Contemporary Debates in International Relations Theory

Organised by Jennifer Welsh

Dates/Roome:

1) Tuesday, 26 Nov 2013, 11:00 – 13:00, Seminar Room 3
2) Wednesday, 27 Nov 2013, 11:00 – 13:00, Seminar Room 3
3) Thursday, 28 Nov 2013, 9:00 – 13:00, Seminar Room 3
5) Friday, 29 Nov 2013, 11:00 – 13:00, Seminar Room 2

6) Tuesday, 10 Dec 2013, 9:00 – 11:00, Seminar Room 3
7) Wednesday, 11 Dec 2013, 15:00 – 17:00, Seminar Room 4
8) Thursday, 12 Dec 2013, 9:00 – 11:00, Seminar Room 3

9) Tuesday, 14 Jan 2014, 13:00 – 15:00, Seminar Room 3
10) Tuesday, 21 Jan 2014, 13:00 – 15:00, Seminar Room 3

Please register with Monika.Rzemieniecka@eui.eu

1. Course Syllabus

This course focuses on ideas about, and explanations of, international relations, concentrating mainly (but not exclusively) on the major theoretical approaches in the academic study of international relations since 1945. The key theories and approaches to be examined include: realism and neo-realism; theories about war, security and the use of force in international relations; classical liberalism, globalization, and transformation in world politics; theories about inter-state co-operation and transnationalism; the concept of international society; constructivism and the impact of law and norms in international relations; neo-Marxist and critical theory approaches to international relations; and normative theory and international ethics. The seminar should be seen as a core on which students build, not as complete coverage of all developments in the subject.

2. Seminar Content

The ten topics this term are:

1. Theorizing in International Relations
2. Traditions of thought about International Relations
3. Realism and Neo-realism
4. Security, Insecurity and War
5. Liberalism and Liberal Institutionalism
6. Constructivism
7. International Society
8. International Law
9. Neo-Marxism and Critical Theory
10. Normative Theory and International Ethics
3. Teaching Arrangements

The seminar is taught in two-hour sessions. At each meeting there are two short oral presentations by students on the topic questions (of no more than 10-15 minutes), followed by discussion.

GENERAL BACKGROUND READING


Please note that we are reading a number of chapters from the *Oxford Handbook of International Relations* denoted OHIR below. The OHIR chapters are available on SOLO.


Burchill, Scott, Andrew Linklater (eds.), *Theories of International Relations* 3rd edn. 2005).


Keohane, Robert (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (1986).


JOURNALS


***NOTE: All readings in bold are required readings for each session, other readings are recommended.

WEEK 1: WHAT IT MEANS TO DO IR THEORY

This seminar deals with questions of theory at a general level. The questions raised here have no definitive answers but are subject to on-going contention and evolution in the field – and in the course!

1. Is it possible to do “science” in international relations?
2. What is (or should be) the relation between the practical/empirical and the conceptual/theoretical in IR theory?

Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal. ‘Between Utopia and Reality: The Practical Discourses of IR.’ OHIR Chapter 1.
David A. Lake. ‘The State and IR.’ OHIR Chapter 2.
Barnett & Sikkink. ‘From IR to Global Society.’ OHIR Chapter 3.
Peter Katzenstein & Rudy Sil. ‘Eclectic Theorizing in the Study and Practice of IR.’ OHIR Chapter 6.
Patrick Jackson, The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations. Chapters 1, 2 and 7.
Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (1979), chs. 1, 4.

Hollis, Martin & Steve Smith, Explaining and Understanding International Relations (1991)

WEEK 2: TRADITIONS OF THOUGHT ABOUT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This class will begin by examining the thought (and subsequent reception) of perhaps the most widely cited classical theorist of the post-Cold War era, Immanuel Kant. Then it will then consider the merits and problems of approaching the study of international relations through the study of traditions.

1. Was Kant a ‘Kantian’?
2. What problems are involved in the construction of traditions or patterns of thought in international relations?


Clark, Ian and Neumann, Iver (eds.), *Classical Theories of International Relations* (1996), chapters 1 and 4.


Jahn, Beate ed., *Classical Theories of International Relations* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), chapters 1, 3, 4 and 8.


**Question 2**


WEEK 3: REALISM AND NEO-REALISM

This seminar discusses the key differences between classical and neo-realism, general realist understandings of order in international relations, and neo-realism’s explanatory approach. It also looks at the particular issues that arise out of the concept of the balance of power.

1. ‘For classical realists conflict stems from human nature, while for neo-realists conflict stems from the nature of the international system.’ Is this an accurate assessment of the differences between classical and neo-realists?

2. Does the ‘balance of threat’ approach (Walt) undermine the scientific aspirations of neo-realism?

Question 1


Waltz, Kenneth, *Man, the State and War* (1959).

Question 2


WEEK 4: SECURITY, INSECURITY AND WAR

This seminar deals with various issues relating to war, security and the use of force in international relations. It begins with more traditional theories about inter-state war and arguments about its obsolescence (including the so-called ‘Democratic Peace’ thesis). It then addresses the changing definition of ‘security’ in international relations.

1. How and why do some problems become securitized?
2. Is war among the major powers obsolete?

Question 1


Question 2


Mandelbaum, Michael, ‘Is major war obsolete? An Exchange’, *Survival* 40, 4 (Summer 1999), 139

**WEEK 5: LIBERALISM AND INSTITUTIONALISM**

This seminar will look at classical liberalism and its account of war and change in international relations and contrast these writings with contemporary analytical liberalism. It will also examine liberal institutionalism’s response to neo-realism and its analysis of inter-state cooperation and the origin of institutions.

1. To what extent does Moravcsik transform liberalism from an ideology into a theory?
2. How successful is institutionalism in explaining international cooperation?

**Question 1**


**Question 2**

James Richardson “Ethics of Neoliberal Institutionalism.” OHIR, Chapter 12.


**WEEK 6: CONSTRUCTIVISM**

This seminar will assess the contributions of constructivism to the theory of international relations, particularly through the ‘state centric’ approach of Wendt. It will also examine constructivist claims about the origins, evolution, and impact of norms in international relations.

1. How convincing is the argument that ‘anarchy is what states make of it’?
2. What are ‘norms’ in international relations, and how do they matter?

**Question 1**


Hurd, Ian, ‘Constructivism’, OHIR, Chapter 17.


Boli, John and George Thomas (eds.), *Constructing World Culture* (1999).


**Question 2**


Hurrell, Andrew ‘Norms and Ethics in International Relations’ in Carlsnaes et al, *Handbook of International Relations*.

**WEEK 7: INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY**

This seminar will introduce the concept of ‘international society’ (its foundations, its membership, and its primary institutions). It will also examine whether/how ‘English School’ theorizing about international society has contributed to historical understanding of the evolution of international society.

1. In what ways do international society approaches represent a challenge to realism?
2. Does English School theorizing help us understand the evolution and expansion of international society?
Question 1


Question 2

Keene, Edward, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (2002).

Bell, Duncan (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (2012), especially chapters 1, 3 & 4.

WEEK 8: INTERNATIONAL LAW

This seminar will consider the specific character of international law and the various sources for law. We will also examine the ways in which law affects the behaviour of states, and how the nature of international law is changing.
1. Of what does international law consist? In what ways do legal rules differ from other kinds of rules?

2. How is the international legal order changing?

Question 1


Cassese, Antonio, *International Law in a Divided World* (pb. edn. 1991), Sections I and II and ch. 11.


Byers, Michael (ed.), *The Role of Law in International Politics: Essays in International Relations and International Law* (2000), esp. chs. 1, 2, 4, 9.


Question 2


WEEK 9: NEO-MARXISM AND CRITICAL THEORY

1. What do neo-Marxist approaches add to our theoretical understanding of international relations?

2. What is "critical" about Critical Theory? Can it reveal progressive possibilities immanent within the society of states?

3. How can poststructuralism’s concern with subjectivity, identity, power, and discourse connect to the categories and concerns of IR?

**Question 1**


Habermas, Jürgen, 'Between Philosophy and Science: Marxism as Critique', in *Theory and Practice* (1986)
Rosenberg, Justin *The Empire of Civil Society* (1994).

**Question 2**


Booth, Ken, Steve Smith and Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (1996), Part IV.
WEEK 10: NORMATIVE THEORY AND INTERNATIONAL ETHICS

This seminar will address ethical approaches to understanding international relations. The discussion will focus on two issues that have been central to normative theorising: how justice claims are grounded; and the right and/or duty of humanitarian intervention.

1. How can claims about international justice be grounded?
2. Is humanitarian intervention a legitimate exception to the general prohibition on the use of force in international relations?

**Question 1**

Bell, Duncan, ed., *Ethics and World Politics* (2010), chapters 1, 4 and 8.
Nardin, Terry, ‘International Ethics.’ *OHIR*, Chapter 34.


**Question 2**

Pattison, James, *Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect* (2010), Chapter 1, 2, 3 and 7.

Contemporary Debates in International Relations Theory  Seminar and Reading List


