Theories of International Relations

Course Convenor
Dr Katharine Millar
Room: CLM 4.10
E-mail: K.M.Millar@lse.ac.uk
Tel: 020 7955 6788
Office hours: TBC

Lectures
*Michaelmas Term*
Mondays (Weeks 1-11), 11.00am-12.00pm, CLM 7.02

*Lent Term*
Mondays (Weeks 1-11), 11.00am-12.00pm, 32L.G.03

Lecturers
Professor Barry Buzan (BB)
Dr Janina Dill (JD)
Dr George Lawson (GL)
Dr Katharine Millar (KM)

Seminars
*Michaelmas Term*
Group 1: Wednesdays (Weeks 1-11), 15.00 - 17.00, KSW 2.07
Group 2: Thursdays (Weeks 1-11), 14.00 - 16.00, TW1 2.04
Group 3: Wednesdays (Weeks 1-11), 10.00am - 12.00pm, OLD 3.25

*Lent Term*
Group 1: Wednesdays (Weeks 1-11), 15.00 - 17.00, KSW 2.07
Group 2: Thursdays (Weeks 1-11), 14.00 - 16.00, TW1 2.04
Group 3: Wednesdays (Weeks 1-11), 10.00am - 12.00pm, OLD 3.25
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. A revision class 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. 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.

- **Small groups:** During the reading weeks that are held during week 6 of Autumn Term and Spring Term, students will meet in small groups of 3-4 with their seminar leader. These ‘tutorial’ sessions are intended as forums for probing deeper into issues raised by the course, highlighting problems, and looking more closely at topics which students are engaging with in their written work. These sessions will be timetabled in consultation with seminar leaders.

**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.
Assessment

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

- **Essays**: you will write three essays (2,000–2,500 words) during the course of the year. The first, due in week 7 of Autumn Term (Wednesday 9th November), should engage with the texts used to set up the course and its central concern: how to conceptualize IR as a field of enquiry. The second, due in week 2 of Spring Term (Wednesday 18th January), should be an assessment of mainstream theories and concepts. The final essay, due in week 8 of Spring Term (Wednesday 1st March), should interrogate critical approaches to the subject. Please note that these essays can be used in the development of your summative essay.

- **Outline**: it is strongly encouraged to provide an outline of your summative essay (see below) to your seminar leader. The outline should be 2-3 pages long and consist of: a question/title; 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:

- **Long essay**: 50% of the final grade is drawn from a long essay (4,000 words) due in week 1 of Summer Term (Wednesday 26th 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 long essay during the year.

- **Exam**: during Summer Term (probably in mid-May), 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 each essay.

To reiterate, deadlines for the assignments are:

- **Essay 1 (‘theorising the international’)**: Wednesday 9th November
- **Essay 2 (mainstream theories)**: Wednesday 18th January
• Essay 3 (critical theories): Wednesday 1st March
• Long essay: Wednesday 26th 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 other’s 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:

• Richard Pears and Graham Shields, Cite Them Right: The Essential Guide to Referencing and Plagiarism (London: Pear Tree Books, 2008);
• LSE’s regulations on plagiarism:
  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

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! There is also an IR436 e-pack consisting of scanned readings that are not otherwise available electronically. 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/) 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/) is a solid, student-friendly site.

Other useful websites include 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.theyre-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

#### Autumn Term

**Part 1**  
**Theorising theory; theorising the international**
- **26 September**  
  International Relations vs. international relations (GL)
- **3 October**  
  Angell, Mackinder and Du Bois on ‘the international’ (GL)
- **10 October**  
  Slaughter, Mearsheimer and Pipes on ‘the international’ (GL)

**Part 2**  
**Theories of International Relations**

**Mainstream approaches**
- **17 October**  
  Realism and neorealism (JD)
- **24 October**  
  War and security under anarchy (JD)
- **7 November**  
  Classical, Neo- and ‘New’ Liberalism (JD)
- **14 November**  
  Regimes, Institutions and the Mitigation of Anarchy (JD)
- **21 November**  
  The English School (BB)
- **28 November**  
  Constructivism (JD)
- **5 December**  
  International Law (JD)

**Reading week – meet in small groups: see p. 3**

**Spring Term**

**Critical approaches**
- **9 January**  
  Marxism and critical theory (GL)
- **16 January**  
  Empire (GL)
- **23 January**  
  Post-structuralism (KM)
- **30 February**  
  Power (KM)
- **6 February**  
  Feminism (KM)
- **Reading week – meet in small groups: see p. 3**
- **20 February**  
  Security (KM)

**Part 3: Theorising theory**
- **27 February**  
  Philosophy of Science I: Knowledge and certainty (KM)
- **6 March**  
  Philosophy of Science II: Pluralism and paradigms (KM)
- **13 March**  
  Philosophy of History I: Context (GL)
- **20 March**  
  Philosophy of History II: Narrative (GL)

#### 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.

Autumn Term
Part 1: Theorising the international

The first section of the course examines how a range of scholars from different times and starting points imagine ‘the international’. This helps to illuminate one of the central concerns of the course: is there something distinctive about IR, and if so, what is it?

Week 1  Introduction: International Relations and international relations

Before the discipline of International Relations, there was the study of international relations i.e. the influence of ‘external’ practices, ideas and institutions on polities around the world. This lecture provides an overview of the ‘deep roots’ of international relations. Its main point is that ‘international relations’ has a longer, deeper and broader history than that of modern Europe. Taking this longer lens provides us with a surer basis for thinking about the present international order and about the institutionalisation of IR as a discipline.

Essential reading

Further reading

Key questions
• To what extent is IR as a discipline shaped by the experience of the modern West?
• Does it matter if IR is Eurocentric?
This lecture explores three approaches to theorising International Relations in the early 20th century. Angell, Mackinder and Du Bois wrote before IR was institutionalised as an academic discipline. Nevertheless, all three outlined what they saw as the distinctive features of ‘the international’. Angell saw the international as acquiring a new form in the early 20th century, which he associated with the ‘interdependence’ of financial markets. Mackinder argued that there were long-standing forces that shaped international politics, particularly geography and power politics. For Du Bois, international order was sustained by imperialism and underpinned by a racial ‘colour line’. If Angell, Mackinder and Du Bois had distinctive takes on ‘the international’, all three were deeply immersed in debates about empire, race and civilization. IR as a discipline emerged from these debates.

Essential reading

Further reading

Key questions
• In what sense do Angell, Mackinder and Du Bois provide us with a theory of the international?
• To what extent was – and is – international order sustained by a ‘global colour line’?
• How relevant are the arguments of Angell, Mackinder and Du Bois to 21st century concerns?
**Week 3  Slaughter, Mearsheimer and Pipes on ‘the international’**

This lecture examines three attempts to specify what ‘the international’ means from the perspective of IR as an established social science in the early part of the 21st century. Anne-Marie Slaughter, a former adviser to President Obama, picks up some of Angell’s themes in arguing that IR needs to meet the demands of an interdependent, networked world. John Mearsheimer follows Mackinder in stressing the importance of perennial (particularly geopolitical) themes to the make-up and practice of international relations. Daniel Pipes, like Du Bois, sees IR as intimately bound up with questions of race, even if he takes a quite different view than Du Bois about how to conceive race and what to do about the ‘global color line’. Which of these visions is more compelling? And to what extent can we draw common threads between the writings of Slaughter, Mearsheimer and Pipes, and those of Angell, Mackinder and Du Bois?

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**

To get an up-to-date sense of Slaughter’s thinking, have a trawl through her tweets, blog posts and interviews. A longer version of Mearsheimer’s article can be found in his *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (Norton, 2001). A shorter version can be found in *Newsweek*. Daniel Pipes runs both an extensive website and a think-tank.

**Key questions**

- Do the analyses of Slaughter, Mearsheimer and Pipes have anything in common?
- What distinguishes the ways in which Slaughter, Mearsheimer and Pipes theorise the international from the views of Angell, Mackinder and Du Bois?
- To what extent do we need to read texts contextually?

---

**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)

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, The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations (2005)
* 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
* Randall Schweller, Deadly Imbalances (1998)
Randall Schweller, Unanswered Threats (2006)

Key questions
• ‘For classical realists, conflict stems from human nature, while for neo-realists conflict stems from the nature of the international system’. Discuss.
• Do defensive and neoclassical realism pose a threat to the ‘scientific’ credentials of neorealism?

———
**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**

---

13
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
John Ikenberry, After Victory (2000)
Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Power and Interdependence (1977)
Donald Puchala and Raymond Hopkins, International Regimes: Lessons from Inductive Analysis (1983)

Democratic peace theory
* Bruce Russett, Controlling the Sword (1989)
Bruce Russett, Grasping the Democratic Peace (1993)
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
This lecture begins by reviewing the classical English school ‘pluralism’ of Bull, Wight and their successors. It then explores three additional threads that run through the fabric of English school theory alongside, and in debate with, this pluralist core. The first is historical. This work concentrates on: a comparison of different international societies; the evolution of international society in world history; and the coercive expansion of European international society. The second thread is solidarism. Solidarists take a progressive view of international relations, denying the pluralist assumption that coexistence provides the limits of international society. They make particular play of human rights and their work is strongly connected to normative theory. The third thread is the debate between structural and normative strands of English school theory: is the framework of the ‘three traditions’ fundamentally a normative debate, or can it also be constructed as a way of looking at the evolution and interplay of macro-scale social structures? This structural framing questions the linkage of solidarism to human rights, brings in the economic sector generally neglected by the English school, and focuses on institutions as social structures. This approach also builds links to constructivism, though without seeing the English School simply as a precursor to it.

Essential reading

Further reading
* The online home of the English School can be found here.

Key questions
- Critically assess solidarist and pluralist visions of the English School.
- 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?
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 reading
*Theoretical debates*
* Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), especially Chapter 1
[Also see the forum on the book in: *Review of International Studies* 26(1) (2000)]

*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

Janina Dill, *Legitimate Targets?* (2015), Chapters 1 and 2

Further reading

* Michael Byers ed., *The Role of Law in International Politics* (2000), esp. Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 9
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
Key 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?

Spring 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 reading
* 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?

Week 13 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. This lecture explores the political, economic and cultural components of empire, and assesses the extent to which imperial relations continue to underpin contemporary market, governance and legal regimes.

Essential reading


Further reading


**Key questions**
- Are ‘international relations’ better understood as ‘imperial relations’?
- 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 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 15 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 ‘govenmentality’ for understanding how power operates in global governance?
- In what ways do poststructural conceptualizations of power differ from notions of hegemony, socialization, or ‘soft-power’?
- What can poststructural notions of power tell us about the role of knowledge – and the academy – in international politics?

Week 16 Feminism

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


Further reading

Overviews


Additional reading


Key questions
- What is distinctive about feminist critiques of mainstream IR theory?
- Can the concept of ‘gender’ be divorced from feminist theory?
- Is feminist IR a mode of analysis, a theory, or a political project?

Week 17  No lecture – reading week

Week 18  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 19

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?

---

**Week 20 Philosophy of Science II: Pluralism and paradigms**

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’?

Week 21   Context
In some respects, history has always been a core feature of the international imagination. Leading figures in the discipline such as E.H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, Martin Wight and Stanley Hoffman employed history as a means of illuminating their research. 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. However, much of this literature – either deliberately or otherwise – operates under the guise of a well-entrenched binary: social scientists do the theory, historians do the spadework. This lecture problematizes this set-up, asking what it is we mean when we talk about history in IR. Along the way, special attention is given to the role of ‘context’ as developed by the ‘Cambridge School’ of intellectual historians.

Essential reading

Further reading

Key questions
- What is the best way of combining theory and history?
- ‘It depends’ (Goodin and Tilly). Does it?
- Are there any dangers in the turn to ‘context’ in IR?

Week 22 Narrative
This lecture looks at the work of ‘narrative historians’ and ‘eventful sociologists’ who attempt to theorise contingency, chance and uncertainty without losing track of the broader dynamics, processes and sequences that make up historical development. Regardless of sometimes stark disagreements over epistemology, subject matter and sensibility, the lecture examines whether enduring links can be established between history and theory by acknowledging that history is a form of theorising, and that theory is necessarily historical.

Essential reading

Further reading

Key questions
- Is history a social science?
- Does narrative serve as a useful bridge between history and IR?
- Can we speak of an ‘eternal divide’ between history and social science?
Is International Relations theory necessarily Eurocentric?

Does Realism rely on a rationality assumption?

‘International law is what states make of it.’ Do you agree?

How useful is the concept of international society?

‘Real sovereignty belongs only to the powerful.’ Discuss.

To what extent is capitalism the driving force of international relations?

‘There is not a single issue in world politics that does not have a gendered dimension.’ Is that right?

‘History is a fiction that serves to persuade people that international politics is orderly.’ Discuss.