Yale University
Department of Political Science

Syllabus
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS GRADUATE FIELD SEMINAR

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Office: Rosenkranz 226, Tuesdays 1:00-3:00pm
Class: Rosenkranz 102, Tuesdays 9:25-11:15am
PLSC 679

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course lays out the basic landscape of the field of international relations (IR), its central questions, approaches, concepts, and theories. The aim of the course is to provide students with a working understanding of the scope of IR, the role of theory in the field, its main questions, and existing answers to them. More generally, the course should provide students with a basic toolkit with which to evaluate existing theories, construct new theories, and think about the nature and possibility of causal explanation in IR.

The course starts out with a summary of the history of IR and its foundations in terms of the ways in which the knowledge it produces has been and continues to be legitimated. We then compare and contrast the two main meta-theoretical approaches to the study of international relations -- rationalism and reflectivism -- and explore the central concepts in the field: anarchy, power, and levels of analysis. The second part of the course is devoted to one of the main dichotomies in IR -- competition versus cooperation. We will cover the main theories accounting for the conditions under which states compete or cooperate. Specifically, we will study realism (both in its balance-of-power and its hegemonic component), liberalism (and its account of the role of international and domestic institutions), and constructivism (with its focus on identity, culture, and norms). Part three of the course covers the other central question in the study of international relations -- the causes of conflict. Here, we will cover the role of power; the role of crisis dynamics, credibility, and reputation; and that of domestic variables in producing war. We conclude by reflecting on the role and possibility of progress in IR.

Please be aware that this course is not focused on a description or analysis of the events, actors, institutions, and processes which make up international relations. Nor is the purpose of this course to expose you to cutting-edge work in IR. It is designed to give you the theoretical foundations and conceptual tools needed to pursue research in international relations and be able to place it in the field.

A secondary role of the course is to prepare you to pass the Ph.D. qualifying exam in IR. With this in mind, the course makes abundant use of materials included in the reading list for that exam.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

This course is intended primarily for doctoral students in the political science department. Others may be admitted, but students who are not intending to pursue a Ph.D. in political science are discouraged from taking this course. The level of theoretical abstraction and sophistication of the readings -- and, consequently, the class discussions -- will be above and beyond that which is required in order to engage in the practice (as opposed to the study) of international relations.
The course will consist in a series of seminar sessions with pre-assigned readings. Students are expected to do all the required readings prior to each session, as well as attend and participate in all sessions. The weekly sessions will focus on (i) laying out the main arguments of the assigned readings and (ii) critically discussing them. I will open up the session with a short (20-minute) lecture on the topic, laying out and interconnecting the main arguments in the readings, to be followed by a general examination and discussion of the core ideas.

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

- Seminar participation: 20%;
- Response papers: 20%;
- Great-book review: 20%.
- Final paper: 40%.

Please note that in order to receive an overall passing grade, students must receive a passing grade in all four components of the final grade.

While these requirements and the deadlines described below 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. Ideas drawn from other sources should be properly cited. 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, including cheating, plagiarism, and document citation. It is your responsibility to understand and abide by this policy. If you don’t, please ask.

**DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Participation:** Since the course will be conducted in a seminar format, students will take responsibility for leading much of the discussion. All students should be prepared to contribute to class discussion by doing all the readings in advance and bringing to class questions that stem from the readings. 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.

**Response Papers:** Each student will post a 2-3 paragraph (max. 1 page) reaction to the weekly readings for four different weeks. Your response papers should be posted on the Classes*V2 by 8:00pm the day before the class meeting in which we will discuss these readings. Short papers received after the deadline but before the relevant seminar session begins will be dropped one letter grade. Short papers will not be accepted after the relevant seminar session starts. Each of the four short papers will be worth 5% of the final course grade.

These short statements 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). You are welcome to choose any four weeks in which to write reaction papers, though spacing things out over the semester might be best.

“Great Books” Assignment: One of the purposes of the course is to encourage students to read the most important -- or “great” -- books in the field. Since it is impossible to assign all great books during one semester, a second-best option seems to be to ask each student to review one great book and then present its basic argument in class. The idea is to incorporate these basic arguments in the classroom discussion as well as to encourage students to read all of these canonical books at a later moment. In the last page of this syllabus, you will find a list of twenty books that no IR scholar should go without reading. (Or, put another way, no one who hasn’t read them should call themselves an IR scholar…) Each of the students in the seminar should select one book from the list during the second weekly session for this assignment, which has an in-class and a written component. The written assignment will be due in a session determined by mutual agreement between me and the student. The student will then make an in-class presentation during that session. For the written assignment, the student must write a 3-5 page critical review of the book. This review, which ought to keep summary to a minimum (i.e., less than 1.5 pages), should highlight what the student feels are the strengths, weaknesses, insights, and oversights of the book they picked. (I encourage students to read a handful of book reviews in field journals in order to get a feel for what is expected.) Then, during the class in which the review is due, you will make a short, 10-minute presentation of the book’s goal, argument, structure, and evidence. In the Q&A that will ensue the presentation, you will be asked to clarify and defend the book as if you were its author.

Final Paper: Students will write a substantial (20-25 pages for graduate students) research paper. This paper may either be a critical review essay, a “long prospectus” for a (perhaps hypothetical) doctoral dissertation, or a research paper on a topic relevant to the course. In order to discuss and approve paper topics, students should schedule and have individual meetings with me by the end of week 9 (October 29). I encourage you to do it earlier.

Final papers should be printed in letter-sized paper, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins all around, using a size 12 standard font such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman. You can use any citation style you fancy, as long as you stick to it throughout the paper.

The final paper should be emailed to me by Tuesday, December 14, 5:00pm. This deadline is strict. Papers received late will be dropped one letter grade for each 24 hours past the deadline.

READINGS

The selected texts were chosen to represent the major positions and theories in the study of international relations. They provide a wide range of views and differ in the general flavor or style, the persuasiveness of the theoretical argument, and the evidence provided in its support. As a whole, the selection is designed to encourage critical evaluation of existing academic literature. In order to best achieve this goal, keep in mind the following questions when doing the readings: What is the argument the author is trying to make? Why does it matter? What are its strengths and weaknesses? How convincing is it? What are possible counter-arguments? Above all, how does the argument advance our understanding of international politics?

The following books are required for the course:

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph Siverson, and James Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003);


• John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001);

• Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence and International Organizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001);

• Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960);

• Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966);

• Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979);


All other 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.

Please note that the readings for each session below are listed in the order you should do them. Essential readings are marked with an asterisk (*), but you should aim at doing all the readings, not only these. (This is particularly the case for Ph.D. students who intend to take the field exam in IR, who will sooner or later have to read all these works.)

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I: THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Week 1 (Sep. 07) -- Introductory Remarks

(Begin reading.)

Week 2 (Sep. 14) -- Introduction: The History and Foundations of IR


*Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapter 1;


Daniel Maliniak, Amy Oakes, Susan Peterson, and Michael Tierney, *The View from the Ivory Tower: TRIP Survey of International Relations Faculty in the United States and Canada* (Williamsburg, VA: Program on the Theory and Practice of International Relations, College of William and Mary, 2007);


**Week 3 (Sep. 21) -- Major Theoretical Approaches: Rationalism v. Reflectivism**


*Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapters 3-4;


**Week 4 (Sep. 28) -- Key Concepts: Anarchy, Power, and Levels of Analysis**


**PART II: THE STUDY OF COMPETITION AND COOPERATION**

**Week 5 (Oct. 05) -- Competition or Cooperation: The Security Dilemma**


**Week 6 (Oct. 12) -- Explaining Competition 1: Realism and the Balance of Power**


• * John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001);


**Week 7 (Oct. 19) -- Explaining Competition 2: Realism and Hegemonic Power**

• * Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), read chapters 1-2 and skim the rest;


Week 8 (Oct. 26) -- Explaining Cooperation 1: Liberalism and Institutions


Week 9 (Nov. 02) -- Explaining Cooperation 2: Constructivism, Identity, and Norms

- * Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chapters 6-8;

PART III: THE STUDY OF THE CAUSES OF WAR

Week 10 (Nov. 09) -- Explaining Conflict 1: Power, War and Peace

**Week 11 (Nov. 16) -- Explaining Conflict 2: Crisis Bargaining, Credibility, and Reputation**


**Week 12 (Nov. 30) -- Explaining Conflict 3: Domestic Politics**

• * Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph Siverson, and James Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), chapters 1-3, 5-6;
• * Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence and International Organizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), chapters 1-6;
• Alexandre Debs and Hein Goemans, “Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War,” forthcoming in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (2010);


• Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), chapters, 1-3, 6-8;


**Week 13 (Dec. 07) -- Conclusion: Progress in IR**

• * Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, “Introduction: Appraising Progress in International Relations Theory,”* in Elman and Elman, editors, *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 1-20;


• * Donald Puchala, “Beyond the Divided Discipline,”* in *Theory and History in International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 214-225;


Great Books

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981);
- David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2009);
- Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007);
- Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997);
- Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954);