Mission of the Course

The purpose of this course is three-fold. First, the course will introduce you to a wide range of international theories including classical realism, neorealism, regime theory, the democratic peace, bureaucratic politics, and constructivism. The syllabus consciously mixes classic works in the field of international relations with recent theoretical extensions and empirical tests. Second, the course is designed to aid you in developing research designs appropriate for qualifying papers, dissertations, and journal articles. My experience has been that the best way to develop the methodological skills necessary to test competing explanations for a given phenomenon is through practice and discussion. Rather than assign a single large research paper that is turned in on the last day of class, students will develop three short research designs which test competing theoretical arguments from world politics. The research designs will be presented and discussed during class. Although students will not be actually collecting qualitative and quantitative data to test their designs, they should develop a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various research designs. Third, the course is intended to demonstrate the complementary nature of different methods of inquiry, including case studies and quantitative analyses. In many weeks, the readings will include both historical studies and statistical analysis. The course will demonstrate that many of the research proposal questions are directly applicable to both methods of analysis.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to accomplish the following activities:

1. Describe elements of an argument,
2. Recognize, diagram and evaluate arguments in the published literature,
3. Compare and contrast the major theories in international politics,
4. Evaluate the empirical strength of major international theories, and
5. Construct innovative research proposals.

Course Requirements

Students' final grades will be based on the following assignments:

1) weekly book, article, or chapter summaries (10%),
2) weekly blog entries (10%),
2) active class participation (20%),
3) student leadership of discussion (10%),
4) three research designs (or single research paper) (30%), and
5) oral final exam with panel of students (20%).
First, each week some or all of the students will prepare a very short (no more than 2 pages, single spaced) summary of an article, chapter, or book from that week's readings. Each summary should contain four sections: 1) summary of theoretical argument; 2) summary of methods employed and major empirical findings (if any); 3) fit to the literature; and 4) critiques and comments. Please use these headings to structure the summary in order to make it easier for you fellow students to quickly identify key information. Students must post their summaries on the course wiki page by 7 am on the day of class. (If you don't like getting up early, post it the night before!). By the end of the semester, the class will have collectively developed a rich inventory of many of the classic works in the international relations literature. Students should note that producing a summary in no way relieves them from having to complete the remaining readings.

Second, each week students will make a blog entry in the course wiki page. In order to structure discussion, the instructor will post a couple of “thought” questions related to the upcoming week’s readings on the wiki page. Students should use their blog pages to think about the readings, the blog questions, and any other issue related to international politics. The blogs in this class are public but “informal” in that ideas need not be fully developed and writing need not be carefully polished. The purpose of the blog is to get the juices flowing before the start of class.

Third, students must actively participate in class discussion each week. I expect students to have read and thought about the material assigned for that week. If language or some other barrier inhibits you from participating actively, you should meet with the instructor during the first two weeks of class to devise some solutions. Attendance (which is mandatory) is not considered participation.

Fourth, students will also take turns leading discussion during class. During the first session, the remaining classes will be divided up with one or two students identified as discussion leaders for each week. The purpose of a discussion leader is to facilitate discussion (not to dominate it). Although I will actively participate in the discussions, I will not lead them nor will any of the period be devoted to lecture. Discussion leaders construct a list of questions that they will use to guide class discussion. This list must be posted to the course wiki by 7am of the day of class. Discussion leaders should meet with the instructor for about 5 minutes before the start of class to make sure we are on the same page.

Fifth, students will write either three research proposals or a single research paper. I strongly encourage first and second year students to select the research design option which involves developing a plan for probing competing arguments for observed phenomenon. Each concisely written design should not exceed seven pages in length. Students will be asked to present one research design to the class; the remaining research designs can be turned in at the beginning of any class period, but only one design may be turned in any given week. More advanced graduate students may choose to produce a single research paper that involves implementing their design. Students writing a single research paper should develop a written research design by week six of the course; this designed must be approved by the instructor. Students will turn in the final paper at the beginning of the next to last class session; the papers will be presented in the last day of class.Late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade per day late. All papers must be posted to the course wiki page by 7am of the day of the class.

Finally, students will take an oral exam during the final exam period. The purpose of the oral exam is to encourage you to integrate the material discussed over the course of the semester and to prepare you for the comprehensive exam in the field. Every student will serve as both an exam taker and exam evaluator. The instructor and two students from the class will form each evaluation committee. Each oral exam, which will last approximately 30 minutes, will probe the student's knowledge of the field and their ability to conceptually move beyond the readings. At a minimum, students should be prepared to summarize individual readings and compare and
contrast readings across the course. At a maximum, students will be expected to identify gaps in
the literature and suggest ways to fill these gaps with unique research proposals.

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities should contact the instructor during the first week in order to
make satisfactory arrangements.

Web Page
This course will use a wiki page for posting materials, communicating, and required readings.
The wiki is located at:
http://rpos570fall2010.pbwiki.com

Plagiarism
The emergence of the internet has changed our world forever. The amount of
information at our fingertips has increased geometrically over the last decade. Library searches
which took hours to complete in the past can be done in a matter of minutes today. Public and
private documents that were difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to in the past are now a
mouse click away. While this technological revolution has enhanced the learning process in
many ways, it has also increased the amount of plagiarism. Plagiarism is the intentional or
unintentional use of another’s words or ideas without giving credit to that person. While this
includes copying text word for word without the use of quotation marks, it also includes
paraphrasing another person’s work without proper citation. Intellectual honesty is a core value of
university and the foundation of faculty and student development. Plagiarism, therefore,
dermines the entire university community. Students guilty of plagiarizing any material will
receive a failing grade for the course and the evidence will be automatically turned over to the
University at Albany office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility (formerly the Office
of Judicial Affairs). If you are unsure about plagiarism in general, please review the UAlbany
Library “Plagiarism 101” training module that can be found at:
http://library/albany.edu/usered/tut.html

Required Texts
The books are available new and used from Amazon and other online bookstores. I have
not ordered the books through the university book store in order to save you money. The
required readings marked [R] can be found in the books and required readings marked with web
[R*] can be found on the wiki page. In some instances, suggested readings marked [S] can be
found immediately after the required readings. The suggested readings have not been compiled at
this time.

Outline of Lectures and Readings

Week 1 (8/30): Introduction: World Politics and Argumentation

[R*] Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 1995. The

[R*] Rousseau, David L. 2008. “Argumentation Across the Social Sciences:
Using Critical Thinking to Connect Theory, Evidence, and Policy.”


**Week 2 (9/6): No class due to school holiday.**

**Week 3 (9/13): The Levels of Analysis**


**Week 4 (9/20): Classical Realism**


**Week 5 (9/27): Structural Theories: Neo-realism, the Security Dilemma, etc.**


**Week 6 (10/4): Classical Liberalism and International Regimes**


**Week 7 (10/11): Marxism, Imperialism, and World Systems Theory (Guest: Professor Greg Nowell)**


Week 8 (10/18): Strategic Choice and International Relations

[R] to be determined


Week 9 (10/25): Structural Realism


Week 10 (11/1): Culture, Norms, and Identity (Guest: Professor Rey Koslowski)


Week 11 (11/8): Democracy and International Conflict


Week 11 (11/8): Democracy and International Conflict

[R*] Doyle, Michael W. 1986. "Liberalism and World Politics." American Political Science Review 80(December), 1151-69.


**Week 12 (11/15): Bureaucratic Politics and Organizational Decision Making**


Week 13 (11/22): Individual Level: Decision Making


**Week 14 (11/29): Foreign Policy Analysis (Guest: Professor Bryan Early)**
-- reading to be determined.

**Week 15 (12/6): Conclusions**
-- no readings assigned

**End of Semester: Oral Final Exam During Finals Week**
-- Date and Time to be Determined