GOVT 540.005: International Relations
George Mason University
Spring 2018

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

Founders Hall, ARLFH477

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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 reading for that week. Additionally, those students will provide a
ten-minute oral presentation of their paper. The papers will be provided in hard copy at 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.

1. The literature critique should 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 about 12 -15 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 no later than March 9; early submissions are encouraged. The research paper is due on May 4, 2018, submitted via email.

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. Others will be available on the course website. Contact me immediately if you cannot find the reading assignments in one of these two ways.

**Week 1 (January 22, 2018): Introduction and levels of analysis**

Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,”

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


**Week 2 (January 29, 2018): Realism and Neo-Realism**

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


**Week 3 (February 5, 2018): Liberalism/Utopianism**

Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace. The Liberty Fund


**Week 4 (February 12, 2018): Constructivism**


**Week 5 (February 19, 2018): International Institutions**


**Week 7 (February 26, 2018): Domestic Politics and International Relations**


**Week 8 (March 5, 2018): Leader Psychology and International Relations**


*[Spring Break; March 12-16, 2018]*

**Week 9 (March 19, 2018): International Political Economy**


**Week 10: (March 26, 2018) International Politics and Nuclear Weapons**


**Week 11: (April 2, 2018) International Relations after the Cold War**


**Week 12 (April 9, 2018): Ethics and International Relations**


**Week 13 (April 16, 2018): Civil War and Intervention**


**Week 14 (April 23, 2018): Nationalism and Borders** (TBD)

Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities,” 1983


E.J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, Chapters 1-2

Stacie Goddard, Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy: Jerusalem and Northern Ireland, Chapter 2, 7
Week 15 (April 30, 2018): Issues in international security


May 4, 2018: Final Papers Due

May 5, 2018: Last Day of Classes