International Politics

Draft syllabus

GOVT 540-003
Spring 2019
Tuesday: 7:20-10 pm
FH468

Prof. Ming Wan
FH515/Research 340
Tel: 703-993-2955
Email: mwan@gmu.edu
Office hours: T: 6:00-7:10 pm or by appointment

Course Description:

This graduate course examines in depth international relations theory. It offers a survey of major approaches to IR scholarship and examines some prevailing questions and concepts. It groups assumptions, concepts and theories into distinct research programs. Students will engage in extensive class discussions, conduct research and present research findings in teams.

Learning objectives:

1. Students develop a critical view of international relations theories. At the end of the class, students should be able to determine whether and how a theory is logically coherent and whether and how a theory may be applicable empirically.

2. Students combine a critical view of IR theories with a sharper understanding of the methodologies IR scholars in different approaches use and how research is actually conducted.

3. Students become more comfortable and competent discussing IR issues theoretically in public.

4. Students acquire the ability to recognize the assumptions, concepts, theories, methodologies and facts in what they read and hear.

5. Students begin to construct their own research program with assumptions, concepts, theories, methodologies and facts.

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short essays (3 x 4-5 double-spaced pages)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (discussions and attendance)</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel Presentation (7 minutes)</td>
<td>April 28 and 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper (20-25 double-spaced pages)</td>
<td>Due April 30</td>
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Total 100%
1. **Short essays**: Write three 4-5-page short essays summarizing and critiquing the assumptions and one or two signature theories of realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism.

2. **Discussions**: Each weekly session starts with discussions. Discussion questions are distributed in advance. Students should sign up for questions to lead discussion of those questions in class. Performance is based on how many times students sign up (counting only one question per session) and how prepared they are for the questions. Theoretical thinking is valued. In addition, performance is based on participation in discussion of questions students have not signed up for.

3. **Panel presentation**: Students should sign up to be part of four panels (5-6 students each). I will ask for your top two picks and will try my best to accommodate your preferences. Members belonging to a panel should work as a team and strategize early on how to present at the end of the semester (each presenter responsible for one dimension of the issue, for example).

   Panels:
   1) The Brexit
   2) The North Korean nuclear crisis
   3) President Putin’s foreign policy
   4) US-China trade war

4. **Research paper**: Your research paper should answer a specific research question. Your research paper proposal, due on February 19, should have the following elements: a clear question, a hypothesis or what you think might be the answer to your question, and a preliminary literature review.

   You can use your research paper as the basis for your panel presentation if they are similar.

   You can use any citation system as long as it is consistent.

**Special needs**: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

**Academic integrity**: Faculty in the Schar School will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code.

**Late work policy**: Request for extension and incomplete has to be made in writing 24 hours before due time. Request will be granted by the instructor if there is a legitimate reason such as family emergency and illness.
**Required books:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

This course requires four books. There are additional readings that can be downloaded from GMU library database or will be put on e-reserve at the GMU library. Reading is due before class. I have suggested some additional important readings for each topic for your reference. You may read them now or in the future. Suggested readings do not have to be read before class.


Those who need to have a better understanding of International Relations and Political Science may want to read the following books.  

**Reading Assignments**

**January 22: Introduction**


**January 29: Realism: Assumptions and Power**

Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Chapters 1, 5-6.


**February 5: Realism: Structuralism**


February 12: Realism: Wars


February 19: Realism: Alliances


February 19: First short essay due

February 19: Research paper proposal due

February 26: Liberal Institutionalism: Assumptions and Preferences


**March 5: Liberal Institutionalism: Structuralism**


**March 11-17: Spring recess**

**March 19: Global Financial Crises**


**March 19:** Second short essay due

**March 26: Constructivism: Assumptions and Theories**

Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Chapters 1, 3-4, 6.

April 2: Norms and Identities


**Suggested readings:** Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (Simon & Schuster, 2006).


April 2: Third short essay due

April 9: Rational Choice Theory


**Suggested readings:** James D. Morrow, *Game Theory for Political Scientists* (Princeton University, 1994).

April 9: American foreign policy


April 28: Panel Presentations

April 30: Panel Presentations

April 30: Research Paper Due