Govt 540-03: Seminar in International Relations

T 7:20 – 10:00 p.m.  
West 1007  
Professor Ahsan Butt  
Email: abutt4@gmu.edu  
Robinson Hall A 241  
Office hours:  T 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.  
and by appointment

Course description

This course is a graduate seminar on theories, concepts, and issues in International Relations. The bulk of the material we cover will be theoretical, but empirical questions will also be considered throughout the course.

Course materials

There is one book required for this course. You can purchase it from the campus bookstore or online marketplaces such as Amazon.com. The required book is:

- Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Waveland Press).

The readings for the course also consist of a number of journal articles, all of which are available online. Assigned book chapters will be made available on the course’s Blackboard site.

Course requirements

Students’ final grades will be determined by their performance in four areas:

- 4 response papers (40%). Students can choose which week’s readings they respond to (though, in general, it is advisable to space these out, such that you’re writing a response paper every 2-3 weeks). These papers must not summarize the readings but critically respond to them. This exercise can include grappling with a theoretical, empirical, or methodological issue that plagues one or more of the readings, putting a number of the assigned readings in conversation with one another, or building upon and extending the insights and arguments contained therein. They must be 3-4 pages in length, and have 1-inch margins, size 12 font, and be double-spaced. Response papers are due at noon the day of the class, either as an email attachment or a hard copy delivered to my office (Robinson A 241).

- 1 research paper (40%). An original research paper on a question or topic that relates to the study of International Relations. On Nov 8 and Nov 15, students will write and circulate a 3-5 page outline of their plans for the research paper, and discuss the project in class with the professor and their colleagues. The final paper is due on Dec 9 and must be 15-20 pages (20-25 pages if you are a PhD student), not including citations and/or footnotes, and have 1-inch margins, size 12 font, and be double-spaced. Only hard copies will be accepted.
Class participation (20%). 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 issues raised in the readings and lectures. Students will also be required to do 1-2 oral presentations of the day’s readings. These presentations should, as with the response papers, not summarize the readings but critically assess them, and should serve as the departure point for class discussions.

Late assignments

Assignments must be turned in at the time and place designated on the syllabus. 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 may be assessed for each day the assignment is late.

Academic integrity

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Students with disabilities or special needs

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, http://ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

Email policy

In general, it is best to discuss any issues or concerns with me in person, either in class or in office hours. This is especially true for issues that require elaboration or a back-and-forth exchange. I will be happy to respond to emails in normal business hours (M-F, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.) that require a short, concise response, and aim to do so in a timely manner. However, there will be occasions when it takes me 24 hours or more to respond.

Course schedule

Aug 30: Introduction
Sept 6: The modern state and state system


Sept 13: Realism

- Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, chapters 5-6, 8.

Sept 20: Liberalism


Sept 27: Constructivism

Oct 4: Civil military relations


Oct 11: NO CLASS – Columbus Day recess

Oct 18: Domestic politics

- Beth Simmons, *Who Adjusts? Domestic Sources of Foreign Economic Policy During the Interwar Years*, chapter 1.

Oct 25: Causes and conduct of war

Nov 1: Civil wars, insurgencies, and counterinsurgencies

- Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, chapters 4-5.

Nov 8: Hegemony and hierarchy – **Student presentations on research projects**


Nov 15: Religion – **Student presentations on research projects**

- David Kang, “Why was there no religious war in premodern East Asia?” *European Journal of International Relations* 20(4): 965-986.

Nov 22: Nationalism and borders

Nov 29: Issues in international security


Dec 6: Issues in international political economy