

MSc International Relations Theory

Since the end of the Cold War, International Relations (IR) has blossomed as a field of enquiry. Debates about the range, scale and scope of American power, the rise of China, the emergence of Islamist terrorist networks, new security threats ranging from climate change to HIV/AIDS, the impact of globalisation, and interventions in Iraq, Kosovo, Libya and elsewhere have produced a surge of interest in the discipline. Yet IR has been somewhat slow at engaging with many of these processes, preferring to rely on outmoded toolkits rather than seeking novel means of understanding a world that is as bewildering as it is complex.

LSE's programme in IR theory is designed to meet these multiple challenges. It asks – and seeks answers to – some of the core questions facing students, academics and policy makers in the contemporary world: How should we understand 'new' security threats? How can we conceptualise the scale of American power? How do debates about 'humanitarianism' feed into broader understandings of individual, state and international responsibility? This programme offers the opportunity to address some of the world's most pressing problems alongside some of the world's most prominent IR theorists in one of the world's leading universities.

Why LSE

Founded in 1895, LSE is one of the world's leading social science institutions. The School offers an unrivalled opportunity to study in an institution with a worldwide academic reputation whilst enjoying the cultural and social facilities of London – one of the world's great capital cities. LSE itself is extremely cosmopolitan, with a student populace drawn from over 150 different countries. As a result, the student body incorporates a diverse cross-section of experience and beliefs.

The School's location in central London is fundamental to its identity and reflects the easy interchange of ideas between the School and the outside world. Westminster, Whitehall, the business and financial institutions of the City, the Law courts and the media are all on the School's doorstep. LSE is also home to the British Library of Political and Social Science, one of the largest libraries in the world devoted exclusively to the economic and social

sciences, containing about four million items on open access and 28,000 journals.

The IR department at LSE is one of the oldest in the world. Since its foundation nearly eighty-five years ago, it has gained a global reputation in the field of IR theory. Its reputation for international excellence was recognised in the most recent Research Excellence Framework when the IR and Government Departments, assessed as one unit, was ranked as second in the UK. Current professors in the department include Iver Neumann, Christopher Coker, Karen Smith, William Callahan, Jeff Chwieroth, Peter Trubowitz, Toby Dodge and John Sidel, while the Department as a whole is a world leader in both explanatory and normative theory. Students will get the chance to work alongside leading figures in the discipline in tackling some of the world's most important concerns.

Programme Structure

1. Paper 1. The core course takes a novel approach to IR theory by taking as its starting point an apparently simple question: what is 'the international'? For much of the history of IR, the discipline has been curiously silent on this issue, appearing more as a branch of political theory, international history and law rather than as a clearly defined area of study in its own right. This course takes as its central engagement ways in which IR may build a new identity as a branch of philosophy, as a social science and via its unique relationship with world history and world politics. The course explores this identity via seminar-based conversations about a number of IR's most contested concepts including sovereignty, security, anarchy and power.
2. Students will get the chance in their second paper to draw from a range of courses taught by IR specialists. These include: 'International Political Theory'; 'Strategic Aspects of International Relations'; 'International Organizations and Regimes'; 'The Politics of International Law'; and 'Culture and Religion in International Relations'.
3. Paper 3 offers students the opportunity to take a course either within the IR department or elsewhere in the School (subject to approval). Within the IR department, students may choose to take an option on a particular area of the world (East Asia, the Middle East or Europe), or another issue altogether such as 'Economic Diplomacy' or 'Foreign Policy Analysis'. Further afield, the IR department has established reciprocal arrangements with a number of departments around the School, thereby allowing access – subject to certain restrictions – to a wide range of theoretical and empirical courses.
4. Paper 4 – the dissertation – is a 10,000 word thesis designed to allow students the opportunity to tackle an independent research project. Students may seek to carve out a niche in IR theory or approach an empirical subject via a theoretical lens. Either way, students will be working closely with a supervisor in generating – and completing – their own research project.

Assessment

Apart from the dissertation, courses are assessed by examination and/or coursework. Formative assessment includes student presentations, essays and other activities as determined by class tutors.

Entry Requirements

Normally, a good upper second class honours degree or equivalent in a relevant discipline. Students often have a background in IR, politics or a related social science, although this is not required. Some knowledge of political theory, social theory, ethics, political philosophy or the philosophy of social science would be an advantage. Regardless of initial background, the key to admission will be demonstrating keenness in engaging with both the theory and practice of world politics.

Careers

Students graduate from International Relations with an understanding of the complex issues that underlie world affairs and how these link to the work conducted by governments, businesses, non-governmental organisations and pressure groups. They develop many widely transferable skills during their studies including:

- ∑ written and verbal communications skills;
- ∑ research skills;
- ∑ an understanding of complex political and cultural issues;
- ∑ the ability to research using a variety of sources;
- ∑ the ability to evaluate and assess a range of options, sifting material and weighing up arguments;
- ∑ the ability to critically analyse information and can assess problems and arguments, reach conclusions and discuss them clearly.

International Relations graduates have found work with a range of employers including: international institutions; non-government organizations (NGOs); local and national government; corporations; the media; and publishing companies. The Department has also played a leading role in training university lecturers – a large number of former students now teach in universities throughout the world.

Financial Support

LSE makes available over £7 million annually in financial support for its students. For up to date information, please refer to the LSE Financial Support Office:

Σ <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/moneyMatters/financialSupport/Home.aspx>