Theories of International Relations

Course Convenor
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Lectures
Mondays 11am-12pm, STC.S78
Tuesdays 10-11am, NAB 1.15 (N.B. these only run during weeks 1-3, Autumn Term)
Dr Jonathan Agensky (JA)
Professor Chris Brown (CJB)
Professor Barry Buzan (BB)
Dr George Lawson (GL)
Professor Iver Neumann (IBN)

Seminars
Group 1: Wednesdays 3-5pm, Room: 32L.G.24
Group 2: Wednesdays 10-12, Room: MT – CLM.3.06; LT – CLM.G.05
Group 3: Tuesdays 11am-1pm, Room: OLD.3.24
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 23 lectures and 20 seminars. Two revision classes will be held in Summer Term – details to be announced later in the year.

There are two main teaching methods used on the course: lectures and seminars.

• Lectures: lectures provide an overview of a particular topic. The course is structured in three sections. We begin with two tasks: ‘theorising theory’ and ‘theorising the international’. The former is an introduction to how to think about ‘doing’ theory; the latter explores 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:

  - 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.

  - 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.

  - 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.

**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 to use PowerPoint, Prezi and other such programmes.

**Assessment**

*Formative assessment* – the course has four forms of formative assessment:

- **Diagnostic test:** all students will take a diagnostic test on Wednesday 8th October in order to gauge your familiarity with core concepts and themes used on the course. The test will be assessed by advisers with feedback provided verbally to students. Please note that no preparation is required for this test and it does not constitute a part of your final grade.
• **Essays**: you will write three essays (2,000-2,500 words) during the course of the year. The first, due in week 6 of Autumn Term (Wednesday 12th November), should engage with the texts used to set up the course and its central concerns: how to ‘do’ theory and how to conceptualize IR as a field of enquiry. The second, due in week 2 of Spring Term (Wednesday 21st January), should be an assessment of mainstream theories and concepts. The final essay, due in week 8 of Spring Term (Wednesday 4th 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 encouraged, but not necessary, to provide an outline of your summative essay to your seminar leader. If you do so, please note that 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, if any, 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 4-16. 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 2 of Summer Term (Wednesday 6th May). 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 early June), 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. Two revision sessions 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.

Please place formative essays in the pigeonhole of your class teacher, located on the 6th floor of Clement House, by 5pm on the deadline day. Instruction regarding the summative essay will be circulated nearer the time. Deadlines for the assignments are:

• **Essay 1** (‘doing theory’; ‘theorising the international’): Wednesday 12th November
• **Essay 2** (mainstream theories): Wednesday 21st January
• **Essay 3** (critical theories): Wednesday 4th March
• **Long essay**: Wednesday 6th May
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 intent. 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:

- 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 training sessions on referencing: [http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/services/training/citing_referencing.aspx](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/services/training/citing_referencing.aspx);
- the IR subject guide on the library website: [http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/subjectGuides/internationalRelations/help.aspx](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/library/subjectGuides/internationalRelations/help.aspx).

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 handouts and 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 – please direct feedback and queries to Jonathan Agensky (j.agensky@lse.ac.uk)

**Textbooks and journals**

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


- Scott Burchill *et al* (eds.), *Theories of International Relations* 4th edition (London: Palgrave, 2009) – 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* (London: Routledge, 2010) – especially useful for the first part of the course (‘doing’ theory) and the third section on philosophy of science.

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.

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 ‘build bridges’ between various approaches.

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 (and currently based at LSE); International Affairs, another good general journal, although more geared at empirical enquiry than theoretical work; 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 – as such it is a valuable way to get to know the best (and worst) of cutting-edge IR theory). International Political Sociology is also worth looking at for (mainly) ‘critical’ articles. International Theory, edited by Alex Wendt and Duncan Snidal, is a newish journal devoted to 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 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: (http://thedisorderofthings.wordpress.com). ‘Relations international’ (http://relationsinternational.com/) is worth bookmarking, as is ‘Political Violence at a Glance’ (http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/). For those interested in philosophy of social science, Daniel Little hosts an excellent site: http://understandingsociety.blogspot.co.uk/. 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 for 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.thorytalks.org/ has a number of interesting interviews, including those with Cynthia Enloe, Ann Tickner, Patrick Jackson, Siba Grovogui and Robert Cox, as well as our own Barry Buzan and Iver Neumann. 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 (http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/), the IISS (http://www.iiss.org/), RUSI (http://www.rusi.org/) and the European Council on Foreign Relations (http://www.ecfr.eu/). 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. The more disturbed amongst you may be interested in the ‘suicide attack database’ hosted by the University of Chicago (http://cpost.uchicago.edu/search.php). Not for the fainthearted …

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
6 October  International Relations vs. international relations (GL)
7 October  What do we study? (IBN)
13 October  Angell & Mackinder on the international in the early C20th (GL)
14 October  What is theory? (IBN)
20 October  Slaughter & Mearsheimer on the international in the early C21st (GL)
21 October  Two ways of doing theory (IBN)

Part 2  Theories of International Relations

Mainstream approaches
27 October  Realism (CJB)
3 November  Anarchy (CJB)
10 November  Liberalism and neoliberal institutionalism (CJB)
17 November  Liberalism 3.0 (CJB)
24 November  Constructivism (CJB)
1 December  The English School (BB)
8 December  Sovereignty (BB)

Spring Term

Critical approaches
12 January  Marxism and critical theory (GL)
19 January  Empire (GL)
26 January  Post-structuralism (JA)
2 February  Power (JA)
9 February  Feminism (JA)
16 February  Security (JA)

Part 3: Theorising theory
23 February  Philosophy of Science I: Knowledge and certainty (JA)
2 March  Philosophy of Science II: Pluralism and paradigms (JA)
9 March  Philosophy of History I: Context (GL)
16 March  Philosophy of History II: Narrative (GL)

Summer Term
We will also hold two revision sessions in Summer Term, most likely in weeks 2 and 3 of 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: Doing theory, theorising the international**

The first section of the course has two parts: three lectures explore what it means to ‘do’ theory; three more lectures examine 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?

**Doing theory**

**Week 1  What do we study?**

The objects of study in IR range from states to ideas, and from war to political economy. This lecture discusses what kind of phenomena these are. Taking its cue from Emile Durkheim, the lecture argues that objects of study in IR are best understood as ‘social facts’. The lecture pays particular attention to what it means to call a state a ‘social fact’.

**Week 2  What is theory?**

Doing theory is to stylize. Theory may be ‘grand’ or less ‘grand’. Theory may vary as to its area of validity. Theory may depend on the concepts of the researcher or of those being studied. The lecture introduces these distinctions and gives examples from the analysis of power, with discussions about Michel Foucault’s approach featuring prominently.

**Week 3  Two ways of doing theory: ideal types and conceptual history**

This lecture outlines two ways of ‘doing’ theory. The first stems from Max Weber’s notion of ideal types. Ideal-types do not have any direct counterpart in social reality and cannot be used for hypotheses testing. The second arises from Reinhart Koselleck’s understanding of conceptual history. The lecture argues that conceptual history is well suited to analysing changes in what might broadly be called discourse analysis.

**Further reading**

There are no particular readings you need to do for these sessions. However, the following will be used to inform the lectures, all of which can be found in the library:


**Key questions**

- What does it mean to ‘do’ theory?
- What makes a theory more or less successful?
Theorising the international

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 societies 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
- What is International Relations? Is it different from international relations?
- To what extent is IR as a discipline shaped by the experience of the modern West?
- Does it matter if IR is Eurocentric?

Week 2  Angell and Mackinder on ‘the international’ in the early 20th century

This lecture explores two contrasting approaches to theorising IR in the early 20th century. Both Angell and Mackinder wrote before IR was institutionalised as an academic discipline. Nevertheless, both outlined what they saw as the distinctive features of ‘the international’, both in order to establish a basis on which international politics could be explained and in order to influence policy making. Whereas Angell saw the international as acquiring a new form in the early 20th century, Mackinder argued that there were long-standing forces that shaped international politics. And whereas Angell argued that scholars of international relations should learn from political economy, Mackinder argued that they should draw primarily from geography and history. Interestingly, both Angell and Mackinder were deeply immersed in debates about empire, race and civilization, considered to be the foundations of international order in the early part of the 20th century.
**Essential reading**

**Further reading**

**Key questions**
- In what sense do Angell and Mackinder provide a theory of the international?
- How relevant are the arguments of Angell and Mackinder to 21st century concerns?

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**Week 3 Slaughter and Mearsheimer on ‘the international’ in the 21st century**
This lecture examines two contrasting attempts to specify what “international politics” 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, like Mackinder, stresses the importance of perennial (particularly geopolitical) themes to the make-up and practice of international relations. Which of these visions is more compelling? And why?

**Essential reading**

**Further reading**

**Key questions**
- Do the analyses of Slaughter and Mearsheimer have anything in common?
- What distinguishes the ways in which Slaughter and Mearsheimer theorise the international from the views of Angell and Mackinder?
Part 2 Theories of International Relations
The second part of the course uses thirteen sessions in order to explore 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: 1. How well – or not – do these concepts/issues map onto existing IR theories?; 2. 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
The roots of realism can be found in texts by Thucydides, Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau and many others, but as a fully-fledged theory of international relations it is a twentieth century product. In the 1930s and 1940s, realism took the form of a critique of idealism/utopianism, and came to be the dominant approach in IR; the American ‘classical realists’, Niebuhr, Kennan and especially Morgenthau are central to this process. The recent revival of classical realism is, in part, a response to the rise of structural realism, the subject of the next session.

Essential reading

Further reading
The Classical Realists
Hans J. Morgenthau, Scientific Man and Power Politics (1947)
* Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations (any edition up to 5th)
George Kennan, American Diplomacy (1952)
Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932)

Major Commentaries on the Classical Realists
Jonathan Haslam, No Virtue Like Necessity: Realist Thought since Machiavelli (2002).
Nicolas Guilhot ed. The Invention of International Relations Theory (2011)

Tragedy
Part of the revival of classical realism focuses on the importance of the notion of ‘tragedy’.
Key questions
- Forget the so-called roots of realism; realism is a twentieth century doctrine with no relevant antecedents’. Discuss
- How central to realist thought is a view of politics as necessarily ‘tragic’?

Week 5  Anarchy
In the 1970s, Kenneth Waltz became the (reluctant?) progenitor of neo- or structural realism, re-orienting realism around the notion of ‘anarchy’. Structural realism divides into ‘offensive realism’, ‘defensive realism’ and ‘neo-classical realism’. Somewhat unintentionally, the turn to structural realism has revived interest in classical realist thought.

Essential reading
- ‘Why Iran Should Get the Bomb’, *Foreign Affairs* (July/August) (2012).

Further reading
* Waltz
  * Conversation with Kenneth Waltz: [http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people3/Waltz/waltz-con0.html](http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people3/Waltz/waltz-con0.html)

* Offensive vs. Defensive realism

* Neoclassical Realism
  * Steve Lobell et al, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 2009).

Much recent attention has focused on:
* Charles L. Glaser, *A Rational Theory of International Politics* (Princeton, 2010). For a discussion of this text (and others), see: Chris Brown, ‘Realism: Rational and Reasonable’, *International Affairs* 88(4) (2012). At the APSA Conference in 2010, Glaser’s book was the subject of a roundtable featuring John Mearsheimer, Randall Schweller and others. An expanded version of the roundtable was published in *Security Studies* 20(3) (2011). More entertainingly, the original discussion can be found here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsQW0dLoYGs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsQW0dLoYGs) for Mearsheimer [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cXSe1PiFGQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cXSe1PiFGQ) for Schweller

As a taster of the sort of critiques of the Anarchy Problematic that will be met next term, see:

**Key questions**
- ‘IR theory must, by necessity, start with a theory of anarchy’. Do you agree?
- Are there important differences between the visions of realism offered by classical and structural realists?
- Is realism rational?

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**Week 6 Liberalism and neoliberal institutionalism**

Classical liberalism rests on a variety of sources, Kant, Cobden and Mill being particularly important. *Contrary* most branches of realism, international behaviour is linked to regime-type, and republics/liberal democracies are taken to be less warlike than monarchies/authoritarian regimes, although modern ‘democratic peace’ theory suggests that liberal regimes are only peaceful in their dealings with each other. In the 20th century liberalism has been associated with the promotion of international institutions; the modern version of liberalism (‘neoliberal institutionalism’ or ‘neoliberalism’ for short) is related to neorealism, but based on a more optimistic reading of the anarchy problematic.

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**

**Classical liberalism**


**Neoliberal institutionalism**


Democratic peace

Key questions
- Is liberalism in IR better seen as a theory or as an ideology?
- When and why do states co-operate?
- Critically assess the argument that democratic states will not go to war with each other. Illustrate your argument with examples.

Week 7  ‘Liberalism 3.0’
The events of the last two decades, and especially of the two terms of George W. Bush’s presidency, have raised questions for the liberal conception of international relations. The charge often made is that the ‘neo-conservative’ vision of the world is, in effect, a modern version of Wilsonian liberal internationalism (‘hard Wilsonianism’ to use a phrase of Max Boot’s.) One response to this is G. John Ikenberry’s notion of Liberalism 3.0; another is Daniel Deudney’s notion of ‘republican security theory’.

Essential reading

Further reading
Ikenberry
- *After Victory* (Princeton, 2001)
- For various unpublished papers and recent publications see Ikenberry’s website: [http://www.princeton.edu/~gji3/publications.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~gji3/publications.html)

Ikenberry has worked closely with Daniel Deudney in the past. See:

But Deudney’s take on these matters is now a little different. See:

For a less sanguine take on the future of liberalism, see:
  Also see: ‘Debate: Which Way is History Marching’ (Gat, Deudney, Ikenberry, Inglehart, Welzel) *Foreign Affairs* (July/August) 2009.

The implications of the ‘rise of China’ are central to the Liberalism 3.0 thesis:
Henry Kissinger, *On China* (2011) is more unperturbed;
Stefan Halper, *The Beijing Consensus* (2010) is more scholarly;
Arne Westad’s *Restless Empire* (2012) widens the story;
David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global* (2013) is better than the above;
And more interesting than any of these is: Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought: Modern Chinese Power* (Princeton, 2011)

**Key questions**
- How successful is Ikenberry’s attempt to develop a new strand of liberal IR theory?
- Is the world becoming more ‘liberal’?
- Does the rise of China threaten the development of a liberal world order?

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**Week 8 Constructivism**
The meaning and nature of constructivism are contested. The most prominent constructivist from the perspective of mainstream IR theory is Alexander Wendt. At the other end of the spectrum is Friedrich Kratochwil. Between these two extremes lie figures such as Harald Müller, Thomas Risse and Emmanuel Adler. Tim Dunne provides a link between constructivism and the English School.

**Essential reading**

**Further readings**
*Wendt*
Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), especially Chapter 1

Critical constructivism

‘Middle way’ constructivism

Realist constructivism
These writers are essentially providing a constructivist version of liberal theory. Pointing in a different direction is:
Samuel Barkin Realist Constructivism (Cambridge, 2010);

Applying constructivism

Key questions
- Is there a single constructivist approach to the study of world politics?
- What is more important to understanding world politics: the logic of consequences, the logic of appropriateness, or the logic of arguing?
- How effectively can constructivism explain ‘actual’ international relations?
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 general evolution of international society in world history; and the specific, coercive story of the 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 have made particular play of human rights and their work is strongly connected to normative theory. The third thread is the debate between structural and normative readings 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 readings**

**Further readings**
* N.B. [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/polis/englishschool/](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/polis/englishschool/) is the online home of the English School, containing articles, papers, and a bibliography of English School resources.

**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  Sovereignty
Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism and English School theory offer contrasting, sometimes overlapping, frameworks for explaining international politics. For all of them, however, a distinctive feature of the international is the institution of ‘sovereignty’. This lecture demonstrates how the theoretical perspectives explored in previous weeks give us different ways of understanding how sovereignty works as a constitutive feature of international relations. It examines how sovereignty became a defining global political principle, how it links to other principles, particularly territoriality and nationalism, and how the practices associated with it have evolved. A key theme is the longstanding tension between the principle of sovereign equality, and various practices of inequality and hierarchy.

**Essential readings**

**Further readings**

**Classical readings**
There is a vast literature on sovereignty in western though. See:
In the 20th century, the German jurist Carl Schmitt introduced a ‘decisionist’ understanding of sovereignty:
- *Political Theology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press)
- *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
- *The Nomos of the Earth* (New York: Telos)

**The dark side of sovereignty: European colonialism and decolonisation**
Key questions

- What makes a state a state for the purposes of International Relations?
- If sovereignty is ‘organized hypocrisy’, what difference does that make to theorising international politics?
- Is sovereignty a source of equality or inequality in international affairs?

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 the schools of thought we examine, they form part of a collective attempt to broaden and deepen IR both in terms of its methods and its empirical focus.

Week 11 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


**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 understanding world politics as a realm of hierarchy?

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**Week 12 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 readings**

**Further readings**

**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?

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**Week 13 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), we explore how matters of representation, language, and power have led some IR scholars to question received wisdom about contemporary international relations and political order. In doing so, we look critically and comparatively at different versions of poststructuralism, exploring the implications of poststructuralist ideas for the meaning of the ‘international’, and for making explanatory and normative claims about international politics.

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**

Key questions

- What do poststructuralists mean by ‘critique’?
- How persuasive is the poststructuralist critique of realism?
- What is the best way to characterise the relationship between poststructuralism and constructivism?

Week 14 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 ‘socially productive’, and how it might be analysed with attention to discourse and modes of representation.

Essential Reading


Further Reading


Key questions

- Can poststructuralist and realist ideas about power ever be compatible?
- Is the concept of ‘governmentality’ useful for understanding power in global governance?
- In what ways do poststructural conceptualizations of power differ from notions of hegemony, socialization, or ‘soft-power’?
Week 15 Feminism
This lecture maps out the contribution of feminist scholarship to IR theory. 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. It lays the ground for thinking about how feminist modes of IR theory intersect and influence other forms of IR ‘at the margins’ — including postcolonial IR — and calls attention to the analytical and normative consequences of patriarchy and androcentrism across issue areas. Finally, it distinguishes between different strands of feminist theories and asks whether it is possible, as some constructivists claim, to incorporate ‘gender’ into IR theory without feminism.

Essential reading

Further reading
Overviews

Secondary Reading
* Goldstein, J. War and Gender (Cambridge, CUP, 2001)
Steans, J. Gender and International Relations (Cambridge: Polity, 1998)
Key questions
- What is distinctive about feminist critiques of mainstream IR theory?
- Can the concept of ‘gender’ be divorced from feminist theory?
- How might empirically driven feminist modes of IR differ from those that are conceptually driven?

Week 16  Security
Peace, war and security studies have long been targets for various forms of critical intervention. This lecture examines feminist critiques of how ‘security’ is understood in both mainstream and critical theories. Building on the previous lectures, we explore how the agenda of security studies has grown to encompass a wider range of security referents and modes of analysis. We assess how feminist arguments fit with contemporary developments in the theorization of security, and consider 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 among and between mainstream and critical approaches? How commensurable are they?
- 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, focusing on how concepts such as context
and narrative help to build bridges between the two enterprises.

Week 17  Philosophy of Science I: Knowledge and certainty
This 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.
Perspectives covered include: those who read causation in ‘Humean’ terms; those who deny
the relevance of causal models for the social sciences; and those who argue for a different,
more complex, model of causation as the means to generate a ‘scientific’ IR. A central theme
will be the way in which post-positivist approaches have opened up disciplinary debates
about the importance of explanation, causality, and interpretation.

Essential reading
42(2): 359-363.
189-216.
of International Studies*, 24(Special Issue): 101-117.

Further Reading
Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire', *International Studies Quarterly* 28(2):
121-142.
* Biersteker, T.J. (1989) 'Critical Reflections on Post-Positivism in International Relations',
* Haraway, Donna (1988) 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the
Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist studies* 14(3): 575-599.
* Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus (2011) *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*
(London: Routledge).
* Law, John, and John Urry (2004) 'Enacting the Social', *Economy and Society* 33(3): 390-
410.
254.
*Weber, Max. ‘Politics as a Vocation’ & ‘Science as a Vocation’. In: *From Max Weber:*
*Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1946). [Both essays are available online at:
https://archive.org/details/frommaxweberessa00webe]
* Wight, C. ‘IR: A Science Without Positivism’, Ch. 1 in *Agents, Structures and
International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006).

Key questions
• To what extent is social science concerned with providing causal explanations?
• How important is prediction to the study of world politics?
• Can there be a social science without positivism?
Week 18 Philosophy of Science II: Pluralism and paradigms
This lecture traces the take up in IR of the Kuhnian notion of ‘paradigms’. It examines the difficulties of adapting Kuhn's argument to IR and assesses recent arguments that suggest IR should embrace methodological pluralism. Drawing on this framework, we examine one of the most entrenched meta-theoretical problems in IR – the ‘agent-structure’ debate – and how some scholarship has attempted to resolve this through a turn to critical realism.

Essential reading

Further reading
Bueno de Mesquita, B. Predicting Politics (Ohio State: 2002), Ch. 1.
* European Journal of International Relations, Special Issue: ‘The End of IR Theory?’ 19(3) 2013: see the contributions by Mearsheimer and Walt, and Jackson and Nexon.

Key questions
• What is a ‘paradigm’ and can we know the world without one?
• Are ‘isms’ evil?
• Is it possible to resolve the ‘agent-structure’ debate?
Week 19  Context
In some respects, history has always been a core feature of international studies. On both sides of the Atlantic, leading figures in the discipline such as E.H. Carr, Hans 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 research programmes 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: political 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 readings

Further readings

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 20  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 social theory by acknowledging that history is a form of social theory, and that social theory is necessarily historical.

Core readings

Further readings

Key questions
• Is history a social science?
• Does narrative act as a useful bridge between history and IR?
• Can we speak of an ‘eternal divide’ between history and social science?
Instructions to candidates

Time allowed: 2 hours

This paper contains eight questions. Answer two questions. All questions will be given equal weight.

1. ‘The power of Waltz’s theory is that it is immune from “internal critique”.’ Discuss.

2. How important is the concept of sovereignty to the development of International Relations theory?

3. ‘Both liberalism and Marxism should be primarily understood as normative theories.’ Discuss.

4. Do the concepts of empire and imperialism belong to the past?

5. Is it possible to study security in International Relations without feminism?

6. ‘Post-structural readings of power are philosophically interesting, but empirically vacuous.’ Do you agree?

7. Are International Relations theories incommensurable or can they be usefully combined?

8. What is the best way to understand the relationship between International Relations theory and the substance of international relations?