GOVT 540.003: International Relations
George Mason University
Spring 2020

Instructor: Arnold C. Dupuy
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Thursday evenings; 7:20 – 10:00 PM

Founders Hall, Room: ARLVM 477

Office hours: Adjunct office, Room 656. Thursdays, 6:00 – 7:00 PM or by appointment

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

International relations are primarily concerned with the sovereign nation state, its
determination to acquire, maintain and administer power or influence, and where each
state fits in the broader global system. Every state has unique goals regarding how it
wields power and influence outside its borders. Indeed, even the smallest of states must to
some extent engage with its neighbors to protect its interests, resulting in a fascinating
dynamic of alliances, rivalries and interactions.

These interstate interactions can be peaceful or violent, disruptive or benign. Moreover,
this global system can undergo dramatic change in relatively short periods; examples
being Syria and Ukraine, or more long-term, as we are seeing in China’s economic,
political and military rise in East Asia. Ultimately, it is a look inside human interaction
and the ways we have chosen to organize ourselves in relation to each other around the
power dynamic. To make sense of this often confusing and volatile condition, this course
will expose the student to a range of theories designed to add structure to the analysis of
the global political order.

Essentially, these theories provide a ‘lens’ with which to observe, categorize and interpret
the geopolitical order. Think of these theories as analytic tools given to us by their
authors. Additionally, the course provides a venue for the students to discuss these
theories with their classmates and instructor regarding content of the readings, with the goal of applying them to real-world situations.

Integrated within this curriculum we will review current events as case studies to test the efficacies of these theories. These real-world case studies are intended to help students become critical and analytical thinkers and to better relate to world events. It is through the combination of theory and case study analysis that students will develop and hone their abilities to determine patterns of state behavior, as well as outcomes of world politics and international relations. It is encouraged that students share sources that might enhance the discussion or provide additional context.

As noted earlier, the students will become familiar with the major theories of international relations, the commonalities and differences, as well as intellectual gaps, all with the goal of understanding today’s world within the impressive literary heritage of political theory. The main questions guiding the discussion should consider whether theory helps us understand the nature of international politics. More specifically, can it help explain ground-breaking events such as the end of the Cold War, the rise of Putin’s Russia, or the emergence of nationalism, terrorism and non-state actors?

2. **Student Responsibilities**

**Regular attendance and Class Participation**
It is vital that students read the assigned material and attend all the classroom meetings to benefit from the discussions and general interaction. Students should also familiarize themselves with current events, and keep up with the news via major media outlets. This should include domestic and foreign news sources to obtain a balanced perspective. **Please note that class participation is 30% of a student’s grade**, and I will routinely call on students during class to answer questions or contribute to the discussion.

**In-class presentations and literature critique**
Beginning on the second week, selected students will submit a **3-page** literature critique of one of the assigned readings for that week. Additionally, those students will provide a
ten-minute oral presentation of their paper. **Please do not exceed the 3-page or ten-minute limitations.** The papers will be emailed to me before the beginning of class. The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments offered in the texts you analyze. Additionally, this assignment will ensure that students are able to condense the material into succinct and manageable written and oral products.

1. The literature critique can be organized as follows:
   a. Description of the work: main argument; building blocks of the argument; make sure you have a statement summarizing what the piece is about on the first page.
   a. Methodology (how the author achieved his/her stated goals): Did the author present historical, statistical, anecdotal evidence to support his/her argument? Was the evidence sufficient? Did it address the argument? Was the evidence presented in a sequential and logical manner? Was the argument presented in a clear fashion?
   b. Organization of the material and sources: Is the material easy to follow? Does it make a compelling case? Are the sources reliable? Are they biased (i.e. reflecting only one side of the argument)?
   c. Personal critical evaluation: Has the author achieved his/her goal? Is the material a contribution to the field? What could the author have done to improve the piece under review? Strengths, weaknesses and limitations of main argument?

**The literature critiques and the corresponding presentations will account for 30% of the grade.** Each student will conduct at least 3 literature critiques and presentations throughout the semester.

**Research paper**

Each student will write a research paper of no more than 10 pages on a topic relevant to the subject of the course. **Students are required to contact the instructor prior to deciding on a paper topic.** A one-page proposal for this paper is due (via email) no later than March 6, 2020; early submissions are encouraged. The research paper is due on May 1, 2020, submitted via email to my GMU address. Please note, all written products will be double-spaced and submitted in MS Word only.
The paper accounts for 40% of a student’s grade, and should reflect: 1) research and analytical skills (no opinion pieces or essays are acceptable); 2) knowledge of international relations theories; 3) solid writing skills. Students can identify a topic of personal interest and apply international political theory to the understanding of the selected topic, or do innovative research to test a theory discussed in class.

The following should be reflected in the final paper:

b. **Research question**: Ex. Does Neo-realism provide a useful framework of analysis for Russian actions in Ukraine?

c. **Main Argument**: Ex. In the case of the Russian actions in Ukraine, Neo-realism offers little explanatory power.

d. **Working Hypotheses**: Ex. If international social and political norms constitute the main driver(s) of the Russian actions in Ukraine, then Neo-realism only partly explains developments in the region.

e. **When you first approach the instructor with a topic, be prepared to offer the following**: 1. a statement of paper topic, 2. research question, 3. working hypothesis, 4. expected findings.

Students should also familiarize themselves with the Graduate Honors Code, available on the GMU website. 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. GMU takes academic integrity seriously, so if in doubt, ask.

3. **Course Readings and Schedule**

Most texts for this course will be available via electronic journal archives, such as JSTOR, accessible through the GMU library website. Most of the readings are available on the course website; go Course Management, then Adupuy Content then International Relations. Contact me immediately if you cannot find the reading assignments in one of these two ways.
Week 1 (January 23, 2020): Introduction and levels of analysis

Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,”

Hobbes, Leviathan (XIII-XIV; XVII, XXI, XXX).


Week 2 (January 30, 2020): Realism and Neo-Realism

Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations; Chapter 1,” The Six Principles of Political Realism.”


Week 3 (February 6, 2020): Liberalism

Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace. The Liberty Fund


**Week 4 (February 13, 2020): Constructivism**


**Week 5 (February 20, 2020): International Institutions**


**Week 6 (February 27, 2020): Domestic Politics and International Relations**


Weekly Reading:

**Week 7 (March 5, 2020): Leader Psychology and International Relations**


(Optional reading: David Art, “The German Rescue of the Eurozone: How Germany is Getting the Europe It Always Wanted,” Political Science Quarterly 130(2): 181-212.)

**Week 8 (March 19, 2020): International Political Economy**


Week 9: (March 26, 2020) International Politics and Nuclear Weapons


Week 10: (April 2, 2020) International Relations after the Cold War


Week 11 (April 9, 2020): Ethics and International Relations


**Week 12 (April 16, 2020): Civil War and Intervention**


**Week 13 (April 23, 2020): Nationalism and Borders**

https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2017/12/19/whither-nationalism

Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities,” 1983


May 3, 2020: Final Papers Due

May 7, 2020: Last Day of Class