DESCRIPTION

This graduate course on the study of international relations will survey some of the most prominent contributions to the field during the past thirty years. It is designed to help you prepare to take the Ph.D. preliminary exams for the IR subfield in the Government Department and to help you prepare to execute your own original research projects. To these ends, the course will provide a broad theoretical overview of the field of international relations and introduce you to some research design fundamentals as they have been applied in the field of international relations. The substance of the course is conceptually organized around the question of how social order is constructed and sustained in the international system. Our discussions of theory will focus on the following sources of order: balance of power, hegemony, technology, ideas, norms, international organizations, globalization, territory, and domestic regime type. Throughout the semester, we will take numerous research design “sidebars” in which we discuss some of the challenges associated with executing quality research that test these theoretical insights.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be three key requirements for this course. First, you will be expected to attend class, keep up with the assigned readings, and participate in our discussions. Second, you will maintain a regular reading journal that will be randomly collected throughout the semester. Third, you will also complete a comprehensive in-class final exam during the assigned exam period. Your final grade will be tabulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading journal</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(collected at least three times during the semester)</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>45%</td>
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READING MATERIALS

The reading material for this course will be made available through two primary formats. First, our blackboard site will contain electronic versions of all readings that cannot be found online through the library’s electronic journal subscriptions (http://courses.utexas.edu). Second, the following books can be ordered through such online sites as bn.com and amazon.com. Note: I have ordered some of the books through the University Coop.


READING JOURNAL

Your principal assignment for the semester will be to maintain a regular reading journal that includes an entry for every assigned reading. The goals behind this assignment are numerous. First, it is designed to be a future resource for you—both in preparation for comprehensive exams and to provide a means to assess your intellectual evolution as a graduate student. Second, these journals are designed to prepare you to be an active participant in our class discussions. Given limited class time to cover a huge amount of material, I want to ensure that our class time is spent largely on debating the larger implications of our readings and not on simply rehashing or summarizing what a scholar wrote. This means that you need to devote significant time before class figuring out what you think about the readings. The journal should help in this. Third, the journal is designed to facilitate a direct written dialogue between me and you. You should use it to sound out all sorts of ideas that are just beginning to develop.

Apart from summarizing a reading and offering some sort of comment on all required readings, I want to keep the rules associated with these journals to a minimum. Please write in complete sentences but do not worry about building complete paragraphs. Do not spend a bunch of time editing your entries.
More specifically, these assignments could be directed toward answering some of the following questions:

What is the author’s argument? (Note: this question should be answered in every entry.)
How is the argument tested? (Note: this question should be answered in every entry.)
What is an interesting theoretical extension of these claims?
Are there any logical inconsistencies in the construction of the key hypotheses?
What are the key theoretical influences on this work?
To what literatures is the author attempting to address? Is the challenge/revision effective?
What new work has this research helped generate?
Evaluate the concepts that are missing from the analysis. How might they change theoretical expectations?
What hidden or unstated assumptions does the author make? How do they shape the analysis?
How would you characterize the author’s world view or ontology?
Do you agree with the conclusions? Why or why not?
Evaluate the quality of the empirical work.
Are the tests appropriate for the hypotheses?
What other empirical implications of the theory did the author fail to test?
Could you design an alternative (better) way to test the primary hypotheses?
What other issues areas could the theory be applied to?

Your journals will be collected randomly throughout the semester. At the start of every Thursday class (beginning on Thursday, September 13), I will announce a group of names of people whose journals are due that day. These people should email me their journal (which includes entries for the readings from the time your journal was last collected until that Thursday on which they were due) by 12.30 p.m. that day. Please email the journal as a .doc or docx file so I can use track changes to make comments on your journal.

I will not accept late journals. Just email what you have completed at that time. You should anticipate though being docked some points if you do not keep up with the entries.

CLASS DISCUSSION

Our class time will be a mix of lecture and discussion. As already noted, please make sure you have already spent a significant amount of time thinking about the readings before coming to class. Please do not finish the readings five minutes before class and do not just read the assigned readings to finish them. Much of our class time will be devoted to exploring the very general questions that I suggested you could address in your journals. Most importantly, our class time will be devoted to pushing you to develop your own theoretical worldview. Expect to have your claims challenged and expect your own ideas to evolve throughout the semester.
FINAL EXAMINATION

The final examination will be designed to replicate the comprehensive exam process in the department. This means you will take the final on a clean computer (no notes, no pre-writing) in a room (without internet access) with your colleagues. There will be one exception though to this testing protocol. You will be given a candidate list of questions on the last day of the class. The exam will be comprised from this list.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

“Scholastic dishonesty…includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act” (Section 11-802 (b), Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities).

If you have any questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty, you should consult with me and the following website (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html). Any student that violates this policy will fail this course and have the details of the violation reported to Student Judicial Services.

Students with disabilities…please have a representative from the Office of the Dean of Students contact me as early as possible in the semester. All accommodations must be coordinated through this office.

Changes to the syllabus…I may make minor changes to the syllabus. These will be announced at least a week in advance.

Religious holidays: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Emergency evacuation: In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building...
they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as they way they typically enter buildings.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with "Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley" written in the subject line.

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at http://www.utexas.edu/emergency.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Thursday, August 30
Course overview

Class cancelled because of APSA, we will meet over lunch on Tuesday, Aug 28 instead

I. METATHEORETICAL ISSUES

Tuesday, September 4
History/Sociology of the field of International Relations and its relationship with other disciplines


Recommended:


**Thursday, September 6**

**The Agent Structure Debate**


Recommended:


Levels of Analysis


**Tuesday, September 11**

**Agent-Structure II: Two views on process and its role in international political structure**


Recommended:


Thursday, September 13
Agent-Structure III: Who are the key agents? What do they want?


Recommended


**Tuesday, September 18**

**Agent-Structure IV: material v. ideational composition of political structure**

Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 92-138


**Thursday, September 20** (class made up over lunch on Friday, September 21)

**Causal theory**

Wagner, *War and the State*, pp. 1-52


**Tuesday, September 25**

**Constitutive Theory**

Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, pp. 47-91

II. IR THEORY AND THE SOURCES OF ORDER IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

II-A. War, the State, and the States System

Thursday, September 27
The order generating properties of war

Wagner, War and the State, pp. 52-130.


Recommended:


Tuesday, October 2
Bargaining and war I

Wagner, War and the State, pp. 131-172


Recommended:


**Thursday, October 4**

**Bargaining and War II**

Wagner, *War and the State*, pp. 173-196


Recommended:


Tuesday, October 9
War settlements and the construction of postwar orders


Recommended:


Thursday, October 11
Research Design I: Intro to Research Design and methodological choices
Application: War Termination

King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry, p. 3-33


Dan Reiter, *How Wars End*, pp. 51-62

II-B. The Balance of Power

Tuesday, October 16
Research Design II: Causal Inference
Application: Balance of Power

Research Design

King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry, pp. 75-114.

Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, pp. 161-200

Balance of Power
Review Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, ch. 6


Recommended:


II-C. Hegemony and hierarchy

Thursday, October 18


Recommended:


II-D. Technology

Tuesday, October 23
Nuclear Weapons and the Offense-Defense Balance


Recommended readings:


**Thursday, October 25**

**Research Design III: Case studies, expected utility theory, and case selection**

**Application: Rational Deterrence Theory**

Case studies:


Rational Deterrence Theory


Recommended:


II-E. Domestic Politics

Tuesday, October 30
Imperialist coalitions and the Democratic Peace


Recommended:


**Thursday, November 1**

**Research design IV: Regression basics and typical quantitative design choices in IR**

**Application: The democratic peace**

Regression basics

Quantitative design basics in IR

Applications:


Recommended:

Tuesday, November 6
Research design V: Typical regression challenges in IR—Time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) designs, endogeneity and instrumental variable (IV) estimation, omitted variable bias, sample selection
Application: Democratic Peace


Recommended:


Thursday, November 8
Research Design VI: process tracing, measurement/concept refinement, and conditional relationships
Application: Extensions on the democratic peace


II-F. International Institutions

Tuesday, November 13


Recommended


**Thursday, November 15**  
**Research design issues VII: Selection bias**  
**Applications: International Institutions**


**II-G. Territory**

**Tuesday, November 20**


Recommended:


**II-H. Culture**

**Tuesday, November 27**

*Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 139-191, 246-312.

**II-I. Globalization**

**Thursday, November 29**


Recommended:


**II-J. International Law**

**Tuesday, December 4**

**Human Rights**


Recommended


III. METATHEORETICAL ISSUES REDUX

Thursday, December 6
The Paradigm Debate


Recommended


APPENDIX—What goes through my mind when grading comprehensive exams…

Prior to taking comprehensive exams, students generally meet with their examiners to get some sense of how to prepare and write quality exam answers. I know that students are often frustrated by the variation they observe across faculty responses to these questions. I am also aware of the frustration created by different evaluation standards among faculty that then can create very different grades on the same question in an exam. I am afraid I cannot do much of anything about variation across faculty standards. These often stem from honest disagreements about the state of the field and how we should train students. While these can accentuate your anxieties, I believe that these differences ultimately create intellectual opportunities for you and us. I can though perhaps reduce some of this uncertainty by increasing the transparency with respect to how I grade exams. The rest of this note details what I look for and the questions I ask myself when reading an exam and attaching a grade to it.

1. **Make sure you answer the question.** One of the first things I ask myself after reading the exam is “did the student answer the question?” If he/she or didn’t, I then think hard about the failing student for the following reasons. First, perhaps the student did not know how to directly answer the question and was hoping that a list of scholarly literature (often organized around some form of the paradigm debate) loosely related to the question (and often more relevant for others) would be sufficient to hide this. Second, the student might have been trying to subtilely redefine the question into something he/she could answer, which simultaneously suggests that he/she did not how to answer the question he/she wrote. This brings me to my third point. You have choices about which questions to write on. I assume that you have chosen the question that will allow you to write the best response. If you write on a question that you do not how to answer directly, this also means that you did not know how to answer the other options, which in turn opens larger doubts about your command of the field. In short, answer the question you choose to write. If you feel the question is worded ambiguously, note this ambiguity, mention alternative ways to answer the question, and briefly justify your decision to answer it in the fashion you have.

2. **Build an argument in your essay.** I hope this is relatively straightforward. I am looking to assess your progress in the program by whether or not you have begun to build and refine your own theoretical worldview. Part of demonstrating your knowledge of the literature (and, as a consequence, demonstrating readiness to write a dissertation) is showing that you can do more than summarize it and have begun to think both independently and creatively about it.

There is also a presentational aspect to this issue in your essay. Don’t let your argument emerge over the course of the essay and then just state it as an afterthought in the final paragraph. Given the time constraints associated with writing these essays, it is ok if your ideas and thus argument changes/emerges some over the course of writing the essay. But if this occurs, make sure you go back and revise that introduction so it is clear there.
3. **Demonstrate breadth of knowledge of the relevant literature.** I recognize that we, as a faculty, cannot ask you to do something that we are incapable of doing, namely keeping with all the relevant literature. However, I do look for a pattern of significant omissions that I think should be included across your essay. I use the word “pattern” to distinguish from a few oversights here because there is always going to be disagreement on whether a reading was relevant and I understand that you simply don’t have time to be comprehensive in your discussion. However, if I can identify a series of literatures and/or important articles/books that have been omitted, a red flag goes up. This warning draws more of my attention if the relevant readings were assigned in a graduate class here.

Finally, let me point out that there are two components to this criterion—breadth and ability to think in an integrative fashion. While I want to see that you have recognized that there are multiple attempts to approach this question in the literature, I also want to see that you can recognize the connections within the literature. In other words, don’t just include a series of one-sentence summaries of all the literature that you think is relevant for the question. *This is known as a literature dump and I do not want my discussion here to be seen as a call for one in your answer.* You tell me that you have not done a literature dump by being able to talk about the connections within the literature. These connections include pointing out how scholars’ ideas have progressed or evolved over time, how they have engaged in a dialogue with each other, and perhaps most importantly, how you think they should be engaged in a dialogue with each other and with you. An identification of such connections tells me that you have not only just memorized the literature, but have also begun to think about it in an integrative fashion. I often talk about this as seeing the forest rather than the individual trees. If you can demonstrate to me that you see the forest, I pass the exam.

4. **Be very careful in using the paradigm debate to organize your response to any, or worse yet, all questions.** There is a strong proclivity by graduate students to start here with their essays. It provides the comfort of the familiar in an uncertain and stressful environment. People have been doing this for decades. But you should know that there is more to IR theory than the debate between Keohane and Waltz. Seriously. Now if a question explicitly asks for the neo-neo debate, by all means answer it. Otherwise, be careful. There are many ways to organize debates or literatures outside of the confines of paradigm clash. You should have had plenty of exposure to these alternative frames in your classes here.

5. **Are there any apparent contradictions in your argument?** I always look these as I go through essays. They tell me a lot about your depth of understanding of the literature and your ability to think about and draw implications from any argument.

6. **Take some time at the beginning of your day to plan your answers.** I would encourage you to incorporate the outline of a tentative argument and a list of relevant literatures/scholars in this planning process. At some point of the day, you are likely to feel the pressures of the time crunch. I found that when I was writing my comprehensive exams, this outline provided some security to me throughout the day that its end (when I
was already mentally tired) wouldn’t be further complicated by time pressures that could hinder any search for new ideas to incorporate in my essays.