Yale University
Jackson Institute for Global Affairs

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

INRL 651 | Fall 2011 | Syllabus

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Class Time: Rosenkranz 006, Tuesdays 3:30-5:20pm
Office Hours: Rosenkranz 226, Tuesdays 1:00-3:00pm
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"The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves of some defunct thinker."

--- John Maynard Keynes

"Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future."

--- Niels Bohr

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims at providing students in the M.A. program in International Relations with the conceptual and theoretical toolkit necessary to make informed decisions in the realm of international politics. Decisionmakers necessarily use concepts and theories. Often, however, these remain implicit or unconscious, making it harder to detect inconsistencies and other problems with their rationales, and thus negatively impacting the odds of success of whatever course of action they recommend. It is the purpose of the course to give students the tools needed to detect, evaluate, criticize, and fine-tune concepts and theoretical positions in the arguments they will make and encounter throughout their professional lives.

To do so, the first part of the course is devoted to surveying IR theory, its central questions, approaches, concepts, and theories. Then, in the second half of the course, we will look at several central topics in contemporary international relations -- the causes of war, deterrence and nuclear weapons, domestic and international institutions, psychology and negotiation, norms and cooperation, and the role of ideas and identities -- through the theoretical lenses we have studied in the first half. This means the course will work quite like a Zastava Yugo, named worst car of the twentieth century. (Pros: Nice rear-window defroster; keeps your hands warm while you push. Cons: Everything else.) You should expect to do quite a bit of pushing before you can actually jump in and enjoy the ride.

Please be aware that the course is not focused on a description or analysis of the events, actors, institutions, or processes which make up contemporary
international relations. Nor is the purpose of this course to expose you to cutting-edge academic work in IR. The readings will instead focus on the key conceptual and theoretical tools used in the study of international relations, some of which are a few decades old.

COURSE STRUCTURE
This course is intended primarily for M.A. students in international relations. Doctoral students in the political science department may be admitted by express consent of the instructor.

The course will consist in a series of weekly 110-minute seminar sessions with pre-assigned readings. The sessions will focus on (i) laying out the main arguments of the assigned readings and (ii) critically discussing them. I will open up each session with a short (20-minute) lecture on the topic(s) of the day, laying out and interconnecting the main arguments in the readings, to be followed by a general examination and discussion of the core ideas.

GRADING
Course grades will be assigned as follows:

- Seminar participation: 20%;
- Theory memos (2 x 10%): 20%;
- Policy memos (3 x 10%): 30%;
- Policy paper: 30%.

Note: In order to receive an overall passing grade, students must receive a passing grade in all five components of the final grade. In other words, failing one component of the course will lead to a failing grade in the overall course.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS
Participation: Since the course will be conducted in a seminar format, students will take responsibility for leading much of the discussion. Students are thus expected to do all the required readings prior to each session, as well as attend and participate in all sessions. In order to encourage completion of the readings prior to each session, I reserve the right to call on students during the class and ask them to lay out the basic argument of any piece assigned for that session. I also reserve the right to ban electronic devices (other than pacemakers and ankle monitors for those on parole) from the classroom if it appears that they are impoverishing the discussions. More than one non-justified absence from the weekly sessions will lead students to fail the participation component of the grade, and therefore the course.

Theory Memos: Each student will write two theory memos, one for each of two weeks of your choice among those marked below with [TM]. Your memos should be posted on the Classes*V2 server by 8pm on the Sunday before the class meeting in which we will discuss the relevant readings. Theory memos received after this deadline but before the relevant seminar session begins will be dropped one full letter grade. Memos will not be accepted after the relevant seminar session begins. Each of the two theory memos is worth 10% of the final course grade.

These short theory memos should include an analysis of strengths or weaknesses of arguments made by the authors for the relevant week; questions with which you were left by the readings; or points of confusion that should be
clarified. (You should not summarize the readings; assume that everybody else has done the reading as well and understands the basic arguments.) You do not have to discuss all of the readings assigned for the week; you can discuss just one or two, or you can pick a broader range and compare them to each other (or to readings for earlier weeks).

Policy Memos: Each student will write three policy memos, one for each of three weeks of your choice among those marked below with [PM]. Your memos should be posted on the Classes*V2 server by 8pm on the Sunday before the class meeting in which we will discuss the relevant readings. Policy memos received after this deadline but before the relevant seminar session begins will be dropped one full letter grade. Memos will not be accepted after the relevant seminar session begins. Each of the three policy memos is worth 10% of the final course grade.

A shortlist of memo topics for each [PM] week will be posted on the Classes*V2 server one week before the relevant session. The purpose of a memo is to lay out your position on what the United States should do on the topic. Imagine you are writing directly to the President, so do not waste any space stating what you can assume he already knows. The memo should include a description of the policy problem, a statement of the policy recommendation, the argument for that particular option, and an evaluation of the pros and cons of your recommendation -- all in one page.

Both theory and policy memos should be printed in letter-sized paper, with 1-inch margins all around, using a size-12 standard font such as Arial, Courier, or Times New Roman, single-spaced. You must write the memo topic and your name on separate lines at the top of the page, then use the remaining space to write your memo.

Policy Paper: At the end of the semester, students will write a longer (12-15 pages) policy paper. A list of topics will be distributed one month in advance. The paper should lay out the several broad policy options on the topic and specify the theoretical arguments behind each of them. Then, based on a critique of these theoretical arguments, the paper should make a policy recommendation.

Final papers should use the same format as policy memos except they should be double-spaced. You may use whichever citation style you fancy as long as you use only one style consistently throughout the paper.

The final paper should be emailed to me by Wednesday, December 14, at 5:00pm. This deadline is strict. Papers received within the first 24 hours past this deadline will be dropped one full letter grade, to which one further full letter grade will be subtracted for each additional 24-hour period of delay.

Note: While these requirements and the deadlines described above will be strictly enforced, I know that emergencies and illnesses might arise during the term. If that happens to be the case, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work out alternative arrangements for you to complete your work within a reasonable period of time.

All assignments are non-collaborative and should be entirely your own work. Plagiarism is unacceptable and will result in penalties up to and including a failing grade for the assignment (and therefore the course) and referral to the university for disciplinary action. If you haven’t done so yet, please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on academic honesty, in-
including cheating, plagiarism, and document citation. It is your responsibility to understand (and abide by) this policy. If you don’t, please ask.

READINGS
In order best to achieve the goals of the course, keep in mind the following questions when doing the readings: What is the question the author is trying to answer? Why does it matter? What is the argument the author is trying to make? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What is the evidence the author presents in support of the argument? How convincing is it? What are possible counter-arguments? What are the policy problems to which the argument applies?

All readings will be available in PDF format on the Classes*V2 server at least one week before the session in which we will discuss them. The one exception, which you have to purchase, is the following book:


Note: The readings for each session below are listed in the order you should do them.

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I: CONCEPTS AND THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Week 01 (Sep. 06) Introductory Remarks: The Role of Theory (98pp.)

Week 02 (Sep. 13) Key Concepts: Power, Anarchy, Levels of Analysis (192pp.) [TM]

**Week 03 (Sep. 20) Rationalism versus Reflectivism (142pp.) [TM]**


• David A. Lake and Robert Powell, eds., *Strategic Choice and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), Chapter 1, pp. 3-38;


**Week 04 (Sep. 27) The Rationalist Lens (233pp.) [TM]**


**Week 05 (Oct. 04) The Reflectivist Lens (157pp.) [TM]**


**PART II: APPLICATIONS TO KEY AREAS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Week 06 (Oct. 11) The Causes of War (175pp.) [PM]**


**Week 07 (Oct. 18) Deterrence and Nuclear Weapons (262pp.) [PM]**


**Week 08 (Oct. 25) Domestic Institutions (194pp.) [PM]**


Week 09 (Nov. 01) International Institutions (233pp.) [PM]


Week 10 (Nov. 08) Psychology and Negotiation (231pp.) [PM]


• Thomas Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), chapters 1-3 and 6, pp. 1-125 and 221-259;


Week 11 (Nov. 15) Norms and Cooperation (191pp.) [PM]


**Week 12 (Nov. 29) Ideas and Identity (176pp.) [PM]**


