DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Department
Module Code:

POLS 214

Banner Module Code:

08 20900

TITLE:

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

Session:

2010-11

Lecturers:

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Office hours:

Dr. Jill Steans
Tuesday 11am-1pm
Weds 10am-11am

Dr. Marco Vieira
Tuesday 2pm-3pm
Thursday 11am-1pm

Please note: Students must also check the time of the office hours held by their seminar tutor
Module Description
POLS 214 focuses on the current theories and debates in International Relations Theory which are introduced through the exploration of a number of themes. You may already be familiar with some of these themes (from POLS 105 or similar introduction to IR courses) but many will be new. They will also challenge traditional notions of international politics. Our aim in this course is to provide you with an overview of current discussions in International Relations, and on that basis to think critically about issues of international politics and to analyse these issues from various theoretical perspectives.

Learning Outcomes of Module
By the end of the module, you are expected to be able to:

1. Discuss and appraise both traditional theories of International Relations and more recent critical approaches.
2. Differentiate between various critical and constructivist approaches to the analysis of world politics and assess their relevance.
3. Analyse particular problems or issues in world politics in a theoretically consistent manner.

We have also identified learning outcomes for every week of this course which specify more detailed what we expect you to have acquired. To pass this course, we will expect you to show evidence of having achieved these learning outcomes to the extent that they are relevant for the subjects chosen in the assessed work.

First Essay:
You are required to submit an essay engaging with the themes and arguments covered in the first part of the unit and showing a good, basic grasp of issues in IR theory.

This essay is due on by 12.00 midday. The Department's usual rules and regulations for essays apply.

Choose one of the following questions and write an essay of 1,500 words maximum.

1. How do critical and constructivist approaches challenge ‘mainstream’ theories to the study of International Relations?
2. Why is social constructivism sometimes described as a ‘middle ground’ position in IR?
3. How does either Critical Theory or poststructuralism help us to understand and analyse and/or critique any one key area of international relations?

4. What insights does feminist IR bring to the study of war?

5. Is IR a Western centric discipline?

6. What does Anderson mean when he says that the nation is an 'imagined community'?

Second Essay:

You are required to submit an essay engaging with the themes and arguments covered in the second part of the unit and showing a good, basic grasp of issues in IR theory. Choose one of the following questions. This essay is due on at mid-day (1,500 words)

1. ‘Global environmental problems and politics have significantly informed and reshaped contemporary international relations theory’. Discuss.

2. Develop a postcolonial critique of EITHER/BOTH the ‘end of history’ OR/AND ‘clash of civilizations’ theses

3. In your opinion, do emerging powers, such as China, India and Brazil, challenge the Western international order?

4. ‘International community is a contradiction in terms. The notion of ‘community’ only applies at the national level’. Do you agree?

5. Should states intervene in other states to protect victims of human rights violations? Justify your answer.

6. Does international migration pose a challenge to state sovereignty?

Workload

As a general guideline, the University expects students to spend 100 hours on each 10- credit module. Participants are strongly advised to stick to this workload in order to meet the course requirements. This means that students are expected to spend about 3–4 hours per week preparing for lectures for this module in addition to contact hours, exam preparation, and essay writing. Being prepared not only saves time when preparing for the exam, but also makes attendance of and participation in the classes more rewarding.

Absences
Preparation for the course and class attendance is compulsory; compulsory readings must be prepared in advance of each class. Upon failure to attend class – or in case of attending class unprepared – on more than two occasions without prior notification to the lecturer, the student will be called to the student monitoring committee, which comprises the Head of Department and the Undergraduate Director.

**Reading List**

*General reading:*

We will use two main textbooks, plus additional reading material as identified in the course schedule. We recommend that you buy at least one of the following textbooks, but we would like to emphasise that it is essential that you read beyond the material provided in these:


Note that the library will have a number of copies of the first edition of this book, which will have different page numbers and sometimes different chapter titles. Throughout this syllabus and in relation to this book, page numbers in brackets refer to the first edition.


*Other useful books are:*


As a general source of reference, you will also find the following useful:


Note that this book is available in the library as reference only.

*International Relations/Politics Journals*
Often the most up to date sources on various topics covered in the course are found not in books, but journals. The following are all useful sources:

*Review of International Studies*

*Millennium: Journal of International Studies*

*British Journal of Politics and International Relations*

*Global Society*

*Alternatives*

*International Studies Quarterly*

*International Studies Review*

*International Studies Perspectives*

*World Politics*

*Journal of International Relations and Development*

*Cambridge Review of International Affairs*

*International Feminist Journal of Politics*

**Important information on WebCT:**

In this module, we will use WebCT, a web-based teaching and learning tool (URL: http://www.webct.bham.ac.uk), which will enable you to access the course information that you will find on our WebCT module site, such as handouts, seminar tasks, essential WWW links, important announcements, quizzes, etc. It is your responsibility to check this website regularly, to prepare yourself for the lecture and seminar of each week and to pursue the study tasks set out each week.

As in all modules, you are expected to work for about 100 hours per 10 credits. Taking into account exam preparation, contact hours and essay writing, you should still spend 3-4 hours per week on this module! We know that this may seem a lot of work for you, but you will find that not only will you save yourself a lot of time when preparing for the exam, but you will also enjoy this module much more if you are prepared throughout the year.

**Note on the reading list:**

The readings for each week are split into core and further readings. The core readings should be read by everyone. They can be found in the main library's short loan section unless otherwise specified (e.g. if an article is available on the WWW). However, we have usually listed more literature than we expect you to have read in recognition that it may be difficult to obtain a copy from the library of each text in such a large group of students. Readings that we would normally expect you to read as core are marked by an asterisk (*). If you cannot get hold of core readings, you should go to further reading. The latter are there primarily for you to consult if you are particularly interested in a specific subject, or if you are writing an essay on this topic, or for future reference in other second and third year international politics courses. It is your responsibility to have done the required reading.
Reconsidering IR

This introductory lecture will review traditional theories of IR, the extent to which they offer explanations of international politics based on certain taken for granted assumptions, and the problems this poses for a deeper understanding of international politics in theory and practice. Traditional theories start from a fairly familiar picture of international politics as dominated by states and perhaps a few other non-governmental actors, and in which interests, and often more specifically the national interest, have been the driving force. Recent theoretical developments challenge the basis on which traditional theories have been constructed to explain the world, and seek to reconstruct IR in a different way. This raises questions about what theories are for, and so this lecture will alert you to the different purposes of theory. It will also argue that the assumptions underlying any given theory will make us see the world in a particular way. This lecture will also introduce the relationship between knowledge and power, as well as between theory and practice, and the significance of these for contemporary IR theory.

Learning outcomes:

● You should understand the different purposes of theory.
● You should recognise the interrelatedness of theoretical assumptions and particular images of international politics.
● You should appreciate the significance of issues of power/knowledge for contemporary IR theory and the relationship between theory and practice.

Seminar:

There is no seminar in week one. You should use this week to familiarise yourself with the webct site.

Core reading:


Further reading:


Week 2

Reconstructing IR

This lecture provides a more detailed introduction to critical theories of IR providing a broad overview of: Critical Theory; constructivism, postmodernism/poststructuralism and the way in which they challenge traditional theories. We shall see that whenever we think about the world around us, we do so through a certain set of assumptions about the reality of that world. Different theorists (and actors) obviously see the world in different ways and will interpret facts accordingly. Thus facts do not simply speak for themselves, and so the study of international politics cannot simply be seen as the unproblematic accumulation and arrangements of the facts that we know (or
think we know) about the world. Furthermore, we should not regard theory as an abstraction. from reality but a means by which realities may be created.

Learning outcomes:

You should:

• Understand key concepts such as hegemony, emancipation, and discourse.

• Be able to differentiate between different critical approaches to IR theory.

• Appreciate how ‘realities’ are created and sustained in international politics.

Core reading:

* Steans, Pettiford et al chapters 4 and 5.

George, Jim and Campbell, David, 1990 'Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations', International Studies Quarterly 34(3), pp.269-293

Further reading: (Critical Theory)


Further reading (Poststructuralism)

Theory: Positivism and Beyond, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Neumann, I. B. 1996, “Self and other in international relations”. In: European Journal of International Relations, 2, 2, pp. 139-174.

Social Constructivism

Week 3

The Postcolonial Challenge

The focus here is on the way in which postcolonialism challenges the Eurocentricity of most IR theory, including the critical theories examined in Week 2, and proposes alternative approaches. The lecture will examine certain postcolonial critiques and the way in which they address the power/knowledge nexus. We shall also consider some of the problems that seem to be inherent in postcolonial theory, especially in terms of a West./.non-West. dichotomy.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the lecture you should be able to:
Recount the major epistemological, conceptual and theoretical issues raised by postcolonial IR theorists.
Understand the assumptions underpinning different postcolonial accounts of International Relations.
Identify possible problems in postcolonial critiques of Western IR theory.

Core readings:


Further reading:

Barkawi, Tarak and Laffey, Mark, 2002 Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International Relations, Millennium, 31(1), 109-127 (see also debate and responses in International Affairs, 83 (1), 2007 , pp. 165-186.
Chowdry, Geeta and Nair, Sheila, 2002, Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class, London: Routledge
Das, Runa, 2003, Postcolonial (In)securities, the BJP and the Politics of Hindutva., Third World Quarterly, 24(1), pp.77-96
Lawson, Stephanie, 2006, Culture and Context in World Politics, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
Ling, Lily, 2001, Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire Between Asia and the West, Basingstoke: Palgrave
Varadarajan, Latha 2004 Constructivism, identity, and neoliberal insecurity,. Review of International Studies, 30(3), 319-341

Week 4

Feminist Interventions and Perspectives

This lecture introduces you to feminist approaches in IR. It firstly outlines the main ideas, concepts and themes in feminist thought. Second, the lecture covers the feminist critique of mainstream IR theory, the contribution of feminist thought to a number of long established area of study within IR, such as the state, conflict and security, and the development of new approaches to the study of world politics.

Learning outcomes:

● By the end of the lecture you should:
● Be able to recount the major epistemological, conceptual and theoretical issues raised by feminist IR theorists.
● Be able to summarise and discuss feminist critiques of traditional approaches to IR.
● Have some understanding and knowledge of how feminist scholarship has contributed to our understanding of the key areas of study in IR.

Core reading:

Further reading:

SECTION TWO: SECURITY

Week 5

Theorising Security

Traditionally, security in international politics has been defined in terms of security against military threat. Increasingly, however, this understanding of security has been seen as being too limited. Some would even argue that military security is often in conflict with the security of the environment, or the security of an individual or even groups of people. This has led to a fierce debate within Security Studies between those who would like to see the concept of security expanded and who often build on critical or constructivist approaches, and those who want to stick to its narrow, military definition. This lecture provides an overview of this debate and an alternative conceptualisation of security as discourse.

Learning Outcomes:

- You should know the different possible dimensions of security
- You should be able to relate particular understandings of security to their underlying theoretical or normative concerns.
- You should be able to provide examples for different forms of security, and assess to what extent these different forms interact in these examples.

Core reading:


Weldes, Jutta, Laffey, Mark, Gusterson, Hugh and Duvall, Raymond, 1999 ‘Introduction: Constructing insecurity,’ pp. 1-33 in Weldes, Laffey, Gusterson, and Duvall, (eds), Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Further reading:


**Week 6**

Study Week

You should use study week to catch up with your reading and begin planning your essay.

**Week 7**

Theorising the War on Terror I

This week we explore the ways in which the War on Terror. (WOT) is linked to a specific set of discourses in contemporary world politics. We will consider different perspectives on the WOT with a particular emphasis on critical perspectives.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lecture you should:

- Understand the ways in which different theorists have made sense of the “war on terror”.
- Be able to identify the key assumptions on which these different theories rest.
- Be able to explain and defend your own theoretically informed perspective on the War on Terror.

Core readings:


Further Reading:
Week 8

Theorising the War on Terror II

DVD Presentation: The Power of Nightmares

This video presentation provides valuable critical insights into the social, cultural and political context of the WOT and the discourses surrounding it. The readings for this week also focus more on the ways in which representations (eg through speeches, photographs, film, TV programmes, academic theory etc.) function to constitute different understandings of the WOT. The video itself highlights key themes including the problem of defining terrorism.

Note that the video, which comes in several parts, is available on YouTube.

Learning outcomes:

- By the end of this session you should be able to:
- Understand the complex interplay of representation, power and discourse in the context of the war on terror.
- Explain the continuity or shifts in the construction of the war on terror.
- Understand why war and terror have been represented in scare quotes
throughout this syllabus.

Core readings:

* Morris, Rosemary 2004, Images of Untranslatability in the US War on Terror., Interventions 63, pp. 401-423

Further readings:

Cole, David 2003, Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism, New York: New Press,
Margolis, Joseph 2004, Terrorism and the new forms of war,. Metaphilosophy, 35 (3), pp. 402-413
Week 9

Gender and War

War, and the violence associated with it, has traditionally been seen as an almost exclusively male domain. In this lecture, we will first consider the gendered nature of violence in warfare, looking in particular at issues such as rape in war. But in asking whether women are always victims we should also consider the active role that some women have played in warfare from historical times to the present. We therefore examine the role of women war leaders in different times and different places, and reflect on what this means for the relationship between gender, violence and IR and how they are theorized.

Learning outcomes:

- Be able to analyse gender and warfare through a critical lens
- Be able to relate gender issues to earlier themes in the course
- Be able to analyse gender and warfare generally in terms of IR theory.

Core reading:


(samples of chapters may be accessed on-line through Google Scholar or publisher’s web-sites).

Further reading:

Atiglmayer, Alexandra, 1994, Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lincoln NE, University of Nebraska Press.
Dowler, Lorraine, 1998, And They Think I.m Just a Nice Old Lady: Women and War in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Gender, Place and Culture, 5 (2), pp. 159-176.

SECTION THREE: IDENTITY

Week 10

The Politics of Identity

The politics of identity has become a prominent theme in international relations in recent years and is often seen to lie at the heart of many conflicts. One of the most important forms of political identity is national identity. This week we examine key themes in the construction of national identities from both historic and contemporary perspectives. We also look at other forms of
identity, how these have often fractured and multiplied in the contemporary period, and what implications they have for world politics.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lecture you should:

● Understand the importance of identity to critical theorising of International Relations and be aware that there are a variety of perspectives from which to theorise nationalism.
● Be familiar with key concepts in theorising identity and the assumptions that underpin these concepts.
● Understand the ways in which the critical study of nationalisms is important for the study and practice of international relations

Core readings:


Further reading:

Vandersluis, Sarah Owen (ed.), 2000 The State and Identity Construction in International Relations, New York, NY: Millennium,

Week 11

Nationalism and Identity II

Video Presentation: Imagined Communities.

This week we will watch a video on Imagine Communities, the title of which is taken from a well-known book on nationalism by Ben Anderson. Among other things, the video features an interview with Anderson. A useful website for reading more about this particular topic is: http://www.nationalismproject.org/what/anderson.htm. It contains excerpts from the book, including an explanation of why Anderson describes nations as imagined communities.

I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.
The video raises questions about national identities, how these are formed and how they are politicized.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this video/lecture you should:

- Be familiar with key concepts in theorising identity including nationalism and multiculturalism.
- Understand how identities are constructed in various contexts and for various purposes.
- Be able to reflect critically on the broad range of issues raised by identity politics and their implications for IR.

Core reading:


SECOND SEMESTER:
Lecturer: Dr. Marco Vieira

TOPIC: IDENTITY

Week 1

Boundaries and ‘Community’

This lecture will review debates in IR about the nature and constitution of community. I will begin by defining community and explaining what community means in this context (i.e political community), and suggest that invoking the idea of community immediately raises questions of identity, society, norms, values, politics (conceptions of the good and projects to realise this) and ‘space’. Second, I will consider the different and contrasting ways in which realists and liberals have understood the nature of community, and the degree to which the centrality of the state (and citizenship) in the study of IR has fundamentally shaped thinking about ‘community’. I will also sketch briefly some of the ways in which critical theorists (in a broad sense of the term) have challenged the privileging of nation/state/citizen in the discourse of community. Third, I will outline the cosmopolitan/communitarian debate. At the heart of this are questions about extent to which human beings owe obligations to the ‘people of the world’ rather than simply to fellow citizens.

Learning outcomes:

- To be able to understand how ‘community’ is conceptualised in different approaches in IR
- To be able to outline the cosmopolitan/communitarian debate.
• To be able to reflect on and discuss the extent to which human beings owe obligations to the ‘people of the world’ rather than simply to fellow citizens.

Core reading:


Further Reading:


Week 2

Migration and Diaspora Communities

Learning outcomes:

• To be able to understand the complex nature of international migration from an interdisciplinary perspective.

• To be able to outline the major implication that migration has for our understanding of the state and borders.

• To be able to reflect on and discuss how the experience of immigration might challenge our understandings of national identities.

Core reading:

Further reading:

Week 3

Multiculturalism and the Nation-State

Learning outcomes:
• To be able to understand the concept of multiculturalism and why it is important in the study of IR
• To be able to outline the major implication that cultural diversity has for our understanding of the state and citizenship
• To be able to reflect on and discuss debates about liberal democracy, cultural diversity and rights.

Core reading:
Bhikhu Parekh 'A Varied Moral World: A Response to Susan Okin's "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?"' (available online at: http://www.bostonreview.net/BR22.5/parekh.html)

Further reading

The below are available as electronic sources in the library. If you have difficulty locating them, you should 'key word' search for 'ethnic minorities' and 'nation state.'
Contested citizenship [electronic resource]: immigration and cultural diversity
Publication Date: 2005
Rex, John 'Ethnic minorities in the modern nation state' : working papers.

TOPIC: ORDER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Week 4

‘The End of History’

This week and next week we will explore the ideas of two highly influential theorists whose work generated an enormous amount of debate in the early post-Cold War period about the likely shape of world order in the coming decades. The lecture this week will outline the key points of Francis Fukuyama’s arguments first presented in his 1989 article on ‘The End of his History’ which was followed by a book-length study in 1992. The lecture will also provide some critical perspectives on Fukuyama’s thesis as well as the global political context in which it became so influential.

Learning outcomes:
By the end of this lecture you should:
• Understand the social/ political context in which Fukuyama theorised the ‘end of history’.
• Be able to identify the key assumptions on which his theory rests.
• Be able to explain several of the ways in which Fukuyama’s thesis has been critiqued, and defend these critical interjections.

Core readings:
The short essay version is:
*Fukuyama, F (1989), ‘The End of History?’, The National Interest. And may be found at:
http://www.unc.edu/home/rlstev/Text/Fukuyama%20End%20of%20History.pdf
OR
http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm

Further reading:
Fukuyama, Francis, 2002, ‘Has History Started Again?’, Policy, 18 (2), pp.3-7
Peet, Richard, 1993, ‘Reading Fukuyama: Politics at the End of History’, Political Geography, 12(1), pp.64-78, see also, Simon Dalby’s ‘Reading Peet, (Re)Reading Fukuyama: Political Geography at “The End of History’’ and Richard Peet’s ‘The End of Prehistory and the First Human’, both in the same volume. Irony of Western

Week 5

‘The Clash of Civilizations’

Samuel Huntington’s “clash of Civilizations’ thesis was in many ways a response to Fukuyama’s notion of the ‘End of History’. This lecture will outline Huntington’s key arguments as well as key points of criticism. The lecture will also explore the ways in which both theses can be seen as organizing logics
for various discourses in world politics and the way in which these have influenced the discursive construction of IR itself.

Learning outcomes:
- By the end of this lecture you should:
  - Understand the context in which Huntington theorised the ‘clash of civilizations’.
  - Be able to identify the key assumptions on which his theory rests.
  - Be able to identify ways in which Huntington’s thesis has been critiqued, and explain these critical interjections.
  - Understand the ways in which different theorists have made sense of the ‘war on terror’.

Core readings:

Further reading:
Russett, Bruce, Oneal, John and Cox, Michaelene 2000 ‘Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà vu? Some Evidence’ Journal of Peace Research 37(5) pp. 583-608 see also Samuel Huntington’s ‘Try Again: A Reply to Russett, Oneal and Cox’ pp. 609-610 and John Oneal and Bruce Russett’s ‘A Response to Huntington’ pp. 611-612, all in the same volume

Week 6

Study Week

You should use study week to catch up with your reading and begin planning your essay.

Week 7

Emerging Challenges from the South

This lecture discusses the implications to world order of the rise of South powers in international politics. It covers different theoretical perspectives and arguments related to the subject.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lecture you should:

• Understand and evaluate different theoretical interpretations of the impact of emerging South powers on contemporary international order
• Understand the common identity, institutions and political/economic claims of the South in world politics
• Understand and critically discuss changes in South-South and North-South relations due to economic globalization, the end of Cold War and the rise of new great powers such as China, India and Brazil.
• Be able to discuss new models of South-South cooperation in the 21st century such as the IBSA partnership and BRIC.

Core reading:


Further reading:


Week 8

Human Rights, Culture and Difference

This lecture covers the ‘place’ of human rights in international relations. It covers the key debate on the ‘universality’ versus the ‘specificity’ of human rights. It also covers a number of critical and constructivist approaches to human rights that in distinctive ways attempt to move beyond the universalism/particularism dichotomy.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lecture you should:

• Know and appreciate liberal and English School perspectives on the role of human rights in international relations.
• Understand the major approaches to human rights in contemporary ‘critical’ IR theory
• Be able to re-evaluate the ‘universalism’/relativism’ debate from a number of critical and constructivist positions.

Core reading:


Further reading:

Week 9

The Environment and International Relations

This lecture covers the various theoretical perspectives outlined in this course and their particular views on global environmental issues. It also discusses the main groups of actors, institutions and cooperation problems involved in global environmental governance.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this lecture you should:

- Understand and critically discuss the challenges posed to international relations theory by global environmental problems
- Be able to identify and discuss the main actors, institutions and interests involved in global environmental politics
- Understand and evaluate international environmental cooperation and the (lack of) effectiveness of multilateral environmental agreements.
- Understand the different/conflicting positions of developing and developed states on how to address global environmental problems

Core Reading:


Further Reading:


Week 10

Film Presentation (TBA)

Week 11

Revision
SAMPLE EXAMINATION PAPER

Political Science and International Studies

Degree of BA with Honours
Degree of B.Sc. with Honours
Second Examination

08 20900

LI INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

Time Allowed: 3 hours

Please answer THREE questions: AT LEAST ONE question from EACH section.

All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION ONE:

1. How do critical and constructivist approaches challenge ‘mainstream’ theories to the study of International Relations?
2. Why is social constructivism sometimes described as a ‘middle ground’ position in IR?
3. How does either Critical Theory or poststructuralism helps us to understand and analyse and/or critique any one key area of international relations?
4. Does Huntington ‘clash of civilizations’ offer any insights into contemporary security challenges?
5. What insights does feminist IR bring to the study of war?
6. How does human security differ from more traditional conceptions of state security?
SECTION TWO:

7. Why and how is migration important in the study of international relations?

8. What role do non-governmental actors play in the development of human rights regimes?

9. Is IR a Western centric discipline?

10. What does Anderson mean when he says that the nation is an ‘imagined community.’?

11. What are the key differences between cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches to political community?

12. Is a commitment to multi-culturalism compatible with a liberal commitment to individual rights?