THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Political Science 220A
Fall 2014
W 2-5p, 2121 Bunche
https://moodle2.sscnet.ucla.edu/course/view/14F-POLSCI220A-1
Syllabus Vers. 0.9 (Draft, subject to revision)
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This is a graduate introduction to international relations theory. The course is quite demanding. The readings are varied; they will introduce you not only to schools of thought but also to different methodologies, styles of research, substantive domains, etc. At the end, you will know a lot about international relations theory, but you will also have a good sense of what you don’t know. You will be better able to choose the portions of the field you find appealing and the sets of skills you still need to attain in order to specialize in those areas. Although the course is intended as a broad introduction, there are areas that other scholars might emphasize much more. Because the readings focus on alternative theoretical approaches and perspectives, I have not assigned a lot of empirical work that tries to assess relative explanatory power.

There are different things that you may find disappointing. There are too many readings and not enough time adequately to discuss them all. We will never pay enough attention to those approaches you like; we will spend too much time on work you don’t like. Some of you will be frustrated by the fact that no one particular approach is pushed in the course–you will want to be told where truth lies rather than be encouraged to tolerate ambiguity and accept the hyperpluralism of the field.

Think of the following questions as you read. What do the authors want to explain? What explains each phenomenon in question? What are the critical concepts? How are cause and effect observed? What kind of research design is employed? From what theoretical perspective does the argument originate? With whom are the authors engaged in debate?

This is an incomplete draft syllabus, changes will be made and you will receive updates. The syllabus includes supplementary material and is intended as a resource.

Course requirements: Participation and two short papers.
I expect you to come to each class session and to come prepared. Your participation is essential for the course to work. Not to prepare is to attempt to ride free on the efforts of others. You may be required to do in-class presentations. In addition, you will be required to write two short papers. They must be completed before the end of the quarter. They must not be submitted two weeks in a row; they must be spaced at least two weeks apart (that way, you will have the benefit of comments on prior papers). And you must not write on the same topic more than once. Note that the two papers entail somewhat different tasks–roughly corresponding to the essential components of scholarship.

Paper #1: 7-10 pages
This paper should be a critical review of one or more items assigned in the course. The critique should deal with theoretical and analytical issues rather than minor methodological ones. Examples: “author A argues that X causes Y but the material in the article make a more compelling case for the reverse causal argument”; “author A argues that X leads to Y but variable Z, which is never discussed (much less controlled for), seems a more important causal factor”; “the concept Y is central to the arguments made by both scholars A and B, yet they use the term in quite distinct senses with compelling consequences for their respective arguments.” An example of a critique I do not want particularly to see: “the author’s measurement of power leaves
something to be desired.” Deal with the heart of an argument.

You are encouraged to write about articles we have not yet discussed in class. DO NOT repeat arguments made in class if you do write about an article after we have discussed it.

Paper #2: 7-10 pages
Lay out an interesting puzzle or question and sketch how one might go about solving or answering it.

Alternatively, take off from one or more pieces you have read to develop a hypothesis of your own. This could be an elaboration, extension, or different application of another’s argument.

I am prepared to accept alternative paper topics, but you must clear them with me in advance.

You should think of yourselves as apprentices learning about a field and its practices. Although your primary focus is on the specific arguments developed in the works you read, you should keep an eye on as much else as possible. In what journals does work appear? Do different styles of work appear in different journals (some day you will be an author thinking about where to submit your work)? Who and what is cited? What distinguishes works you like from those that you don’t? Are there any stylistic devices you like?

Course Topics:

1. Realism
2. System Structure
3. Societal Sources of Foreign Policy
4. Institutions and Decision Making
5. Individuals and Contexts
6. Strategic Interaction
7. Situational Analysis: Evolution, History, and Social Constructivism
8. * New Foci: Civil War, Terrorism, and Networks
* These are tentative and subject to change

We will read all or most of:


Key international relations journals you should be aware of:

International Interactions
International Organization
International Security
International Studies Quarterly
International Theory (2009-)
Journal of Conflict Resolution
Journal of Peace Research
Review of International Studies
Security Studies
World Politics
Also worthy of periodic attention:

- Armed Forces and Society
- Australian Journal of International Affairs
- British Journal of Politics
- and International Relations
- Bulletin of Atomic Scientists
- Cambridge Review of International Affairs
- Chinese Journal of International Politics
- Civil Wars
- Conflict
- Conflict Management and Peace Science
- Conflict, Security & Development (2001-)
- Cooperation and Conflict
- Defense and Peace Economics
- Democracy and Security
- Diplomacy and Statecraft
- Economics of Peace and Security Journal
- Ethics and International Affairs
- Ethics and Global Politics
- Ethnicities
- European Journal of International Relations
- European Security
- Foreign Policy Analysis
- Geopolitics and International Boundaries
- Global Governance
- Global Change, Peace and Security
- Global Review of Ethnopolitics
- Global Society
- Harvard International Review
- Human Security Journal
- Intelligence and National Security
- International Affairs
- International Journal
- International Journal of Intelligence
- and CounterIntelligence
- International Negotiation (1996-)
- International Peacekeeping
- International Politics
- International Relations
- International Studies Perspectives
- International Studies Review
- Journal of Common Market Studies
- Journal of European Integration
- Journal of Genocide Research
- Journal of International Affairs
- Journal of Military Ethics (2002-)
- Journal of Strategic Studies
- Journal of Transatlantic Studies
- Journal of World-System Research
- Millenium
- National Identities
- Nationalities Papers
- Nations and Nationalism
- Nonproliferation Review
- Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology
- Peace Review
- Perspectives on Terrorism
- Review
- Review of International Organizations
- Review of International Political Economy
- Security Dialogue
- Small Wars and Insurgencies
- Studies in Conflict and Terrorism
- Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism (2001-)
- Terrorism and Political Violence
- World Trade Review

More primarily policy oriented journals, include:

- Adelphi Papers
- Bulletin of Atomic Scientists
- Foreign Affairs
- Foreign Policy
- The National Interest
- Orbis
- Strategic Studies Quarterly
- Survival
- The Round Table
- Washington Quarterly
- World Affairs
- World Economy
- World Policy Journal
- The World Today
International relations articles also appear in general political science journals, which you should monitor periodically:

- Administrative Science Quarterly
- American Political Science Review
- American Journal of Political Science
- Annual Review of Political Science
- Australian Journal of Political Science
- British Journal of Political Science
- Canadian Journal of Political Science
- Comparative Politics
- Comparative Political Studies
- Economics and Politics
- International Political Science Review
- Journal of Democracy
- Journal of Global History (2006-)
- Journal of Politics
- Journal of Theoretical Politics
- Negotiation Journal
- Perspectives on Politics
- Philosophy and Public Affairs
- Policy Sciences
- Political Analysis
- Political Geography
- Political Geography Quarterly
- Political Psychology
- Political Research Quarterly
- Political Science Quarterly
- Political Studies
- Politics and Economics
- Politics and Society
- Polity
- Public Choice
- Public Opinion Quarterly
- Quarterly Journal of Political Science

Articles of interest to students of international relations also appear in journals in other fields and subfields including:

- American Economic Review
- American Journal of International Law
- American Journal of Sociology
- American Psychologist
- American Sociological Review
- Annual Review of Anthropology
- Annual Review of Psychology
- Annual Review of Sociology
- Chicago Journal of International Law
- Comparative Studies in Society and History
- Complexity
- Contemporary European History
- Critical Review
- Diplomatic History
- Daedalus
- Development and Change
- Economic Journal
- Ethnic and Racial Studies
- Games and Economic Behavior
- International and Comparative Law Quarterly
- International History Review
- International Social Science Journal
- Journal of Cold War Studies
- Journal of Conflict Studies
- Journal of Contemporary History
- Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization
- Journal of Economic Literature
- Journal of Economic Perspectives
- Journal of Interdisciplinary History
- Journal of International Development
- Journal of Law and Economics
- Journal of Legal Studies
- Journal of Mathematical Sociology
- Journal of Military History
- Journal of Modern History
- Journal of National Security Law and Policy
- Journal of Political Economy
- Quarterly Journal of Economics
- Philosophy and Public Affairs
- Rationality and Society
- Social Networks
- Stanford Journal of International Law
- Synthese
- The Manchester School
- The World Economy
- Theory and Decision
- Theory and Society
Articles of interest to students of international relations also appear in journals that cover regions including:

- British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies
- China Security (2003-)
- International Journal of Middle East Studies
- International Relations of Asia-Pacific
- Iranian Studies
- Journal of Asian Studies
- Journal of European Integration
- Journal of Islamic Studies
- Journal of Latin American Studies
- Journal of Slavic Military Studies
- Middle East Policy
- Modern Asian Studies
- Pacific Review
- Post-Soviet Affairs
- Third World Quarterly

Note that many journals you might not suspect carry international relations articles and even devote special issues to international relations topics. Examples include: Special issue on “Formal analysis in international relations,” Synthese 76 (August 1988); Special issue on “International monetary cooperation, domestic politics, and policy ideas,” Journal of Public Policy 8 (July-December 1988).

There has been a huge explosion of new data sets in the last decade, and many are available on the web. But also consult, among others:


Always be on the lookout for reviews of the literature. Most fields have annuals that publish just review essays, see Annual Review of Political Science, Annual Review of Anthropology, Annual Review of Psychology, and Annual Review of Sociology.

Special issues of journals, such as the 50th anniversary issues of International Organization and World Politics, typically contain review essays of the field. The American Political Science Association has also published multiple editions of The state of the discipline which contain review essays. There are also useful essays in encyclopedias and periodic reference volumes, for example: International encyclopedia of the social sciences, and The new Palgrave: a dictionary of economics, eds. John Eatwell, Murray Milgate, Peter Newman (New York: Stockton Press, 1987). Handbooks are a good source of review essays,

The following is a list of twentieth-century classics in the field.

You will be surprised at how many of them you’ve neither been asked to read nor have even heard of. Some of the more recent items may, of course, not stand the test of time and disappear from future lists of such classics. Note that some of the following are by economists, sociologists, and historians, not political scientists.


Gilpin, Robert. 1975. *U.S. power and the multina-


Then there are classics that do not address, but are essential for, international relations. This list specifically excludes diplomatic histories which typically are essential works for scholars of international politics.


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Selected international relations publications by current UCLA political science faculty:


---. co-ed. 2006. *No More states?: globalization,

An incomplete list of UCLA PhDs in international relations:

Max Abrahms (Ph.D., 2010), Northeastern University
Juliann Allison (Ph.D., 1995), (SUNY, Binghamton), University of California, Riverside
Gitty Amini (Ph.D., 2001), University of LaVerne
Joslyn Barnhart (Ph.D., 2013), Wesleyan University
Mark R. Brawley (Ph.D., 1989), McGill University
Lawrence Broz (Ph.D., 1993), (Harvard University, New York University) University of California, San Diego
Daniela Campello (Ph.D., 2008), Princeton University
Rupen Cetinyan (Ph.D., 1998), (University of Pittsburgh)
Kerry Chase (Ph.D., 1998), (Tufts University), Brandeis University
Martha Cottam (Ph.D., 1983), Washington State University
Katja Favretto (Ph.D., 2009), University of Wisconsin, Madison

Judith Goldstein (Ph.D., 1983), Stanford University
Julia Gray (Ph.D., 2007), (University of Pittsburgh) University of Pennsylvania
Sandra Halperin (Ph.D., 1991), (University of Pittsburgh), Sussex University
Mary Hampton (Ph.D., 1993), University of Utah
Cynthia Hody (Ph.D., 1986), University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Shale Horowitz (Ph.D., 1996), University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Koji Kagotani (Ph.D., 2010) (Trinity College, Dublin)
Neil Joeck (Ph.D., 1986), Lawrence Livermore Laboratory
Alan Kessler (Ph.D., 1999), (University of Texas, Austin)
Jennifer Kibbe (Ph.D., 2002), Franklin & Marshall College
Shuhei Kurizaki (Ph.D., 2007), (Texas A & M University), Waseda University
Fred Lawson (Ph.D., 1982), Mills College
Jeffrey W. Legro (Ph.D., 1992), (University of Minnesota), University of Virginia
Peter Li (Ph.D., 2004),
Karen T. Litfin (Ph.D., 1992), University of Washington
Steven Lobell (Ph.D., 1997), (University of Northern Iowa) University of Utah
Charles Mahoney (Ph.D., 2011), California State University, Long Beach
Elizabeth Matthews (Ph.D., 2002), Rochester Institute of Technology
Espen Moe (Ph.D., 2004), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Social Research AS
Jeannette Money (Ph.D., 1991), (LSU), University of California, Davis
Robert Pahre (Ph.D., 1990), (University of Rochester, University of Michigan), University of Illinois
Paul Papayoanou (Ph.D., 1992), (University of California, San Diego)
T. V. Paul (Ph.D., 1991), McGill University
Brian Potter (Ph.D., 1997), Tulane University
Philip B. K. Potter (Ph.D., 2009), Ford School, University of Michigan
Christopher Rudolph (Ph.D., 2001), American University
Maria Sampanis (Ph.D., 1996), California State University, Sacramento
Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey (Ph.D., 1991), London School of Economics
Zachary Selden (Ph.D., 1995), University of Florida
Lars Skålnes (Ph.D., 1993), University of Oregon
Etel Soligen (Ph.D., 1987), University of California, Irvine
Cherie Steele (Ph.D., 1995), (University of Vermont), Wesleyan Univ.
Roland Stephen (Ph.D., 1995), North Carolina State University
Adam Stulberg (Ph.D., 1996), Georgia Institute of Technology
Andrea Talentino (Ph.D., 1998), (Tulane University) Drew University
Jennifer Taw (Ph.D., 1999), Claremont McKenna College
Peter G. Thompson (Ph.D., 2003), (James Madison College at Michigan State University) National Defense University
Jana Von Stein (Ph.D., 2006), University of Michigan
Katja Weber (Ph.D., 1992), (Lehigh University), Georgia Institute of Technology
Melissa Willard (Ph.D. 2011), University of Vermont
Kristen P. Williams (Ph.D., 1998), Clark University

Books that were UCLA dissertations

Legro, Jeffrey W. (Ph.D., 1992), Cooperation under fire: Anglo-German restraint during World War

Articles drawn from UCLA dissertations:

Brawley, Mark R. (Ph.D., 1989)
1993 Regime types, markets, and war: the importance of pervasive rents in foreign policy. Comparative Political Studies 26 (July): 178-197.
Broz, J. Lawrence (Ph.D., 1993)
Burgos, Russell A. (Ph.D., 2005)
Cetinyan, Rupen (Ph.D., 1998)
Chase, Kerry A. (Ph.D., 1997)
2004 From Protectionism to Regionalism:

Florini, Ann (Ph.D., 1995)  

Kurizaki, Shuhei (Ph.D., 2007)  

Legro, Jeffrey W. (Ph.D., 1992)  

Lobell, Steven E. (Ph.D., 1997)  

Moe, Espen (Ph.D., 2004)  


Pahre, Robert (Ph.D., 1990)  
1998 Reactions and reciprocity: tariffs and trade liberalizations from 1815 to 1914. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42:467-
ican Political Science Review 99: 611-622.


Weber, Katja (Ph.D., 1992)


Wehling, Fred (Ph.D., 1992)

1993 Three scenarios for Russia’s Middle East policy. Communist and Post-Communist Studies 26 (June): 182-204.

Pre-dissertation publications by UCLA graduate students (highly incomplete; largely excludes articles in edited volumes):


Brands, Hal and David Palkki. 2012. “Conspiring
Background: theory and methodology in international relations and the history of the field

The field of international relations tends to be quite self-conscious about the nature of theory and science and thus many international relations courses begin with a session on theory. We won’t, but the kinds of questions you should be able to answer, include: What is a theory? How do we select cases for study? What is selection bias? Does all theorizing imply counterfactuals? What is the role of counterfactuals and thought experiments in the development of science? What constitutes a systemic or structural argument? Is reductionism inherently bad? Is there a level of analysis problem in international relations? What is implicated in the choice between qualitative and quantitative methods? What is the relationship between theory and history? What is process tracing?

The field also has a history. Is the field driven by changing historical events and contexts or is it theory- or method-driven? Some references:

Qualitative methods: case studies:


Necessary and sufficient:


Qualitative methods:


Levels of analysis:


Counterfactuals:


Case selection:


Selection bias:


History and how to of the field:


Quantitative methods:


1 Realism

What are realism and neorealism? What are offensive and defensive realism? What is assumed? What is explained? What is not being explained? Are they explanatory theories or normative injunctions? What is meant by anarchy? What does it imply? What is the role of intention? What constitutes change? What kind of empirical work can be done to assess these arguments (i.e., what is the research program)? Does economics provide an appropriate analogue for these theories? What do they say about the economy? Is realism a theory of war, peace, or both? Are some arguments specific to security and others to foreign economic policy?


2 System structure

What is a system? What is a systems theory? Cannot a systems theory also be a theory of foreign policy? Are there alternative ways to characterize international systems or structures than by their balances of power? Compare hegemonic and balance of power arguments. How can scholars characterize the same historical period as both hegemonic and bipolar? What is the difference between assuming an anarchic international system and an international society? What does the anarchy assumption entail? What is the liberal alternative?


3 Societal sources of foreign policy

These articles focus on society and its impact on foreign policy. How is society characterized? Is it a whole or composed of pieces? Along what lines is society divided? What are the societal factors emphasized in the articles? What are the roots of the interests of different subdivisions? Whose interests does policy reflect when society is divided? What are the links between society and the state? Where is government in these models? Are studies of societal sources the sound of one hand clapping (i.e., do they ignore the inter-state component of foreign policy and international relations)? Do these articles provide comparable explanation of security and foreign economic policy? Can all the factors discussed be applied in both domains? Are domestic sources more important in one domain than another? Why?


4 Institutions and decision making

Is there a decision making theory? Is process a description or an explanation? What are the works contrasting process with? Why the need to focus on process rather than purpose? What does it mean for outcomes to be dependent upon process or to be determined by process? Why is the state being disaggregated? Does disaggregating the state require the shift to a decision making approach? Does disaggregating the state require abandoning the rational actor model? Are process arguments about imperfect information or decentralization? What are the relevant actors? Is there a theory of institutions? If we explain foreign policy by use of decision making models, what is the basis for distinguishing international relations as a subfield (i.e., what makes foreign policy different than other policy domains)? Is foreign policy a different issue area? Why? Don’t all domestic policies have foreign consequences?


5 Individuals and contexts

Why are psychological studies self-falsifying (cf., economic arguments self-fulfilling)? Are these arguments universal or contextual? Does context act as a trigger? What is the role of beliefs? Are they driven by motives or not? Do contexts or actors define situations? Is the appropriate level of analysis the individual or the group? What is the basis for deciding? How do scholars demonstrate the explanatory utility of an individual level approach? Are crises inherent in a situation? Can you tell what is or is not a crisis? Is more information always better? Must our explanations of individual behavior conform to individuals’ understanding of their situation, and to their explanations for their choices? What does the problem of cyclical majorities imply for the way we should go about explaining international politics (does it demand a unitary actor model)?


6 Strategic Interaction


7 Situational analysis: evolution, history, and social constructivism


8 New Foci

8a. Civil War


8b. Terrorism


8c. Networks


9 International Institutions