IR436
Theories of International Relations

Course Coordinator:
Dr Katharine Millar
Room: CLM 4.10
e-mail: k.millar@lse.ac.uk
tel: 020-7955 6788
Office hours: See LSE for You

Lectures and seminars:
See online Timetable for details
Dr George Lawson (GL)
Dr Katharine Millar (KM)
Dr. Tristen Naylor (TN)
Dr Chris Rossdale (CR)
Dr Yuna Han
Introduction
This course is a graduate-level introduction to International Relations (IR) theory. It is structured around three core engagements: IR as a branch of philosophical knowledge; IR as a social science; and IR as a dimension of ‘actual existing’ world politics. The course surveys both mainstream and critical approaches to the subject, examining how these theories conceptualize ‘the international’ as a field of study. The course explicitly relates IR to cognate disciplines, reflects critically on the conceptual frameworks and modes of analysis used by IR theories, and studies the co-constitutive relationship between the theory and practice of international relations.

Aims
The course has four main aims:
- To enable students to assess the contributions and shortcomings of both mainstream and critical IR theories.
- To interrogate how ‘the international’ has been constructed as a field of study.
- To connect IR with debates, both methodological and theoretical, that have been germane to the formation of social science as a whole.
- To demonstrate how theory provides a road map, toolkit or lens by which to examine international events and processes.

Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will:
- Evaluate the advantages and difficulties of IR theories both in comparison to each other and vis-à-vis schemas drawn from other disciplines.
- Discuss critically, and write knowledgeably about, major IR theories, relating these both to contemporary events and historical processes.
- Possess the means to show how theory and practice intertwine in constituting mainstream and critical IR theories.
- Learn how to think and write critically about key debates in contemporary IR theory.

Teaching methods
IR 436 is the core course for both the MSc International Relations Theory and the MSc International Relations Research. The course consists of 20 lectures and 20 seminars. Revisions seminars will be held in Summer Term – details to be announced later in the year.

There are three main teaching methods used on the course: lectures, seminars and small groups.
- Lectures: lectures provide an overview of a particular topic. The course is structured in three sections. We begin by ‘theorising the international’, exploring the ways in which IR theorists have conceptualised ‘the international’ as a field of study. The second section of the course examines both mainstream and critical approaches to the subject, applying these theories to key concepts in the discipline. The final part of the course focuses on philosophy of science and philosophy of history, paying attention to how these underpin – and sometimes undermine – IR theories.

Although no previous knowledge of IR theory is assumed, it is worth remembering that this is a graduate level course. As such, preparation – even for lectures – is vital. We suggest that you do some reading before the lectures and, in addition,
strengthen your knowledge of IR theory by attending lectures in related courses such as *The Structure of International Society* (IR100) and *International Politics* (IR410).

- **Seminars:** There are 20 seminars starting in the first week of Autumn Term. The course guide outlines texts that are required reading each week. These are intended to provide a basis for class discussion, to introduce key concepts and issues, and to act as a starting point for more advanced, independent enquiry of particular topics. These texts should be digested *ahead* of the seminars.

  Attendance at seminars is compulsory (and recorded). If you do need to miss a seminar, please notify your class teacher ahead of time. While you are not expected to have prior knowledge of the material we will be discussing, it is important that you are keen, active and involved participants in the course as a whole. This means reading every week, thinking about the topics involved, working hard on the presentations, and generally playing your part in making the seminar an enjoyable, stimulating environment.

  Most of the time, seminars will consist of three core elements:

  o There will be a brief presentation (10 minutes) by one or two members of the group. Presentations should be based on the key questions listed under the weekly topics. Please note that presentation handouts should be circulated to the group twenty-four hours before the seminar takes place.

  o A discussant will comment briefly (no more than 5 minutes) on the topic at hand, raising issues not addressed by the presenter, offering an alternative view or, perhaps, discussing an additional question included in this course guide. Presenters and discussants should work together to ensure that their work is complementary.

  o The class will have a discussion based on the material presented. This will vary in form from week to week, ranging from a general conversation to smaller group work and, on occasion, written assignments.

- **Skills Tutorials:** During or around the reading weeks that are held during week 6 of Michaelmas Term and Lent Term (details of precise dates to be announced closer to the date), students will be offered sessions on key academic skills. These ‘tutorial’ sessions are intended to support students developing the practical approach to scholarship required for success at the graduate level. The first session, in MT, will address analytical academic writing, in concert with the first formative assessment. The second, in LT, will prepare students for the summative essay, and address research components such as topic and question selection, argumentation, evidence, and essay structure.

  **Presentations**

  Begin presentations by setting out the question you are addressing and explaining why it is important. Outline your perspective clearly and identify issues for discussion. Do not merely read out a pre-prepared script, but, using a clear structure, talk through your argument. This makes the presentation more enjoyable to listen to, develops valuable presentation skills and ensures that you know your material. Presenters should also prepare a handout (e.g. outlining the main points covered by the talk) for classmates to download. You are welcome
(in fact, encouraged) to use PowerPoint, Prezi and other such programmes. Do NOT simply summarise the readings of the week – your peers have already done these. The aim is to provide a new and thought-provoking perspective on the topic, drawing from the additional readings, not to recap.

Assessment

Formative assessment – the course has three forms of formative assessment:

- The first formative assessment will be a brief (1500) word critical review of one to two articles from the “theorizing the international” component of the course. The aim of this assignment is to learn to engage analytically with academic work, rather than simply reiterating/summarizing the author’s views. The purpose of the assignment is to support students in developing their general analytical depth in approaching graduate-level writing. This piece is due by 5:00 pm on Wednesday of Week Seven of Michealmas Term.

- Essays: you will write two essays (2,000-2,500 words) during the course of the year. The first, due in week 2 of Lent Term (Wednesday 17th January), should be an assessment of mainstream theories and concepts. The final essay, due in week 8 of Lent Term (Wednesday 28th February), should interrogate critical approaches to the subject. Please note that these essays can be used in the development of your summative essay. Please note that if formative work is submitted late, class teachers will provide minimal feedback, if any.

- Outline: it is strongly encouraged to provide an outline of your summative essay (see below) to your seminar leader. The outline should be 1-2 pages long and consist of: a title; a QUESTION; an overview of your argument; a draft structure; and an indicative reading list. This is a chance to see how your ideas are developing, assess whether the argument is hanging together and receive some thoughts about what gaps need to be filled.

- Verbal: all students will conduct at least one presentation and take one turn as discussant during the second section of the course i.e. weeks 4-18. Class teachers will provide feedback on presentations. In addition, all students are expected to contribute regularly to seminar discussions.

Summative assessment – the course has two forms of summative assessment:

- Assessed essay: 50% of the final grade is drawn from an assessed essay (4,000 words) due in week 1 of Summer Term (Wednesday 25th April). We are open about both topics and methods. Essays should, of course, engage with a theoretical question, issue or puzzle, although this will be interpreted liberally in order to maximise independence of thought and creativity of research. Class teachers and advisors will provide guidance on the assessed essay during the year.

- Exam: during Summer Term, students will sit a two hour unseen exam. This exam constitutes 50% of your final grade. Last year’s exam is provided at the back of this reading list. You can find copies of the exams from previous years in the library. A revision session relating to the exam will be held early in Summer Term. Once again, advisors and class teachers will provide guidance on the exam during the year.

Essay writing
Essay topics should be drawn from the questions listed under each topic or from prior discussion with class teachers. Essays should be typed, double spaced and printed on A4 paper. They should outline a sustained argument answering a specific question, backing up claims and refuting counter positions with examples and evidence. Essays should also include footnotes (where appropriate) and a bibliography. As a basic guide, we suggest reading and absorbing between 6-10 texts (articles, chapters and books) for formative each essay, and one to two texts for the short analytical review.

To reiterate, deadlines for the assignments are:

- **Analytical literature review 1** ('theorising the international'): Wednesday 8th November
- **Essay 1 (mainstream theories)**: Wednesday 17th January
- **Essay 2 (critical theories)**: Wednesday 28th February
- **Assessed essay**: Wednesday 25th April

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the most serious offence in academic work. All summatively assessed work, as well as some formatively assessed work, will be checked against plagiarism software. The department takes plagiarism seriously and the penalties are severe. Plagiarised work will, at minimum, be given a mark of zero, and you may be denied a degree. If your referencing (or lack thereof) makes it difficult for examiners to identify clearly where you draw on the work of others and in what form you do so, you have committed plagiarism, even if this was not your intention. Drawing on the work of others includes, but is not limited to, direct use of others' formulations and paraphrasing of their formulations without due referencing. The work of others includes text and illustrations from books, newspapers, journals, essays, reports and the Internet. It is also an offence to plagiarise your own work (e.g. by submitting the same text for two different pieces of summative work).

The golden rule for avoiding plagiarism is to ensure that examiners can be in no doubt as to which parts of your work are your own formulations and which are drawn from other sources. To ensure this, when presenting the views and work of others, include an acknowledgement of the source of the material. For example, ‘As Waltz (1979) has shown’. Also make sure to give the full details of the work cited in your bibliography. If you quote text verbatim, place the sentence in inverted commas and provide the appropriate reference. For example, ‘It is not possible to understand world politics simply by looking inside states’ (Waltz 1979: 65). Once again, make sure to give the full details of the work cited in your bibliography. If you want to cite the work of another author at length, set the quoted text apart from your own text (e.g. by indenting a paragraph) and identify it by using inverted commas and adding a reference as above. If you want to use references to third party sources you have found in a text, include a full reference. For example, ‘Considerations of security subordinate economic gain to political interest’ (Waltz 1979, cited in Moravcsik 1993: 129). In this instance, include bibliographical details for each work.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand the rules on plagiarism and do not submit plagiarised work. The failure of seminar leaders to detect breaches of these rules in formative or summative essays does not constitute an endorsement – implicit or explicit – of your referencing. You must read the school regulations and, if you have any questions,
consult your seminar leaders and/or personal advisor. For further guidance on how to avoid plagiarism and how to reference, see:

- LSE’s regulations on plagiarism: [http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/academicRegulations/RegulationsOnAssessmentOffences-Plagiarism.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/academicRegulations/RegulationsOnAssessmentOffences-Plagiarism.htm)
- The library’s guide to citing and referencing: [learningresources.lse.ac.uk/24/1/L045APACitingAndReferencingGuide.doc](http://learningresources.lse.ac.uk/24/1/L045APACitingAndReferencingGuide.doc)

**Moodle**

Moodle is the web-based location for IR436 course materials. Moodle can be accessed via the ‘Welcome to LSE Moodle’ quick link on the ‘current students’ page of the LSE website. Students need to self-register via the link on the Moodle homepage in order to gain access to the IR436 site. Help in using the system is available online, and the Teaching and Learning Centre runs tutorials that you can – and should – make use of.

The IR436 Moodle site contains an electronic version of the course guide, lecture slides, web links and news of upcoming events. We have tried to ensure that all essential readings are available electronically, although this should not be assumed and does not serve as a substitute for visiting the library! Your views on the site are welcome.

**Textbooks and journals**

Although there is no textbook assigned for this course, it will be worth purchasing the following three books, particularly if you haven’t studied IR before.

- Barry Buzan and George Lawson (2015) *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). This book blends IR and world history in order to trace the emergence of modern international order. It serves as a useful primer to many of the theoretical and empirical issues we will be wrestling with.
- Scott Burchill *et al.* (eds.), *Theories of International Relations*, 5th edition (London: Palgrave, 2013) – solid ‘ism’-based textbook pitched at quite a high level. Includes chapters on subjects such as historical sociology, international political theory and green politics as well as the usual suspects.
- Patrick Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2016) – especially useful for the third section of the course on philosophy of science. The second edition has a new, and very useful, introduction by Jackson exploring the debates that have emerged since the book was first published in 2011.

Three useful (although more expensive) reference texts would also be worth tracking down:


It might also be worth buying a copy of the *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*, edited by Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, which contains further information on the main concepts and terms we use on the course. There is also a glossary on the course Moodle page that provides definitions of the key terms we will be using.

It is important to keep up to date with debates in the field through the major journals, all of which are available electronically. *International Organization* and *International Security* are the premier US journals. Please note that these journals are, in the main, gateways to mainstream approaches – they are interesting as much for what they omit as for what they cover. *International Studies Quarterly* is the house journal of the International Studies Association. It provides an alternative showcase for mainstream theories, while self-consciously seeking to represent the breadth of work being done in the discipline.

The main non-US journals are the *European Journal of International Relations*, which is mostly (but by no means exclusively) associated with constructivism and post-positivism; the *Review of International Studies*, a well-established general journal published by the British International Studies Association; *International Affairs*, another good general journal, although more geared at ‘stuff’ than theory; and *Millennium*, a self-styled avant-garde journal edited by research students at LSE (N.B. the Millennium Editorial Board is open to all MSc students in the department – it is a valuable way to get to know the best (and worst) of cutting-edge IR theory).

*International Political Sociology* is worth looking at for (mainly) ‘critical’ articles. *International Theory*, edited by Alex Wendt and Duncan Snidal, is a high-calibre theory journal intended to explore the ways in which IR fits with – and rubs up against – cognate modes of enquiry.

**Websites and blogs**

There are an increasing number of blogs devoted to international studies, some of which repay regular visits. The journal *Foreign Policy* houses a number of blogs, including one by Stephen Walt, perhaps the world’s pre-eminent Realist. However, be warned: the site charges a subscription fee. ‘The Duck of Minerva’ ([http://duckofminerva.blogspot.com/](http://duckofminerva.blogspot.com/)) is a collective venture established by a youngish crowd of IR scholars. ‘The disorder of things’ is a group blog set-up by an even younger, and altogether more radical, collective. ‘Relations international’ is worth bookmarking, as is ‘Political Violence at a Glance’. For those interested in philosophy of social science, Daniel Little hosts an excellent site, e-International Relations ([http://www.e-ir.info/](http://www.e-ir.info/)) is a solid, student-friendly site.

Other useful websites include [http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/](http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/), the front-page of the University of California, Berkeley’s ‘conversations with history’ TV programme. The site contains interviews with some of the leading figures in IR theory including Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, Stephen Krasner and Robert Keohane. [http://www.theory-
talks.org/ has a number of interesting interviews, including those with Cynthia Enloe, Ann Tickner, Patrick Jackson, Siba Grovogui, Nick Onuf and Robert Cox, as well as our own Barry Buzan and Iver Neumann. Those of you keen on exploring ideas formulated outside IR, which I hope means all of you, can spend many happy hours roaming around this site, which features interviews with a range of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, classicists and even the odd neuroscientist. ‘Global Social Theory’ is an attempt to widen what is understood to be the theoretical ‘canon’.

In terms of ‘actual existing’ international affairs, the ‘World Affairs Journal’ provides up-to-date commentary on international affairs: http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/; http://www.opendemocracy.net/ is a ‘global conversation’ that includes discussion of issues ranging from security to social justice. The main UK think-tanks working on international affairs are Chatham House, the IISS, RUSI, and the European Council on Foreign Relations. http://www.brookings.edu/ is the online home of the Brookings Institution, perhaps the main think-tank in the United States devoted to international studies.

Obviously, this is just the tip of a substantial iceberg. The key point is that websites, blogs and social media are an increasingly common – and powerful – means of conducting, and thinking about, IR theory. So make sure that you are part of the conversation.

List of Lectures

Michaelmas Term

Part 1 Theorising theory; theorising the international
25 September International Relations vs. international relations (GL)
2 October The Global Transformation (GL)
9 October Modernity, Order, and International Relations (KM)

Part 2 Theories of International Relations

Mainstream approaches
16 October Realism and neorealism
23 October War and security under anarchy
6 November Classical, Neo- and ‘New’ Liberalism
13 November Regimes, Institutions and the Mitigation of Anarchy
20 November The English School
27 November Constructivism
4 December International Law

Lent Term

Critical approaches
8 January Marxism and critical theory (CR)
15 January Postcolonialism (KM)
22 January Race and Empire (CR)
29 January Post-structuralism (KM)
5 February Power (KM)
12 February Feminism (KM)
26 February Security (KM)

Part 3: Theorising theory
5 March Philosophy of History (TN)
12 March Philosophy of Science I: KM
19 March Philosophy of Science II (KM)

**Summer Term**
We will hold a revision session early in Summer Term. Details will be forwarded to you nearer the time.
Topics: Overview, reading and key questions

It is not intended that students read all the references listed under each topic below. Essential readings are exactly that – essential. Other important works are marked with an asterisk (*) and are usually held in the Course Collection and/or available electronically.

Michaelmas Term
Part 1: Theorising the international
The first section of the course traces the emergence of modern international order. It links history with theory, examining how thinking about international relations has both been shaped by historical developments and has helped to shape these developments.

Week 1 Introduction: International Relations and international relations
Most social sciences emerged in the 19th century as attempts to understand ‘global modernity’, i.e. the shift from (predominantly) agrarian to (predominantly) industrial economies, the transition from dynastic orders to (often imperial) nation states, and the rupture prompted by the emergence of ideologies ranging from liberalism to socialism. However, IR has traditionally embraced a different point of origin, seeing itself as formed in 1919 around the theme of war and peace, and progressing through several ‘great debates’ during the course of the 20th century. This sense of disciplinary exceptionalism is matched by a set of distinct benchmark dates around which IR is organized, most prominently 1648, when the Peace of Westphalia ended the Wars of Religion in Europe. However, recent scholarship has questioned both of these foundational myths – thinking about IR extends beyond 1919 and there are landmark events that have had more of an impact than 1648 on the making of modern international order. But if the standard stories told about IR are myths, then how should we understand the relationship between International Relations (as a field of enquiry) and international relations (as a practice).

Essential reading

Further reading

European Journal of International Relations (2013) Special Issue: ‘The End of International Relations Theory’ 19(3). Also see the debate at the Duck of Minerva.

Key questions
• What is International Relations? Is it different from international relations?
• Can we speak of international relations before 1648 or 1919?
• What, if anything, differentiates IR from other social sciences?
Week 2  The Global Transformation
This lecture extends the themes of the previous week by situating the emergence of modern international order within the 'long 19th century' (roughly 1776-1914). This period was one of huge turmoil, combining simultaneous political, economic, military and cultural revolutions. Taken together, these revolutions are known as ‘the global transformation’. The global transformation opened up a huge power gap between those who first harnessed the revolutions of modernity (a handful of Western states) and those who were denied access to them (most of the rest of the world). This gap dominated international relations for around two centuries. As such, the global transformation serves as the foundation for how modern international relations has been organised, practiced and theorised.

Essential reading

Further reading
N.B. Check out Hans Rosling’s ‘joy of stats’ video. Those keen to find out more can do so here.

Key questions
- What was the impact of ‘the global transformation’ on international order?
- To what extent is contemporary international relations a product of global modernity?

Week 3  Modernity, Order, and International Relations
What does it mean to be “modern”? How do we make sense of ‘modernity’? Are we already ‘past’ modernity as in ‘postmodern’? Building on the previous two weeks, this lecture explores the idea of modernity as a source of power within international relations, how this relates to broader understandings of the relationship between science and modernity, and International Relations itself as a modern form of knowledge. It also grapples, briefly, with ‘postmodern’ thought to show how what exactly modernity it is, remains far from obvious.
Essential readings


Further readings


Key questions

- Is modernity best described as a political project?
- What does Latour mean when he says we have never been modern?
- Can the Enlightenment be thought of as ‘the birth’ of modernity?

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Part 2  Theories of International Relations

The second part of the course explores the principal theories of International Relations. Most of the time, theories are covered in two sessions. In the first week, lectures provide a general introduction to a particular approach. In the second week, lectures tackle an issue/theme/concept of core concern to the theory. At all times, we will be asking two linked questions: a) How well – or not – do these concepts/issues/themes map onto existing IR theories?; and b) How close are the links between the concepts and issues we use to understand/explain/describe the world, and actual events and processes in world politics?

Week 4  Realism and Neorealism

Realism has deep roots in the writings of such thinkers as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes. After the Second World War, E.H. Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau in particular sought to establish realism as an alternative to ‘idealism’, which they thought had dominated the interwar years. Realism soon became the principal IR theory, especially in North America. Following the behaviourist turn in political science, Kenneth Waltz became the progenitor of neo- or structural realism, aspiring to develop realism into a ‘scientific’ theory. Structural realism divides into ‘offensive realism’, ‘defensive realism’ and ‘neo-classical realism’.

Recently, there has been revived interest in classical realist ideas.

Essential reading


Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (1979), Chapter 6.

Further reading

Classical realists

E.H. Carr, The Twenty Years Crisis (especially the 2001 edition by Michael Cox)
George Kennan, American Diplomacy (1952)
Hans J. Morgenthau, Scientific Man and Power Politics (1947)
* Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations (up to 5th edition), especially Parts 1 & 4
Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932)
*Stephen M. Walt, The Origins of Alliances (1987), Chapters 1 & 2

Commentaries on the classical realists

Christoph Frei, Hans J. Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography (2001)
* Nicolas Guilhot ed. The Invention of International Relations Theory (2011)
Jonathan Haslam, No Virtue Like Necessity: Realist Thought since Machiavelli (2002)
Joel Rosenthal, Righteous Realists (1991)
Michael Williams (ed.), *Realism Reconsidered* (2007)

* Neorealism(s)
  * Ken Booth ed., *Realism and World Politics* (2011) [also published as ‘The King of Thought’, *International Relations*, 23(2) (2009) and 23(3) (2009)]
  * Steve Lobell et al., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (2009)
  * Gideon Rose, ‘Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy’, *World Politics* 51(1) (1998): 144-172
  * For ‘A Conversation with Kenneth Waltz’, click [here](#).

**Key questions**
- ‘For classical realists, conflict stems from human nature, while for neo-realists conflict stems from the nature of the international system’. Discuss.
- What are realism (and its variants) effective at capturing in the international system and what does it miss? Is realism useful for analysing contemporary international politics?

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**Week 5 War and Security under Anarchy**

One of the central preoccupations of IR is the possibility of security under conditions of anarchy. In a system of states without a centralised monopoly on the use of force, how can states ensure their survival? Realist scholars have devoted much thought to the link between the distribution of power in, and the stability of, the state system. At the same time, realists have grappled with the observation that war is costly, yet even ‘rational’ actors seem unable to avoid it.

**Essential reading**

**Further reading**
*Theoretical takes on the anarchy problematic*
Robert Art and Kenneth Waltz eds., *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics* (5th ed. 1999), especially the chapters by Art, Jervis and Waltz


On war

Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett eds., *Security Communities* (1998), especially Part I


John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (1990), esp. Ch. 10


Key questions

- In an anarchical system, is durable peace possible?
- How does a ‘rational’ hegemon react to the rise of a peer-competitor?
- Is war ‘rational’?

Week 6

No lecture – reading week

Week 7

Classical, Neo- and ‘New’ Liberalism

Classical political liberalism traces its origins to thinkers as diverse as Kant, Paine and Smith. Liberal IR theorists tend to reject the realist conception of states as like-units, linking variations in state behaviour to differences in regime type. In particular, democracies/republics are considered to be less warlike than monarchies/authoritarian regimes. Modern ‘democratic peace theory’ has refined this theory into the statistically grounded hypothesis that consolidated liberal democracies do not go to war with each other. Another particularly influential strand of liberalism in IR, ‘neoliberal institutionalism’, accepts most of neorealism’s basic assumptions, but, drawing on game theory, makes more optimistic predictions about the viability of cooperation under anarchy.

Essential reading


**Further reading**

*Classical liberalism*


*Neo*liberalism(s) – and their critics


*Democratic peace theory*

* Bruce Russett, *Controlling the Sword* (1989)

**Key questions**

- Is liberalism in IR better seen as a theory or as an ideology?
- Does neoliberal institutionalism challenge or extend neo-realism?

**Week 8 Regimes, Institutions and the Mitigation of Anarchy**

All variants of liberalism are associated with the theorization of cooperation. While neoliberal institutionalism explains the emergence of cooperative regimes as a rational choice depending on the distribution of gains/losses and available information, newer
iterations of liberal theory have drawn attention to the capacity of institutions to influence states' interests and thus to afford durable order under anarchy. The empirical focus of these theorists, who are sometimes grouped in the category of 'new liberals', is on the implications of the decline of American hegemony and the rise to prominence of new state and non-state actors for the configuration of international institutions and the character of cooperation.

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**


* Steven Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes* (1983)


Beth A. Simmons, Frank Dobbin and Geoffrey Garrett, ‘The International Diffusion of Liberalism’, *International Organization* 60(4) (2006), 781–810 [Also see the symposium that follows this article]


**Key questions**

- When and why do states co-operate?
- Is democratization making international politics more peaceful?

**Week 9 The English School**

In reviewing the English School by focusing on its key concepts of (i) international society; (ii) solidarism and pluralism; and (iii) primary and secondary institutions, this lecture explores the School’s utility as a ‘middle way approach’ between realism (international system) and revolutionism (world society) and probes what kinds of insights an English School approach
can yield that others cannot. The lecture then looks in-depth at a further distinctive feature of the school within IR theory: the centrality of historical enquiry. The English School provides a sophisticated lens through which to study the entrance of actors into international societies (and exists from them), the relative positions and identities of those actors, and what the story of the expansion and evolution of the contemporary, global international society can tell us about key issues in contemporary international politics from the norm of sovereign inviolability to the human rights agenda.

**Essential readings**


**Further readings**


* The online home of the English School can be found [here](#).

**Key questions**

- Is contemporary international society predominantly pluralist or solidarist?
- Does the English School provide a convincing account of the expansion of international society?
- Is the English School best seen as a form of proto-constructivism?

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**Week 10 Constructivism**
The introduction of constructivism has prompted a shift in IR theory away from a focus on the distribution of material power to a concern with the role of ideas in constituting state behaviour. Perhaps the most prominent constructivist, Alexander Wendt, accepts the ‘states under anarchy’ problematic, but rejects the immutability of anarchy. Other constructivists more fully embrace the idea of ‘social construction’, emphasising the role of otherwise relatively neglected aspects of world politics, such as language, identity and beliefs.

**Essential reading**
Emanuel Adler ‘Seizing the Middle Ground’, *EJIR* 3(3) (1997): 319-364

**Further readings**
Theoretical debates

**Applying constructivism**
Key questions

- Can constructivists explain state behaviour?
- Do all forms of constructivism share a common denominator?

Week 11  International Law
Since the end of World War Two, international law has proliferated, mainly in the form of bi-and multilateral treaties. The existence of supposedly binding and enforceable rules challenges the assumption that the international system is anarchical. While constructivists have devoted more attention than other approaches to the study of international law, all theories discussed in the preceding weeks have proposed ways of interrogating the role of international law in IR. The challenge for these approaches is to show whether international law is a variable in its own right. Do states create or comply with international law when it furthers a prior interest and/or aligns with a shared norm, or does law make a substantive difference to international politics in its own right?

Essential reading
Hyeran Jo and Beth A. Simmons “Can the International Criminal Court Deter Atrocity?” International Organization 70 (Summer 2016): 443-475
Martha Finnemore and Stephen J. Toope “Alternatives to ‘Legalization’: Richer Views of Law and Politics” International Organization 55.3(Summer 2001): pp. 743-758

Further reading
* Michael Byers ed., The Role of Law in International Politics (2000), esp. Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 9
* Jeffrey L. Dunoff and Mark A. Pollack eds., International Law and IR (2012)
Thomas Franck, The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations (1990), Chapters 1 and 2
Rosalyn Higgins, International Law and How We Use It (1994), Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 6
Nico Krisch, Beyond Constitutionalism (2010), Chapter 1 and Conclusion


Jutta Brunée and Stephen Toope, Legitimacy and Legality in International Law (2010)

**Essential questions**

- Of what does international law consist?
- In what ways do legal rules differ from other kinds of rules?
- How is the international legal order changing?

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**Lent Term**

**Critical Approaches**

This section of the course assesses the challenges posed to mainstream IR theory by ‘critical’ approaches to the subject. Although there is considerable variation both within and between critical IR, they form part of a collective attempt to broaden and deepen IR theoretically, methodologically, and historically.

**Week 12 Marxism and critical theory**

Critical theorists draw on a long line of scholarship that extends from Marx and Gramsci via the Frankfurt School to modern day theorists such as Immanuel Wallerstein and, in IR, Robert Cox and Justin Rosenberg. For ‘critical’ scholars, world politics is marked by historically constituted inequalities between core and periphery, north and south, ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’. To that end, liberal and realist approaches are seen as ideologies of inequality. Rather than focusing on anarchy, Marxist theorists examine the social relations that underpin geopolitical systems. Such a commitment leads to debates about the hierarchical nature of international affairs. It also leads to attempts to construct a ‘social theory’ of ‘the international’.

**Essential reading**


**Further readings**

*Rosenberg, Justin (2016) ‘IR in the Prison of Political Science’,* *International Relations* 30(2): 127–153. You can watch the lecture from which this article is based [here](#).

The debate on ‘hierarchy’

Key questions
- What is ‘critical’ about critical IR theory?
- ‘Capitalism not anarchy is the defining feature of the international system’. Discuss.
- What is the significance of seeing hierarchy rather than anarchy as the organizing principle of world politics?

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**Week 13** Postcolonialism
Postcolonial approaches, those that centre the continuing legacy of empire in structuring the contemporary world order, are becoming increasingly prominent in IR. They seek to decolonise the discipline by drawing our attention to the ways in which ostensibly neutral categories of thought are themselves a product of (neo)colonial relations of domination (by the Global North) and subordination (of the Global South). This lecture explores some of the key tenets of postcolonial thought and analyses the extent to which imperial relations continue to underpin current political, economic and legal regimes.

**Essential readings**

**Mupiddi, Himadeep (2012) The Colonial Signs of International Relations** *(London: Hurst)* (Ch 1)

**Further readings**

Burbank, Jane and Frederick Cooper (2010) *Empires in World History* *(Princeton)*.  
Halperin, Sandra and Ronan Palan eds. (2015) *Legacies of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), especially the chapters by Barkawi and Panan  

**Key questions**

- Is Postcolonialism a coherent school of thought in IR? Why or why not?  
- To what extent is the discipline of International Relations an imperial discipline?  
- How useful is the concept of empire for understanding contemporary international relations?

**Week 14 Race & Empire**
Most IR scholars accept that the modern states system emerged from a system of empires, even if they disagree about when and how this process took place. Fewer scholars accept that imperial legacies and practices continue to constitute core features of contemporary international relations. More often than not, empire is seen as a normative term rather than as an analytical tool. Similarly, most scholars agree that race and racism are important political categories within the modern era, but fewer consider the politics of race and racism to be integral to the development and nature of the international system. This lecture explores the political, economic and cultural components of empire and race, and assesses the extent to which imperial and racist relations continue to underpin contemporary international relations.

**Essential readings**


**Further readings**


Key questions
• To what extent is the discipline of International Relations an imperial discipline?
• How useful is the concept of empire for understanding contemporary international relations?
• What role does race play in international relations?

Week 15  Poststructuralism
This lecture maps out major developments in IR theory under the heading of ‘poststructuralism’. It examines the arguments underlying poststructuralist critiques of realist, liberal, English School, constructivist and critical theories. Calling attention to the influence of leading figures within literary theory and philosophy (e.g. Foucault, Derrida, Butler, Kristeva, and Lyotard), the lecture explores how matters of representation, language, and power have led some IR scholars to question established approaches to world politics. In doing so, the lecture looks critically and comparatively at different versions of poststructuralism, exploring the implications of poststructuralist ideas for the meaning of the ‘international’, ‘the political’, and for making explanatory and normative claims about international politics.

Essential reading

Further reading


Key questions

- What do poststructuralists mean by ‘critique’?
- What is the relationship between ‘the political’ and ‘the international’?
- What is the best way to characterise the relationship between poststructuralism and constructivism?

Week 16  Power

One of the major contributions claimed by poststructuralist international theory is that it incorporates a more comprehensive and nuanced conception of ‘power’ than other perspectives. This lecture addresses the different dimensions of power proposed within the framework of poststructuralism, calling attention to how power might be thought of as ‘relational’ and ‘productive’, and how it might be analysed with attention to discourse and modes of representation. Particular attention is paid to the intersection of power/knowledge in producing ‘the international’, ‘expertise’, and those in the academy as ‘international experts’.

Essential Reading


Further Reading


Key questions
- How useful is the concept of ‘governementality’ for understanding how power operates in global governance?
- In what ways do poststructural conceptualizations of power differ from notions of hegemony, socialization, and/or ‘soft-power’?
- What can poststructural notions of power tell us about the role of knowledge – and the academy – in international politics?

Week 1
- No lecture – reading week

Week 17
- Feminism and Gender
This lecture maps out the contributions of feminist scholarship to IR theory. Initially, it distinguishes between different strands of feminist theories and feminist ‘ways of knowing’. It explores the distinctive claims of feminism, its critique of mainstream IR theories, and its overlaps – and tensions – with constructivism, critical theory and post-structuralism. This, in turn, lays the ground for thinking about how feminist modes of IR theory intersect with and influence other forms of IR ‘at the margins’—including postcolonial and queer IR—and calls attention to the analytical and normative consequences of patriarchy and androcentrism throughout ‘the international’.

Essential reading


Also see Weber, C. (2014) “You Make My Work (Im)Possible”, Duck of Minerva

Further reading
Overviews


**Additional reading**


**Key questions**

- Can the concept of ‘gender’ be divorced from feminist theory?
- Is feminist IR a mode of analysis, a theory, or a political project?
- “Queer and feminist IR are essentially more specific re-treads of existing critical approaches in international relations, and therefore do not make a specific analytical contribution”. Discuss

**Week 19 Security**

Peace, war and security studies have long been targets for modes of critical intervention. This lecture examines feminist critiques of how ‘security’ is understood in both mainstream and critical theories. The lecture explores in the ways in which the agenda of security studies has grown to encompass a wide range of security referents and modes of analysis. It also assesses how feminist arguments fit with contemporary developments in the
theorization of security, and considers their strengths and weaknesses in relation to concepts like ‘human security’, ‘insecurity’, and ‘securitization’.

Essential reading


Further Reading


Key questions
- How do conceptions of security differ between mainstream and critical approaches?
- What are the consequences of defining ‘security’ from a feminist point of view?
- Can the Copenhagen school accommodate feminist critiques?

Part 3 Theorising theory
The final section of the course explores the ‘theory of theory’, i.e. the concerns with issues of objectivity and truth, causation and chance, and power and knowledge that lie behind social scientific enquiry. The first two sessions look at whether social sciences, including IR, can be approached in a way comparable to natural sciences. The latter two sessions look at the use – and abuse – of history in social scientific research.

Week 20 History and/in International Relations

In some respects, history has always been a core feature of the international imagination and since the end of the Cold War, the prominence of history has risen with the emergence – or reconvening – of historically oriented approaches such as constructivism, neo-classical realism and the English School. That said, different theoretical approaches use history in fundamentally different ways. This lecture clarifies the different ways in which history is used in IR and questions whether all approaches can be said to be using history in a valid way.

Essential readings
* Also see the essays by Chris Reus Smit and Eddie Keene in the same forum.

Further readings


Key questions
- How does the way that realists use history differ from that of constructivists? Does one set of theorists use history ‘better’ than the other?
- In what ways do discussions of history in IR map onto other debates within the discipline (e.g. the quantitative/qualitative divide, the rationalist/empiricist divide, and/or the positivist/post-positivist divide)?
- Are there any dangers in the turn to ‘context’ in IR?
### Week 21  Philosophy of Science I: Knowledge and certainty

This lecture is the first of two that draw on Patrick Jackson’s *Conduct of Inquiry* to examine the role of epistemology in the study and practice of international relations. The lecture provides an overview of debates about the nature of ‘scientific’ knowledge and how these have been taken up in IR. Focusing on issues of causation and prediction, the lecture interrogates what it means to understand IR as a ‘positivist’ social science.

**Essential reading**


**Further Reading**


**Key questions**

- To what extent is social science distinguished by its focus on causal explanation?
- How important is prediction to the study of world politics?
- How (or what) does critical realism enable us to explain (in) international politics?
Building on themes explored in the previous lecture, this lecture investigates various understandings of social ‘science’ and the politics of ‘truth claims’. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which ‘post-positivist’ approaches have opened up debates over explanation, causality, and interpretation. The lecture concludes with a critical reflection on the utility of epistemological debates – and the question of what we do with constructivism.

Essential reading


Further reading


Bueno de Mesquita, B. Predicting Politics (Ohio State: 2002), Ch. 1.


* Sabaratnam, Meera (2011) ‘Of Consensus and Controversy: The Matrix Reloaded’, The Disorder of Things (see also the rest of this discussion series)

Shapiro, Michael (1991) Reading the Postmodern Polity (Minneapolis: Minnesota) Chs. 1-3


Key questions

- Can there be a social science without positivism?
- What is the epistemology of ‘constructivism’?
- Are ‘isms’ evil? Either way, what do we do about ‘all the bodies’?