Course information 2021-22
PS1130 Introduction to International Political Thought

General information

COURSE LEVEL: 4
CREDIT: 30
NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

Summary

The course is taught as an introduction to political ideas in the context of international relations and global politics with a focus on how the international perspective informs ideas about political institutions, political agency and the challenges of global politics. The course introduces students to the ideas, concepts and perspectives of some of the most important international political theorists on the challenges of war, violence, revolution and political change.

Conditions

None.

Aims

The course is designed to:

- introduce students to some of the most important theorists of international political theory
- explain different models and approaches to thinking about political and international relations
- explore the origins, nature and uses of war in international politics
- examine and assess accounts of political and historical change and its implications for political institutions and global order
- examine and assess account of the limits and possibilities of global order
- to prepare students for further courses in international relations and political science.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should be able to:

- identify and criticise the merits of different approaches to international political theory.
- explain different ways in which order might be achieved in the international realm.
- demonstrate an understanding of some of the great theorists of international political thought.
- evaluate the political challenges posed by changes in the way war is conducted.
- apply the perspectives on International Political Theory to contemporary problems such as global terrorism and international intervention.

Please consult the current EMFSS Programme Regulations for further information on the availability of a course, where it can be placed on your programme’s structure, and other important details.
Essential reading

For full details, please refer to the reading list.

Kelly, P. Conflict, War and International Relations: An Introduction to International Political Theory (forthcoming)


Assessment

This course is assessed by a three-hour unseen written examination.

Syllabus

Introduction – What is International Political Theory

What is the object of enquiry and how should it be studied? What is a text, what role does context play in understanding and argument? The difference between political, theological, philosophical and historical perspectives. Why are there no women thinkers in this course? Is this a culturally ‘western’ canon?

Thucydides and the Birth of Realism

Thucydides in context. The struggle between Athens and Sparta and the course of the war. The ‘Thucydides Trap’ and the causes of conflict. Periclean Liberalism. The origins of realism. The morality of empire. Democracy and war.

Augustine of Hippo: Peace, war and the challenge of history


Machiavelli: War and Statecraft


Hobbes: Sovereignty and the International Order


Rousseau: The International Order as the source of conflict


Clausewitz: The Science of War and the Modern State

Clausewitz in context. The professionalisation of war. Politics by other means. Interstate conflict as a dispute mechanism. The disciplining of war and the challenge of technology.
Lenin and Mao: War and Revolution


Schmitt: Enmity and International Order

The crisis of liberal politics. The concept of the political. The friend enemy relationship. The nature and site of sovereignty. The concept of discriminating war. The nomos of the earth and international law. The partisan and politics. Liberalism and the permanent war.

Rawls: Realistic Utopianism vs Liberal Interventionism