The School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs (SPGIA) GOVT 322 – 002   CRN 11806

International Relations Theory

Overview

This is an upper-level level course that is an advanced inquiry into international relations theories. In the course, we will study theories (perspectives), concepts of international relations, and major forces and current issues in international politics.

Goals

By the end of the course, students should be able to identify and distinguish between the main theories of international relations and use these theories to analyze historical and current events. Students should also be able to identify and explain key concepts in international relations and how current international issues and institutions challenge or reinforce them.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly Attendance & Class Participation = 20% of grade
2. Weekly Study Questions = 30% of grade
3. Tests I & II = 30% of grade
4. Final Exam = 20% of grade

Teaching Assistant: Ms. Shahnoza Nozimova and her email address is: snozimov@gmu.edu

Required Textbook

*Perspectives on International Relations – Power, Institutions and Ideas* by Henry R. Nau (Fourth Edition) SAGE Publisher (2015). Other readings will be available on Blackboard or via textbook website.

Milestones

**Weekly Study Questions**
Respond to TWO questions of your choice listed in the syllabus; one paragraph minimum (200 - 250 words) for each question; submit via Blackboard by 4 pm weekly.

**Test on Part I, and Test on Part II - On 2nd March & 6th April**
Each test will be a combination of short answers and multiple-choice questions.

**Final Exam (Parts 1, II & III)**
See syllabus below for date and it will be comprehensive i.e. combination of test questions from Part I & II plus new questions.
COURSE SCHEDULE:

1. **Monday, 26th January 2015**: Welcome! Review of the syllabus and course requirements  
   **Please read**: Introduction – Why We Disagree About International Relations  
   (Nau Textbook)

   **Weekly Study Questions**:  
   Introduction – Why We Disagree About International Relations  
   1. What are perspectives and levels of analysis? What do we use them to describe?  
   2. How does critical theory perspective differ from the three other perspectives?  
   3. How are rationalist and constructivist methods different?  
   4. What are the three types of moral philosophies? What arguments do they make?

   **Optional Reading** (to support/add to your knowledge)  
   https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/introduction/sage-journal-articles

2. **Monday, 2nd February 2015**:  
   **Please read**: Chapter 1. How to Think about International Relations (Nau Textbook)

   **Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions for each of the Introduction & Chapter 1 are due today by 4 pm via Blackboard**

   **Weekly Study Questions**:  
   Chapter 1 – How to Think About International Relations – Perspectives and Levels of Analysis  
   1. How does the prisoner's dilemma correspond to international affairs?  
   2. How do the “last move” and the “shadow of the future” compare?  
   3. What is the balance of power? Why is it so important to realists?  
   4. Can we isolate causes from effects? Does the logic of consequences or the logic of appropriateness better describe international affairs?  
   5. How does the critical theory perspective differ from the other perspectives? What are some examples of critical theories, and what deep historical or social circumstances do they highlight?

   **Optional Reading** (to support/add to your knowledge)  
   https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-1/sage-journal-articles

3. **Monday, 9th February 2015** - Part I: Historical Patterns  
   **Please read**: 1) Chapter 2. World War I (Nau Textbook)  
   2) “The chummy telegrams that could have prevented World War I - How Nicky and Willy could have prevented World War I” By Graham Allison July 25, 2014 – The Washington Post  
Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard

Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 2 - World War I -- World on Fire
1. Was Germany at fault for causing World War I? What domestic factors might each perspective emphasize when they argue that Germany caused the war?
2. Both the power balancing and power transition schools of realism look at the same period of history but emphasize different facts. According to each school, what changes in the distribution of power led to World War I?
3. The liberal perspective believes that diplomacy, which had previously prevented war, failed in 1914 for three reasons. What are these reasons, and why could they not be overcome?
4. The identity perspective believes that relative and shared identities shaped the aggressiveness of states before 1914. What are specific examples of state identities and shared norms that set the stage for World War I?
5. Why do critical theorists believe that history is mainly written from a realist perspective? By doing so, which factors are overlooked and what are the implications of doing so?

Optional Reading (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-2/sage-journal-articles

4. Monday, 16th February 2015 - Part I: Historical Patterns
Please read: Chapter 3. World War II: Why did War Happen Again? (Nau Textbook)
Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard

Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 3 - World War II – Why Did War Happen Again?
1. Scholars of international affairs sometimes discuss states as being “status quo” or “revisionist” states – that is, some want to preserve the status quo (or current state of affairs), while others want to revise (or change) it. Before World War II, which states wanted to preserve the status quo and which ones wanted to change it, and why? What strategies did they use to accomplish their goals?
2. What was the principle of unanimity, and how did it contribute to the collapse of the League of Nations?
3. What is collective security? How is it different from the balance of power?
4. Why did the United States not join the League of Nations? What other great powers arguably led to the collapse of the League of Nations, and how did they do so?
5. According to the realist perspective, how did the terms of the Versailles Treaty help lead to World War II?
6. According to the power balancing school of realism, balancing strategies can prevent war. What alternatives to balancing strategies did states pursue before World War II, and why?
7. What are the different types of nationalism that were present in Europe before World War II? How did they change from the types of nationalism present before World War I?
Optional Reading (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-3/sage-journal-articles

5. Monday, 23rd February 2015 - Part I: Historical Patterns
Please read: Chapter 4. The Origins and End of the Cold War (Nau Textbook)
Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard

Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 4 - The Origins and End of the Cold War
1. What were the main points of George Kennan's long telegram? Which perspective best characterizes it?
2. How does the realist perspective explain the origins of the Cold War? Was it the fault of either the Soviet Union or the United States, or was it due to systemic problems?
3. According to the identity perspective, why did the two superpowers' perceptions of one another as enemies, not merely rivals, contribute to the beginning and end of the Cold War?
4. What role did international negotiations play during the Cold War? When were negotiations the most prominent?
5. What factors would each perspective emphasize in the origins, escalation, and de-escalation of the Cuban Missile Crisis?
6. How were Reagan and Gorbachev different from previous American and Soviet leaders? What ideas and strategies did they adopt that led to the end of the Cold War, and which perspectives would emphasize those developments?

Optional Reading (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-5/sage-journal-articles


8. Monday, 16th March 2015 – Part II: The Contemporary International System
Please read: Chapter 5. Realist Perspectives on Today's World: Dominance, Balance of Power, and State Institutions (Nau Textbook)
Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard

Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 5 - Realist Perspectives on Today's World
1. What are the power capabilities of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China in today's world?
2. What were the causes and the major outcomes of the six wars fought between Israel and its neighbors since the establishment of Israel in 1948?
3. How did the power transition and power balancing schools of realism view American primacy in the 1990s? What policies did they think the United States should pursue?
4. If September 11th had never occurred, would the power transition realist school still have favored a US preventive war against Iraq?
5. What is the role of ethnic identity in international politics? Is it always as important as the realist advocates of partition suggest?

**Optional Reading** (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-5/sage-journal-articles-0

9. **Monday, 23rd March 2015** - Part II: The Contemporary International System


**Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard**

**Weekly Study Questions:**

**Chapter 6 - Liberal Perspectives on Today’s World**

1. What are the major bodies of the United Nations?
2. What is the relationship between the European Coal and Steel Community and today's European Union?
3. Compare and contrast the role of the International Court of Justice and the role of the International Criminal Court.
4. Why was the first Persian Gulf war an example of collective security?
5. What was the goal of the United Nations operation in Somalia and Rwanda? Did the UN meet any of its goals successfully?
6. How can membership in an International Organization change a state's sense of its own national interests?
7. What is the structure and purpose of the IMF? The World Bank? The WTO? The European Union?
8. How do the existence of international organizations and judicial bodies help states to avoid militarized conflict according to liberal theory?

**Optional Reading** (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-6/sage-journal-articles

10. **Monday, 30th March 2015** - Part II: The Contemporary International System

**Please read:** Chapter 7. Identity Perspectives on Today’s World: Democracy, Religion, Ethnicity, and Human Rights (Nau Textbook)

**Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard**
Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 7 - The Identity Perspectives on Today’s World
1. What is the difference between viewing terrorism as war, terrorism as crime, and terrorism as ideological conflict? What policies are suggested by each of these views?
2. Where do identities come from? Are they primordial and “hard-wired,” or are they constructed (and who constructs them)? Which interpretations are favored by the different perspectives?
3. How do liberal perspectives view ethnic conflicts and what solutions would they likely propose?
4. What is nationalism? What are the differences between ethnic and civic nationalism?
5. According to the liberal and identity perspective, what are the domestic or local causes of terrorism?

Optional Reading (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-7/sage-journal-articles

11. Monday, 6th April 2015 – Test on Part II

   Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard

Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 8 - Realist and Liberal Perspectives on Globalization – Trade, Investment, and Finance
1. In a basic calculation of a nation’s balance of payments, what elements are included in the Current Account, and what elements are included in the Capital Account?
2. What is a balance of payments, and what does it say about a state’s position in the world economy? How can you tell if a state is a net borrower or a net lender?
3. According to hegemonic stability theory, what role does the hegemon play in the world economy?
4. What were the Bretton Woods institutions? Why were they created?
5. What does it mean for a state to have “Most Favored Nation” status under the GATT?
6. What are the differences between Keynesian economics and the Chicago School? How did these ideas impact economic development in the twentieth century?
7. How does the GATT help to make real the economic gains from trade predicted by Adam Smith’s economic analysis in the Wealth of Nations?

Optional Reading (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-8/sage-journal-articles-0

   Please read: Chapter 9. Identity Perspectives on Globalization: Development and Environment (Nau Textbook)
   Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard
Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 9 - Identity Perspectives on Globalization: Development and the Environment
1. What is development? What do we measure when we measure development? Is there a set pattern for development, or does it take different courses?
2. What are some drawbacks to the way that development is measured today? What, in your opinion, is the best way to measure it?
3. What are the differences between export-led and import substitution approaches to international economics? Which perspective is likely to emphasize which approach?
4. What are some policy tools that states can adopt which will impact their trade relationships with other countries?
5. Why has economic growth been so poor in Sub-Saharan Africa, even after those states attained political independence in the 1950's and 1960's?
6. What policies most contributed to the economic miracle in East Asia?
7. Why would a Marxist, (critical theory) perspective possibly recommend import substitution industrialization policies?

Optional Reading (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-9/sage-journal-articles

Please read: Chapter 10. Critical Theory Perspectives on Globalization (Nau Textbook)
Weekly responses to TWO chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard

Weekly Study Questions:
Chapter 10 – Critical Theory Perspectives on Globalization
1. In your opinion, can the Middle East and North Africa ever fully develop without first raising the status of women? If not, how should this be achieved?
2. What are export-led development and import substitution policies? Are they oriented toward domestic markets or international markets?
3. Explain the basic argument of World Systems Theory.
4. What factors eventually limited export-led development in Asia?
5. How did import substitution policies contribute to Latin America’s “lost decade?”
6. What are the basic arguments of dependency theory?
7. How do the mainstream perspectives (realist, liberal, and identity) view issues of inequality and injustice?
8. According to the critical theory perspective, how did colonialism and exploitation lead to the development of the West? Which states were major colonial powers, and how did they spread their colonial influence? What institutions or practices can be considered modern-day versions of colonialism?

Optional Reading (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/chapter-10/sage-journal-articles
15. **Monday, 4th May 2015 – Last Class**

**Please read:** Conclusion: Applying Perspectives and Levels of Analysis: The Case of the Democratic Peace (Nau Textbook)

Weekly responses to **TWO** chapter study questions of your choice due today by 4 pm via Blackboard

**Weekly Study Questions:**
Conclusion: **Applying Perspectives and Levels of Analysis – The Case of the Democratic Peace**

1. What is the democratic peace, and what evidence exists to support it? What major conclusions has it reached?
2. What problems can arise when scholars try to define “democracy” and “war?”
3. How does the realist perspective explain the democratic peace? What about the liberal perspective?
4. Why are democratic states more peaceful, according to the identity perspective?

**Optional Reading** (to support/add to your knowledge)
https://edge.sagepub.com/nau4e/student-resources/conclusion/sage-journal-articles

**Final Exam** (Monday, 11th May 4:30 pm to 7:15 pm) on Parts 1, II and III in Nau Textbook

**Grading Scale:**
A+ = 97–100; A = 94-96; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B= 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; F = 0-59

**Weekly responses to chapter study questions** – please submit responses via Blackboard to any **TWO** questions of your choice. **Format:** Word document please with the following: your name, date, chapter number & title, type out each question and then your response. Each response has to be a **minimum** of one paragraph = 200-250 words. You are welcome to use our textbook to respond to the questions and please put author & page number (Nye page #). If you are going to use outside sources to respond then also use in-line full citation. Also, please when appropriate use examples from current events or history to support your answers.

I will drop the two worst grades from your overall grade. Here are some helpful tips: [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/writing-tips-and-handouts/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/writing-tips-and-handouts/)

**Attendance is mandatory, and in-class participation highly prized 😊**

This is a seminar course and, as such, depends critically upon students’ active participation in class. Students must come to class prepared, having completed all the required readings, and be ready to discuss and debate the issues raised in the readings and lectures. There will be in-class activities (group and individual) that everyone will be required to participate in. **It is to your great benefit that I get to know your name 😊**
Two TESTS and one FINAL Exam: There will be two tests during the semester and a final exam. More information will be given prior to each test and the final exam. The Final Exam will be on Monday, 11th May from 4:30 pm to 7:15 pm.

Late Assignments: Assignments (weekly chapter questions' answers) must be turned on time and via Blackboard. Failure to turn in an assignment on time is unacceptable except with the prior agreement of the instructor (which will be given only in exceptional circumstances, such as a documented illness or family emergency). Except in documented cases of illness or emergency, a penalty of up to a full letter grade will be assessed for each day the assignment is late. After 7 days (one week) – the assignment will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity: “The pursuit of knowledge can only take place in an atmosphere of honesty, integrity, and mutual trust.” In order to accomplish this, we must all be “committed to a policy that regards the highest degree of academic honesty as the norm.” Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at George Mason University, nor is it in this course. Based on University policy, such acts of dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the relevant assignment or a failing grade for the course.

Students with disabilities or special needs: Students who self-identify and provide sufficient documentation of a qualifying disability are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations, such as modifications of programs, academic adjustments, or auxiliary aides as a means to participate in programs and activities. If you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Problems that may arise – Please if you are experiencing any problems that are affecting your schoolwork and/or class attendance --- please feel free to contact me as soon as possible; we can meet and let us see what I can do to help. I will be glad to listen and assist to help you. There are many available resources. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to inform me that you are dealing with a problem(s) since the beginning of the semester. Let us talk and work on getting you the needed assistance early on in the semester so it does not affect your schoolwork down the road. I am here to help you succeed!

Email and use of Blackboard: Please check your Mason email regularly as well as Blackboard. All assignments are to be submitted via Blackboard.

Electronic devices: Laptops and similar devices may be used only please for taking notes or for consulting assigned texts in electronic format. Please do not use cell phone or similar devices in the classroom.

Thank you!

And welcome on this most interesting learning journey together!