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**POS 102 Comparative and International Politics (Class No. 7533)**  
Class meets: Tu, Th, 11:45-1:05 LC022 (sections on Fridays)  
Uptown office hours: Tu 2-4p.m.  
Books: textbooks at Mary Jane Books and campus bookstore; other texts at MJB only  
Midterm: Tuesday March 19  
Final exam (in class): check the registrar's final exam schedule  
(exam week is Fri May 10 through Fri May 17)

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 a variety of on-line and in print materials. Links to most on-line materials are in the syllabus. Texts include materials relevant to assessing “Democratic Peace” concepts and critiques of the same; as all of the materials are even technical aspects of nuclear war are relevant to the thesis that democracy promotes peace. Some works are classics in International Relations (Keynes, *Economic Consequences of the Peace*; Kant, *Perpetual Peace*; ) and others demonstrate core theses
in Comparative Politics (Gerschenkron, *Bread and Democracy in Germany*). Two movies are assigned, including 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 real historical cases.

**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. As of this writing it is May 13th 10:30 to 12:30:

[registrar's exam date postings](#)

Midterm: Tuesday March 25
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 23

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 mac 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.

Tuesday January 28
Thursday January 30

Readings:


Available: JSTOR through U Albany on-line library.

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

Week 3 Contending Theoretical Perspectives, and the IR “system”; levels of analysis or “images”

Tuesday 4 February
Thursday 6 February

Mingst Chapter 3, 4

Discussion: What sorts of theories describe the international system? Why are there different theories? How do we test hypotheses?

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)

Week 4 The State and Foreign Policy: Liberal theory

Tuesday February 11
Thursday February 13

Mingst, Chapters 5, 9

Kant, Perpetual Peace, especially the printed page numbers pp. 106 through 142 in this edition (“First Section” and “Second Section”)

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.”
Week 5  More on the State….Marxist theory

Tuesday, February 18
Thursday, February 20  HOLIDAY

Reading: Bukharin, Nicholai *Imperialism and World Economy*, pp. 17 to 109 [part I&II]  (starting with Part I: World economy and the process of internationalization of capital, through to and including chapter titled “World economy and the national state”).

Bukharin *Imperialism and World Economy*

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Week 6  Marxist Theory of Imperialism

Tuesday February 25
Thursday February 27

Bukharin, Nicholai *Imperialism and World Economy*, pp. 110 to 170  (starting with Part III: Imperialism as the Reproduction of Capitalist Competition on a Larger Scale, through to the end).  

Bukharin *Imperialism and World Economy*

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Case study: WWI peace settlement & liberal internationalism  (Keynes)

Week 7

Tuesday 4 March
Thursday 6 March

*keynes economic consequences of the peace* (Internet): hard copies ordered at Mary Jane Books.

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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Week 8  More Keynes and economic consequences of the peace

Tuesday March 11
Thursday March 13 Human Rights
Liberal Internationalism (continued)  WWI peace settlement as the triumph of realism over liberal internationalist path

Reading: *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, pp. 2nd half (pp. 113 to end) 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)

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

Discuss: Fourteen points for peace, self-determination, human rights, women’s rights, etc.

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Week 9 NO CLASS

Tuesday March 18 NO CLASS
Thursday March 20 NO CLASS

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Week 10  Gerschenkron – a comparative political approach, part I.

Reading: Gerschenkron, pp. 17-112

Tuesday March 25 MIDTERM
Thursday March 27

Reading:

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Week 11  Gerschenkron – a comparative political approach, part II.

Gerschenkron, pp. 113-224

Tuesday 1 April
Thursday 3 April
Week 12 Causes of War

Mingst Chapter 2, 8

Tuesday April 8
Thursday April 10

Week 13 Movie: All Quiet on the Western Front or Paths of Glory (to be decided)

Tuesday April 15
Thursday April 17

Reading: Background materials on WWI and Treaty of Versailles

Week 14 Simulation: Treaty of Versailles

Tuesday April 22
Thursday April 24

Reading: Background materials on WWI and Treaty of Versailles

Week 15 Simulation: Treaty of Versailles

Tuesday April 29
Thursday May 1

Reading: Background materials on WWI and Treaty of Versailles

Week 16

Tuesday May 6 Review of simulation
Thursday May 8 LAST DAY OF CLASS. Discussion of exam.
Course Readings


Bukharin, Nikolai, Imperialism and World Economy. London, Martin Lawerence Limited. [Bukharin Imperialism and World Economy - archive.org](#)


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, Keynes, Gerschenkron, Sagan, and other books to show both theory and practice in the social sciences.