

Government 132
Theories of International Relations
Thursday 4-6.30pm
Mills College
Rachel E. Stern
Spring 2009

Contact information

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Office hours

Thursday 2.30-4pm (drop in)

Monday 2pm-6pm (by appointment)

Course description

This seminar explores the interplay between theories of international relations and real world events. The first part of the course examines key theoretical texts on international politics. Our focus will be on close, critical reading. What assumptions do authors make about the way the world works? How are their views shaped by their values and life experiences? Who do various thinkers see as the key actors in international politics? How do they explain state behavior and define power?

Armed with a set of prisms for thinking about world politics, we then move onto two seminal themes of everyday news: war and globalization. Why do states—or ethnic groups or even individuals—go to war and how do they determine the boundaries of morally permissible action? And amidst the hype about globalization, what does the term mean? Are national boundaries becoming less relevant and, if so, how?

Grades

Think pieces:	55%
<i>(First think piece)</i>	15%
<i>(Second think piece)</i>	20%
<i>(Third think piece)</i>	20%
Final essay:	25%
Participation:	20%

Assignments and deadlines:

Think pieces:

Each student is responsible for three 2-3 page think pieces (one per unit) over the course of the semester. Think pieces must be sent to the class email list by 11pm on Tuesday before the Thursday class. Think pieces will be marked down one grade per day late (A→B, etc).

You can address any aspect of the readings in your think piece, but keep the focus on analysis rather than description. (See the handout *What Makes a Good Think Piece?* for tips and questions to consider). You are encouraged to schedule an appointment on Monday before your think piece is due to talk through your ideas. I am also willing to comment on rough drafts of think pieces if you bring a hard copy to our appointment.

Final essay:

In addition, you are responsible for a 5-7 page final essay. Please email me your essay at rstern@mills.edu on or before 5pm on May 6, 2009.

-Final essay option #1: Write a memo to President Obama on how international relations theory can help him understand the single most important issue facing his administration. (You choose the issue to discuss). How would different authors we've read this semester explain the underlying problem? How do different theoretical perspectives suggest different policy approaches? When do theories conflict and when it possible to combine them? Above all, what kinds of explanations do you find most useful and why?

-Final essay option #2: Apply theories of international relations to a film of your choosing. How does the film implicitly or explicitly endorse some of the theories we've discussed? Does the film present a coherent world view or do contradictory assumptions surface at different moments? Please be as detailed as possible. Papers should discuss specific scenes and/or dialogue and how they relate to theory.

-Final essay option #3: Discuss a computer or video game (like *Civilization*) in terms of international relations theory. How do the rules of the game reflect different schools of thought about how the world works? Does the game privilege some types of power above others? How would you improve the game to more accurately reflect the world we live in? (*Note: This option is only recommended for students who are already familiar with the game they'd like to analyze*).

Deadlines are firm. I will grant extensions only in exceptional (read: life-threatening) circumstances and late papers will be lowered one grade per day after the deadline.

Style and presentation:

Please note that all written work should be double spaced in a 12-point readable font with one inch margins. Please remember to include references to specific authors (e.g., Allison, p. #). Proofread your work before submitting and include page numbers. In keeping with the Mills honor code, also type your name, the date and the following statement at the bottom of each written assignment: "I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment and I have completed it as specified."

All essays will be evaluated for persuasiveness and originality as well as clarity of writing. (See the grading rubric on the handout *What Makes a Good Think Piece?*). Plagiarism, defined as intentionally or knowingly using someone else's ideas, words, and/or thoughts without giving proper credit to the source, is unacceptable.

Readings:

All readings will be posted to the class electronic bulletin board or circulated via email. In addition, William Zissner's *On Writing Well* is on reserve at Olin Library and highly recommended.

Expectations:

Attendance and participation:

20% of the final course grade depends on participation, which means showing me that you are engaged with the material. The basic starting point is regular class attendance and completion of the assigned readings before class. Beyond that, I expect students to thoughtfully participate in discussions, with the understanding that first-rate participation corresponds to quality of comments rather than quantity. You can also demonstrate engagement with the material by coming to see me in office hours or occasionally circulating relevant news articles or announcements to our class email list.

Please also keep in mind that the course may touch on sensitive, controversial or personal topics over the course of the semester. It is critical that we respect one another's thoughts, and address comments to the ideas and arguments, not to the person. Discussions should be productive, respectful and appropriate.

Outside of class:

I strongly encourage you to regularly read a newspaper and keep up with world events. We will routinely bring current events in the classroom as a way to connect theories of international politics with real, live, news and these discussions will be better if you are well-informed. If you don't yet have a favorite newspaper, you may want to check out the below websites. In addition, I encourage you to read newspapers from other countries (especially if you read other languages) to get another perspective on world politics. As you read, consider the source of the news and the underlying bias of the journalist or paper.

American newspapers

The Washington Post	www.washingtonpost.com
The New York Times	www.nytimes.com
The Wall Street Journal	www.wsj.com

British newspapers

BBC World News	http://news.bbc.co.uk/
The Financial Times	www.ft.com
The Guardian	http://www.guardian.co.uk/

News from other parts of the world (in English)

Al-Jazeera	http://english.aljazeera.net/
Der Spiegel	http://www.spiegel.de/international/
Le Monde Diplomatique	http://mondediplo.com/

Getting in touch with me

I look forward to interacting with students outside class. The best way to get feedback on your work or discuss the material is to stop by my office hours or set up an appointment. I don't answer substantive questions over email because it is so time intensive, but I usually respond to emails on administrative matters (setting up an appointment, asking for a recommendation etc.) quickly.

Students with disabilities

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of the course, please meet with me so we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you think formal, disability related accommodations are necessary, please make sure to register with Office of Services for Students with Disabilities.

Course schedule:

Introducing International Relations

- January 29: Issues, Stakes and Approaches
 - Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, “The Coming Conflict with America,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1997)
 - Louis Menand, “Everybody’s An Expert: Putting Predictions to the Test,” *The New Yorker*, December 5, 2005
 - Sir Alfred Zimmern, “Introductory Report to the Discussions in 1935 on University Teaching of International Relations” (1935)
 - Nicholas J. Spykman, “Methods of Approach to the Study of International Relations” (1933)

UNIT ONE

Theoretical Approaches: The Toolkit of International Relations

- February 5: Perspectives on Power
 - Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (1967), pp. 1-31
 - Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (1969), pp. 8-11; 35-38; 40-45
 - Joseph Nye, *Soft Power* (2004), pp. 1-32
 - Amelia Newcomb, “Japan Cracking U.S. Pop Culture Hegemony,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 15, 2008
- February 12: Realism: Classic Thinkers and Neo-Realists
 - Thucydides, “Melian Dialogue” (excerpted)
 - Kenneth Waltz, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1988)
 - John Mershheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* (1994)
- February 19: Challenges to the Realists I
 - Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (1977), pp. 3-35 (excerpted)
 - Graham Allison, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *The American Political Science Review* (1969)
 - Robert Jervis, “Hypotheses on Misconception,” *World Politics* (1968)
 - *In Class*: *Doctor Strangelove* (1964), dir. Stanley Kubrick (also on reserve)
- February 26: Challenges to the Realists II
 - Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” *International Organization* 46:2 (1992) (excerpted or complete—your choice)
 - Noel Perrin, *Giving Up the Gun* (1995), foreword, chapter 3 & chapter 4
- March 5: Beyond States—Transnational Actors and Issues
 - Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* (1998), pp. 1-25

- Michael Ignatieff, "Unarmed Warriors," *The New Yorker*, March 24, 1997
- John Hagedorn, "The Global Impact of Gangs," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* (2005)
- Steven Brayton, "Outsourcing War: Mercenaries and the Privatization of Peacekeeping," *Journal of International Affairs* (2002)
- *In class*: "President Discusses the Future of Iraq," Press release, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington D.C. (2003)
- *Recommended*: For more a fascinating interview with a mercenary, listen to "Warriors" on *To the Best of Our Knowledge* from Wisconsin Public Radio. Available at: <http://www.wpr.org/book/060205a.html>

UNIT TWO

War: Conflict and Ethics in International Relations

- March 12: Why War? Contrasting Approaches
 - Sigmund Freud, "Why War?" (1932)
 - Margaret Mead, "Warfare is Only an Invention—Not a Biological Necessity," *Asia* (1940)
 - Robert Jervis, "Offense, Defense and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* (1978) (excerpted)
 - Jack Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1988)
 - *Recommended*: For more on the history of warfare and how it has changed over time, listen to "The Charge of the Light Brigade" on BBC's *In Our Time* with Melvyn Bragg. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20080110.shtml
- March 19: War and Ethics
 - Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust War* (2006), pp. 3-16; 21-33; 127-137
 - Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (2005), preface and chapter 1
 - John Yoo, Letter to Alberto Gonzales (2002)
 - Neil A. Lewis, "Red Cross Find Detainee Abuse in Guantanamo," *The New York Times*, November 30, 2004
 - *Recommended*: Philip Zimbardo, "How Ordinary People Become Monsters ... or Heroes," 2008 TED talk, available at http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/philip_zimbardo_on_the_psychology_of_evil.html
- March 26: No class, spring break
- April 2: Terrorism

- Sayed Qutb, *Milestones* (2006), pp. 7-13; 63-71
- Osama Bin Laden, “To the Americans” (2002)
- Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (2004), chapter 7
- Max Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy,” *International Security* (2008)

- *Recommended:* Noah Feldman, “Politics and Religion are Technologies,” 2008 TED talk, available at http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/noah_feldman_says_politics_and_religion_are_technologies.html

- April 9: Genocide and Humanitarian Intervention
 - Richard K. Betts, “The Delusion of Impartial Intervention,” (2001) (excerpted)
 - Edward N. Luttwak, “Give War a Chance,” *Foreign Affairs* (1999)
 - Scott Strauss, “Darfur and the Genocide Debate,” *Foreign Affairs* (2005)
 - Samantha Power, “Is Humanitarian Intervention Dead?” *Slate*, September 29, 2008

 - *Recommended:* *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), dir. Terry George (on reserve)

UNIT THREE

Globalization: Towards a New World Politics? (Weeks 9-13)

- April 16: The Mainstream Debate vs. the Skeptic’s View
 - Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat* (2005), chapter 2
 - Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, “Globalization: What’s New? What’s Not? (And So What?),” *Foreign Policy* (2000)
 - Marc Levinson, “Freight Pain: The Rise and Fall of Globalization,” *Foreign Affairs* (2008)

- April 23: Problems of Globalization
 - Thomas P.M. Barrett, “The Pentagon’s New Map,” *Esquire*, March 2003
 - Moses Naim, *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers and Copycats Are Hijacking the Global Economy* (2006), chapter 1 and chapter 3
 - George Gavrilis, *The Dynamics of Interstate Boundaries* (2008), chapter 3

 - *Recommended:* *Traffic* (2000), dir. Steven Soderbergh (on reserve)

- April 30: New Media and State Control
 - Henry Farrell and Daniel W. Drezner, “Webs of Influence,” *Foreign Policy* (2004)
 - Patricia M. Thornton, “Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China,” in *Popular Protest in China* (2008)
 - Jeffery Rosen, “Google’s Gatekeepers,” *The New York Times Magazine*, November 30, 2008

- Jonathan Rauch, “In Arabic, 'Internet' Means 'Freedom,’” *Atlantic Monthly*, March 7, 2006