

International Relations: Introductory Analysis

Spring 2025

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Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30 – 4:50 SLH 100

Office Hours: Tuesdays 5:00 – 7:00 DMC 233D

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introductory level course of international relations with a focus on major IR theories in the first part and selected important topics in IR in the second part. Throughout this course, students will learn how to apply an analytical framework to understand international relations, and many essential tools that they can use to analyze and understand international events and to develop their worldviews.

While this is a foundational course, at times you might find it difficult, as abstract theories and complex issues involving different levels of analysis and actors are what you will learn in class. Also, the purpose this course is not about current events. But instead it will introduce you to the tools that are essential for understanding and analyzing the international current events that dominate the media and your social networks. The knowledge that you accumulate in this course will be essential to all other classes you take in IR.

Over the course of the semester you will find that the content of this class covers not just the stories in the Western world that most of you are familiar with. International relations has been criticized as a Euro-centric discipline, even more so with IR theories. In this class, traditions, ideas, and empirics from other regions around the world will be introduced to you. The feature of my teaching is that, instead of only covering mainstream theories and concepts deriving from the empirical experiences of the West, I incorporate traditions and history of the East in my classes to help my students broaden their horizons, and to prevent them from developing a worldview that is too narrow. This is where I connect my expertise with my teaching.

After completing this course, you will be able to better understand the world outside of the country or region that you are from or most familiar with. By then, you will be equipped with the necessary tools and able to apply the knowledge and skills learned in class to develop your own original perspectives and analytical frameworks to see and understand the world.

Lastly, I encourage you to make use of the knowledge that you have accumulated in class to analyze and make sense of real world events. International relations is not simply about wars and conflicts between great powers in the past or present. It is also about understanding those events actually happening in our world that have changed our lives. And that is why we have short discussions before each lecture where students apply the tools they learn from previous classes to analyze current international events that they find interesting.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course is designed to encourage students to approach international relations in a more sophisticated and theoretically grounded manner. If we are successful, by the end of the course, students should:

- Develop a more comprehensive understanding of the various theoretical analytical frameworks and the roles these theories play in our understanding of global affairs. (knowledge-building)
 - a. You will be able to describe the core assumptions of major theories
 - b. You will be able to identify the similarities and differences between various theories
 - c. You will be able to identify how someone with a particular worldview would respond to different issues and prescribe policy solutions

- Understand the relationship between theory and policy-making in international politics. (problem-solving)
 - a. You will be able to identify how policy-makers with a particular worldview or theoretical preference are likely to respond to a given global challenge
 - b. You will be introduced to levels of analysis that we use to explain foreign policy decision-making

- Develop an appreciation of the fact that your own worldview is not universally shared, and that other worldviews and theoretical assumptions may need to be considered before one has a full understanding of a situation. (values and attitudes)
 - a. You will understand how you construct the world and develop your own worldview
 - b. Similarly, you will also understand how others who do not share similar views with you develop their worldviews, and where are they coming from

- Enhance your ability to understand the world and thereby increase your capacity to act or participate at various levels of international relations. (participation and action)
 - a. You will be able to identify how power is organized and distributed, who the key players in international relations are, and what roles do they play
 - b. You will be able to identify opportunities for civic engagement and participation in the policy processes at local, state, and global levels

Furthermore, this is what we would like to remind the students. Learn to respect different voices, and at the same time, be sure to check if your and other people's opinions are based on solid, reliable sources. We might disagree about what we study and how we study the world. But we should respect others and their freedom to speak about their perspectives. In our complex world, we cannot afford to dismiss any legitimate source of information. People see the world through different filters and they then use this information to evaluate, analyze, and eventually, to act. Knowing the factors that shape the various worldviews is an important starting point for students of international relations. As a critical thinker you want to frequently ask the following questions: Who informs me? Why do I believe this to be true? What are the best explanations for this outcome?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Short paper 10%

Midterm 30%

Student presentation and position paper (in discussion section) 20%: paper 15%, presentation 5%

Final exam 30%

Participation 10%

GENERAL CLASS POLICIES

Students are expected to attend and participate regularly in classes, including the lectures and the discussion sections. The students' participation grade will be evaluated on the quality rather than simply the quantity of the students' performances.

If you have a documented medical issue, the sooner you talk to the Professor the better. Extensions for any graded item in this class will only be given to students with documented illness that are brought to the attention of the Professor with documentation provided before the assignment due date or date of exam. Retroactive extensions will not be given. There will be no

makeup assignments or exams, no re-grading of assignments or exams, and no allowance for missed assignments or exams.

If you are athletes representing the school in competitions or with other similar duties, the schedule of assignments and exams can be found on the syllabus, so you know when you might have a conflict of schedule. You will want to address those conflicts now.

For last minute medical emergencies, please provide documentation as soon as possible.

The Professor and TAs will not accept any communication from your parents or coaches or other people.

To repeat: there will be no re-grading of any assignment for any reason whatsoever.

Policies for late submission: Assignments and exams in this class have specific due dates that are clearly listed on the syllabus and announced in class and on blackboard. Any late submission of any assignment will not be taken or graded. Students who miss any assignment or exam should not expect to be allowed any makeup. Only those students who convey their legitimate reasons for missing any assignment or exam to the Professor and TAs before an assignment is due or an exam, with the approval granted by the Professor along with documentation submitted, would have their requests for extension considered. Students missing any assignment or exam without prior notice to the Professor and without documentation submitted will not be allowed any makeup. Those who only submit documentation for illness or any other reason after the assignment due dates or exams with their extension requests granted should be aware of the penalty of one grade down (e.g. B downgraded to C) from the moment an assignment is late, and then one further grade down each day afterwards.

CONDUCT OF THE CLASS

Lectures: The expectation is that students will attend the lectures and participate in the discussions in class. Quizzes which take place during the lectures account for 10% of the grade. Students have to complete the assigned readings before the lectures.

Discussion sections: The sections are designed to review important theories, concepts, and terms covered in lectures and readings in detail. These are the essential tools for your learning as an IR

major, and in the sections you will apply these tools to analyze international events or other activities designed by the TAs.

We will attempt to create an atmosphere of tolerance and open discussion in our class. We ask you to recognize every individual's right to have an opinion that might not be yours. However, we need to recognize that even tolerance has its limits. Make sure you base your arguments on facts and credible sources.

Readings: The textbooks are available for purchase in the bookstore or elsewhere. All other readings not from the designated textbooks can be found on blackboard.

Ethical behavior: We do not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Any violation of the USC rules as articulated in SCampus will result in an F for the class. The use of generative AI to complete parts or the entirety of students' assignments or exams is not allowed and will be reported as violation of academic integrity.

The use of electronic devices: These can only be used in this class for taking notes.

USC Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>

Students suspected of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards. The inquiry process is explained at:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>

USC Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with the office of student accessibility services (OSAS). A letter of verification for approved

accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the Professor and your TA as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Support system at USC

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

counseling and mental health (213) 740-9355

e-mail: studenthealth@usc.edu

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

TEXTBOOKS

Frieden, Jeffrey, David Lake, and Kenneth Schultz. 2021. *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions*. Fifth Edition. New York: W. W. Norton.

Dunne, Tim, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith. 2020. *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. Fifth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (any of the existing editions would be fine)

Waltz, Kenneth. 1959. *Man, the State, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press. (e-book available through USC library)

Required readings not in the textbooks will be uploaded on brightspace.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Each lecture begins with theories and important concepts in IR, followed by examples and relevant empirics illustrating the theories and concepts more clearly for students to understand. Students need to complete the required readings listed under each lecture topic before class. Before the beginning of the lectures, there will be some time for brief discussions where students apply the tools they learn in previous classes to analyze current international events.

1/15 class 1

Introduction and overview of the course

1/22 class 2

Framework for analyzing international relations: actors, with a focus on the state actor

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 2

Discussion section: introduction of the class

1/27 class 3

Framework for analyzing international relations: interests, interactions, institutions

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 2

1/29 class 4

The individual level of analysis

Non-required but recommended reading: *Man, the State, and War*, chapter 2

Discussion section: review of the analytical framework

2/3 class 5

The state level of analysis

Non-required but recommended reading: *Man, the State, and War*, chapter 4

2/5 class 6

The system level of analysis

Non-required but recommended reading: *Man, the State, and War*, chapter 6

Discussion section: review of the levels of analysis

2/10 class 7

Overview of major IR theories and the debates between them; classical realism

Readings:

Walt, Stephen. 1998. "One World, Many Theories." *Foreign Policy* 110: 29-46.

International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, chapter on this topic.

The chapter number varies depending on the edition of the book you have.

2/12 class 8

Structural realism

Reading: *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, chapter on this topic.

The chapter number varies depending on the edition of the book you have.

Discussion section: review of the debates between major IR theories

2/17 President's Day

2/19 class 9

Liberalism

Reading: *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, chapter on this topic.

The chapter number varies depending on the edition of the book you have.

Discussion section: review of important concepts in realism

2/24 class 10

Neoliberalism

Reading: *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, chapter on this topic.

The chapter number varies depending on the edition of the book you have.

2/26 class 11

Constructivism

Reading: Wendt, Alexander. 1992. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46(2): 391-425.

Discussion section: review of important concepts in liberalism

3/3 class 12

the English School

Reading: *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, chapter on this topic.

The chapter number varies depending on the edition of the book you have.

3/5 class 13

Why IR and its theories are critiqued as Eurocentric

Readings:

Kang, David. 2003. "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks." *International Security* 27(4): 57-85.

Wohlforth, William et al. 2007. "Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History." *European Journal of International Relations* 13(2): 155-185.

Lake, David. 2007. "Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics." *International Security* 32(1): 47-79.

Discussion section: review of important concepts in constructivism and the English School

3/10 class 15: flexible space for unfinished topics

3/12 **Midterm** 3:30 – 4:50 pm in SLH 100

Discussion section: why is the discipline of IR being critiqued as eurocentric, and do mainstream IR theories and concepts explain non-western regions well?

3/24 class 16

Domestic and institutional explanations for war

Readings: *World Politics*, chapters 4 and 5

3/26 class 17

Rationalist explanations for war

Readings: *World Politics*, chapter 3

Discussion section: review of important concepts in domestic, institutional, and rationalist explanations for war

3/31 class 18

Civil war

Readings:

World Politics, chapter 6

Cederman, Lars-Erik, and Manuel Vogt. 2017. "Dynamics and Logics of Civil War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(9): 1992-2016.

4/2 class 19

Terrorism

Readings:

World Politics, chapter 6

Polo, Sara M. T. 2020. "How Terrorism Spreads: Emulation and the Diffusion of Ethnic and Ethnoreligious Terrorism." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64(10): 1916-1942.

Discussion section: student presentations and submission of position papers

Topic: perspectives on why are there internal conflicts within states from different schools of IR theories

4/7 class 20

Non-material factors in IR: religions and cultures

Readings:

Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72(3): 22-49.

Hassner, Ron. 2003. "To Halve and to Hold: Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility." *Security Studies* 12(4): 1-33.

Toft, Monica. 2007. "Getting Religion? The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War." *International Security* 31(4): 97-131.

4/9 class 21

International laws

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 11

Discussion section: student presentations and submission of position papers

Topic: perspectives on non-material factors in IR from different schools of IR theories

4/14 class 22

International organizations and diplomacy

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 11

4/16 class 23

Trade

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 7

Discussion section: student presentations and submission of position papers

Topic: perspectives on international organizations and laws from different schools of IR theories

4/21 class 24

Development

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 10

4/23 class 25

Human rights

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 12

Discussion section: student presentations and submission of position papers

Topic: perspectives on international trade and cooperation from different schools of IR theories

4/28 class 26

The environment and climate change

Reading: *World Politics*, chapter 13

4/30 class 27

Wrapping up: where is the world heading to and how would the IR landscape look like in the near future?

Readings:

Allison, Graham. 2015. "The Thucydides Trap: Are the US and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic* September 24, 2015.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>

Niblett, Robin. 2017. "Liberalism in Retreat." *Foreign Affairs* 96(1): 17-24.

Walt, Stephen M. 2019. "The End of Hubris: And the New Age of American Restraint." *Foreign Affairs* 98(3): 26-35.

Nye, Joseph S. 2019. "The Rise and Fall of American Hegemony from Wilson to Trump." *International Affairs* 95(1): 63-80.

Discussion section: student presentations and submission of position papers

Topic: perspectives on the possible development of U.S.-China relations from different schools of IR theories

5/9 **Final exam** 2:00 – 4:00 pm in SLH 100