reported to judicial affairs. 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/undergraduate_bulletin/2003-2004/regulations.html>. 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/faculty-staff.shtml. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

Resources

This course will be very reading intensive. The readings come from a mixture of required texts, course reserve chapter and articles, and articles that students will be required to look up themselves. The instructor will indicate where the readings can be found in advance of their due dates.

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

*Introduction to International Relations Theory*

Day 1 - 1/22
- Discuss Syllabus, Course Organization, Grading, and Class Policies

Day 2 - 1/24

Day 3 - 1/27

*Levels of Analysis*

Day 4 - 1/29

*Anarchy*

Day 5 - 1/31

*Decision-Making Theories*

Day 6 - 2/3
Day 7 - 2/5

Day 8 - 2/7

Day 9 - 2/10

Day 10 - 2/12 (IRA Simulation Set Up)

Classical Realism
Day 11 - 2/14

Day 12 - 2/17
Day 13 - 2/19

Day 14 - 2/21 – No Class

Day 15 - 2/24 (Guest Instructor)

Liberalism

Day 16: 2/26 (Guest Instructor)

Day 17 - 2/28 (Guest Instructor)

Day 18 - 3/3 – (Simulation Day)
- Brock Tessman. 2007. “Part 1.” in IRA
- Brock Tessman. 2007. “Part 2.” in IRA

Day 19 - 3/5 (Simulation Day)
- Brock Tessman. 2007. “Alliance Politics.” in IRA

Neo-Realism

Day 20 - 3/7
Day 21 - 3/10

**Theories of Hegemonic Leadership and Unipolarity**

Day 22 - 3/12

Day 23 - 3/14

**Spring Break**

Day 24 - 3/17 – No Class
Day 25 - 3/19 – No Class
Day 26 - 3/21 – No Class

Day 27 – 3/24 (Simulation Day)
- Brock Tessman. 2007. “Territorial Disputes.” in *IRA*

**Neoliberal Institutionalism**

Day 28 - 3/26 (Guest Instructor)

Day 29 - 3/28 (Guest Instructor)
Day 30 - 3/31

Day 31 - 4/2 (Simulation Day)
- Brock Tessman. 2007. “Nuclear Proliferation.” in *IRA*

**Constructivism**

Day 32 - 4/4

Day 33 - 4/7

Day 34 - 4/9 (Simulation Day)

**Post-Classical Realism**

Day 35 - 4/11
- John Mearsheimer. 2001. “Chapters 1 and 2.” in *TGGP*

Day 36 - 4/14
- John Mearsheimer. 2001. “Chapters 3 and 4.” in *TGGP*

Day 37 - 4/16 – No Class

Day 38 - 4/18
- John Mearsheimer. 2001. “Chapters 5 and 8.” in *TGGP*

Day 39 - 4/21 – No Class
Day 40 - 4/23 (Simulation Day)
  - Brock Tessman. 2007. “Global Security Organizations.” in IRA

**Domestic Politics**

Day 41 - 4/25

Day 42 - 4/28

**Global Governance**

Day 43 - 4/30

Day 44 - 5/2

Day 45 - 5/5

**Conclusion**

Day 46 - 5/7