Foundations of International Relations Theory

Seminar, 1st term 2017-2018

Thursdays, 11:00 -13:00

Organized by Prof. Jennifer Welsh

Please register online

Contact: Martina.Selmi@eui.eu

Description

This course focuses on ideas about, and explanations of, international relations, concentrating mainly (but not exclusively) on introductions to 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. It seeks to provide not only an overview of the key theoretical debates, but also a ‘toolkit’ of concepts that students can use to analyze international relations. Throughout the course, an emphasis will be placed on the need to marry empirical analysis and normative reflection in the study of international relations. In order to add specific content to the theoretical structure, a ‘real world’ example has been chosen for reflection in the final week (the 2014 crisis in Ukraine), where the theories can be assessed as they are applied.

Seminar Content

The ten topics this term are:
1. Theorizing in International Relations
2. Classical Realism
3. Neo-realism
4. Liberalism and Liberal Institutionalism
5. Constructivism
6. International Society
7. Domestic Politics and International Relations
8. Post-Structuralism and Feminism
10. IR Theories in Action

Requirements

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 10-12 minutes), followed by discussion. Normally, these are circulated to the whole class the evening before the session on EU Collab. Students who wish to take this seminar for credit must meet Department attendance requirements, complete all required readings, and participate actively in seminar discussions. This seminar is worth 20 credits.
Students have the option of writing a term paper for the class, and if they wish to take this option they should discuss their proposed topic with Professor Welsh well before the Department’s due date for term papers (in January). Anyone wishing to audit the class must fulfil all requirements expected of other students. Those who wish to write a term paper for this seminar should submit it to Professor Welsh by email (with a cc to Martina Selmi).

Schedule
The seminar takes place on **Thursdays at 11:00-13:00**, in Seminar Room 4 in the Badia, and will run from **Thursday 5th October to Thursday 14th December**. The full list of the seminar sessions is the following:

Readings

General background readings


*Please note that we are reading a number of chapters from the Oxford Handbook of International Relations denoted OHIR below and you therefore might wish to purchase a copy of the book.*


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


***NOTE: All readings in bold are required readings for each session, other readings are recommended***.
Session 1: Friday 6th October – 16.00 – 18.00

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?

Reus-Smit, Christian and Duncan Snidal. “Between Utopia and Reality: The Practical Discourses of IR.”, OHIR, Chapter 1

Jackson, Patrick. The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations. Chapters 1 and 2.


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


Session 2: Thursday, October 12th

Classical Realism

This seminar discusses the general realist understanding of international order and its critique of interwar idealism.

1. What are the primary arguments that Carr mounts against the liberals of the interwar period?
2. How does Morgenthau generate his “laws” of international politics, and what do they consist of?


Morgenthau, Hans, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace (1948, most recent edition 1985) *First four chapters

Wohlfforth, William, ‘Realism’, OHIR, Chapter 7

Donnelly, Jack, ‘The Ethics of Realism’, OHIR, Chapter 8

Smith, Michael, Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger (1986)

Session 3: Thursday, October 19th

Neo-realism

This seminar discusses the differences between classical realism and neo or structural realism, and the nature of neo-realism’s explanatory approach. It also deals with the particular neo-realist focus on 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, Theory of International Politics (1979), esp. chs. 5-6
Shimko, Keith, “Realism, Neorealism and American Liberalism”, Review of Politics, vol. 54. 2 (Spring 1992)
Donnelly, Jack, Realism and International Relations (2000)
Niebuhr, R., Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932), esp. ch. 4

Question 2

Walt, Stephen M., The Origins of Alliances (pb. edn. 1987), esp. chs. 1 and 2
Vasquez, John A., 'The realist paradigm and degenerative versus progressive research programs', American Political Science Review, 91.4, Dec 1997 and responses in same issue
Jervis, Robert, ‘A Political Science Perspective on the Balance of Power and the Concert’, American Historical Review 97, 3 (1992)

NOTE: There is no class on Thursday October 26th
Session 4: Monday 30th October – 16.00 – 18.00

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


Simpson, Gerry. ‘The Ethics of the New Liberalism.’ OHIR Chapter 14


Long, David and Peter Wilson, *Thinkers of the Twenty Years Crisis* (1995)


Question 2

Baldwin, David A., (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (1993), esp. chs. 1,2,4 and 11

Stein, Arthur, ‘Neoliberal Institutionalism’ OHIR, Chapter 11

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

Keohane, Robert, *After Hegemony: Co-operation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (1984), chs. 4-6


Hasenclever, Andrea, Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes* (pb. 2004)


Ruggie, John, *Constructing the World Polity* (1998), Part I

**Session 5: Thursday, November 9th**

**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.


Wendt, Alexander, *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), esp. Introduction, chs. 3 and 6

**Question 2**


Kratochwil, F., ‘How Do Norms Matter?’ in Michael Byers, ed., *The Role of Law in International Politics: Essays in International Relations and International Law* (2000), ch. 3

Tannenwald, Nina, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the non-use of nuclear weapons since 1945* (2007), Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2


**Session 6: Thursday, November 16th**

**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**


Cochran, Molly, ‘The Ethics of the English School.’ *OHIR*, Chapter 16

Dunne, Tim, ‘The English School.’ *OHIR*, Chapter 15


**Question 2**

Bull, Hedley and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society* (1985), Introduction

Keene, Edward, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (2002), Chapter 4

Rosenberg, Justin, *The Empire of Civil Society* (1999), chapters 2, 5 & 6

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

Horowitz, Richard S., 'International Law and State Transformation in China, Siam and the Ottoman Empire during the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of World History* (Vol. 15, No. 4, 2004), pp. 445-86


### Session 7: Thursday, November 23rd

**Domestic Politics and International Relations**

1. What is the primary challenge to Realism from ‘domestic politics’ approaches?


### Session 8: Thursday, November 30th

**Post-structuralism and Feminism**

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

2. How does a feminist perspective challenge conventional theoretical and methodological approaches to IR?
**Question 1**


Burke, Anthony, ‘Postmodernism’, *OHIR*

Lawler, Peter, ‘The Ethics of Postmodernism’, *OHIR*

Booth, Ken, Steve Smith and Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (1996), Part IV


Special issue of *Review of International Studies*, April 2007 (‘Critical International Relations Theory after 25 Years’)

**Question 2**


Goldstein, Joshua, *War and Gender: how gender shapes the war system and vice versa*, 2001, Especially chapter 1, 4 and 5.


**Session 9: Thursday, December 7th**

**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 theorizing: 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


Miller, David, *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (2007), Chapters 1, 2 and 9


**Question 2**

Holzgrefe, J.L., and Keohane, R.O., *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas* (2003), esp. chs 1, 3, 7, and 8

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


Session 10: Thursday, December 14th
The Crisis in Ukraine: IR Theories in Action


(See also Patrick, Stewart. “Russia Assaults Ukraine - and the Liberal World Order, Council on Foreign Relations Available at https://www.cfr.org/blog/russia-assaults-ukraine-and-liberal-world-order )


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