

**Theories of International Politics • SIS-301.001 • syllabus version 0.95
Spring Semester 2012**

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[PROCEDURE FOR HAVING A SCHEDULED OFFICE VISIT WITH PTJ]: my regular office-hours are unscheduled, and are generally some combination of first-come, first-served plus a periodic triage for time constraints and the like. This semester, office hours will generally take place on either Mondays or Fridays, depending on my weekly schedule of administrative meetings and conferences; whatever is on my online calendar <http://www.tungle.me/profptj> is current for the week. During regular office-hours, I am guaranteed to be available for a face-to-face chat. If you cannot make it to regular office hours, and you don't want to just drop in and take your chances, *you have to make appointments with me using my online calendar*. First, check my calendar online; second, request an open time-slot; third, wait for an e-mailed confirmation before writing the appointment into your own schedule.]



This course will meet Tuesdays, 2:35pm-5:15pm, in a location to be determined soon.

This is a “green” course. Please do not print this syllabus unless absolutely necessary—and it should not be necessary.

Course Objective and Description

World politics is full of dramatic singular events: wars, financial crises, terrorist attacks, peace talks, revolutions, popular campaigns for human rights. International Relations (IR) theory helps us explain and understand those events by equipping us with the appropriate conceptual tools to use in placing these events into context. This course will consider some of the major theoretical alternatives that may be deployed towards this end, with an eye to clarifying their similarities and differences. If I had my way this course would probably be called “thinking theoretically about world politics,” because that—rather than the ability to recite the schools of thought one is likely to find in contemporary IR scholarship—is the primary learning outcome of this course.

Since many of the perennial issues at stake in contemporary IR theoretical debates have their roots in classical questions of European political philosophy, the first half of this course will feature discussion of some of those classical authors. After this foundation

has been established, we will move to a more direct discussion of contemporary IR theoretical traditions, and the various divergent ways that they endeavor to make sense of events in world politics. Key to both parts of the course are differences among authors and traditions when it comes to their object of analysis, i.e. how they conceptualize “world politics” and what conclusions they draw from their conceptualization.

The basic aim of this course is to enhance your ability to “do” IR theory, by which I mean your ability to theorize about world politics in a manner that places you in conversation with other theoretically-informed analysts of world politics both past and present. An essential prerequisite for doing so is that you are able to read theory critically, and that is the primary competency or intellectual disposition that this course seeks to develop. An essential part of such critical reading is the ability to formulate a compelling interpretation of a text, and the bulk of our class time and our assignments will be devoted to the generation and evaluation of such interpretations.

To be somewhat schematic, this course has three learning outcomes. By the end of the semester, you should be able to

- 1) produce and defend a compelling interpretation of a theoretical text about world politics, an exercise which involves both the use of appropriate references to that text and the formulation of arguments that place those references in an appropriate context.
- 2) compare and contrast theoretical texts, disclosing key similarities and differences en route to advancing a compelling argument about the significance of those aspects of the texts.
- 3) explain the similarities and differences between key authors and traditions in IR theory broadly understood, including the perennial challenges faced differently by many different IR theorists.

You will notice that none of these learning objectives say anything about “knowing what PTJ thinks about theories of world politics and being able to spit it back to him,” because I already know full well what I think (indeed, I am in print on the subject, and I have deliberately not assigned any of my own scholarship in this course) and I don’t believe that your critical capacities are greatly enhanced by trying to figure out what I might say about some issue. So don’t bother trying; focus instead on developing what *you* think, in dialogue with the authors we read and the discussions we hold. You will further notice that none of these learning objectives say anything about accepting any of these theories as being *valid* claims about world politics; determining the validity of a

theoretical claim (for whichever of the many meanings of “validity” you care to adopt) requires something other than theorizing, namely empirical research...and we don't have time this semester to engage in any kind of systematic empirical research. This also explains why none of these learning outcomes say much about the *use* of theory in explanatory practice, since that too is empirical research and this is not a methodology course. So while we will undoubtedly use empirical examples throughout our discussions, keep in mind that these are intended to flesh out the logic of the theories, as that logic is our primary object of contemplation this semester.

Assignments and Grading

It should be obvious that a course like this only works if everyone does the assigned reading in advance. In addition, I will expect that everyone will bring the day's text with them to class very day; all discussions will be conducted with the text open in front of us, and if you cannot find textual support for your claim—whatever the claim might be—it is not likely to constitute a productive contribution to the conversation. Take notes when you read; mark passages that seem important or interesting or puzzling, and have those notes with you in class.

In order to help ensure that you do this, I would like everyone to keep a personal reading journal. The journal should consist of at least three paragraphs per week, with minimum two paragraphs written before class and minimum one paragraph written after class. The two before-class paragraphs should consist of one paragraph summarizing the main argument of the day's text to the best of your ability, and one paragraph that highlights one point in the text that you found striking or illuminating or puzzling or otherwise worthy of note. The after-class paragraph should consist of a reflection on how your understanding of the text changed, or was strengthened, by the class discussion—perhaps a point was clarified, perhaps the overall argument now appears less unambiguous than it did before class, etc. If fulfilling these goals takes more than three paragraphs in a given week, so be it.

Note that the reading journal is *not* a document for public consumption; I am not interested in directly stimulating a pre-class conversation based on the circulation of your journal entries for the week. Hence I do not want you to publish your journal to a blog or other online forum; just keep it as a series of weekly electronic documents in some format I can read. On the other hand, I want to make sure that you are actually keeping this journal as we go through the semester. While it seems pretty obvious to me that doing the journal weekly will help you to contribute more intelligently to class discussion, this may not be clear to you yet—or you may need some additional incentive to do the journal weekly. Hence I am going to require you to submit the

journal to me weekly, by noontime on the Friday following each class meeting. *However*, I will not be evaluating the content of these journals; what matters is that you submit them to me on time, and that they have the three paragraphs that I have asked for. As long as you do that throughout the semester, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade.

As you may have gathered, the most substantial component of this course will consist of class discussion. Over the course of the semester I expect you to develop a record of vigorous participation in those discussions; this does not mean that you have to say something each and every day, but it does mean that you should be a regular contributor to our effort to wrestle with the meaning of these theoretical texts and their implications.

To kickstart class discussion, a small group of 2-3 students will begin class each day by presenting, in 10 minutes or less, a brief summary of the day's reading and at least two questions for subsequent consideration by the class. This summary and these questions will be posted (in the form of a page on the day's texts) on the class website, located at <http://sites.google.com/site/airtheoryspring2012>, twenty-four hours before class begins, i.e., by 2pm on Monday of each class week. (I need each student in the class to e-mail me ASAP so that I can add you to the website as a collaborator; if you are not authorized to be a collaborator you cannot post or edit anything.) If you are part of the group kickstarting class discussion for a given week, you do not need to do or submit a journal for that week. Each student will participate in *two* kickstarts over the course of the semester; the teams will be different for each kickstart.

Over the course of the semester, it will be the collective responsibility of the entire class to update the website to take into account what we have discussed; the goal is that by the end of the semester, the website will represent a snapshot of our collective conversation(s). Note that everyone has the opportunity to update the website, and there will be a collective grade for the website as a whole assigned to *every* member of the class at the end of the semester; hence it is in everyone's interest to make the website as thorough and compelling as possible. Note also that the website only has a storage capacity of 100mb, so don't directly upload videos or photos to it; host them elsewhere and link to them from the site.

In addition, there will be three take-home essay exams over the course of the semester. Each exam will feature two questions; for each exam, you must choose one question to answer in an essay of no more than 1200 words. Exam questions will be made available

on 21 February (essays due by 11:59pm on 24 February), 27 March (essays due 11:59pm on 30 March), and 8 May (essays due 11:59pm on 11 May).

Written assignments *must* be submitted to me electronically. In order to do this, please save your assignment in some format I can read—I will convert everything to PDF—and e-mail them to me at the address above. Please name your document as follows: journals should be yourlastname_journal_#.doc or .whatevertheproperextensionis, and essays should be yourlastname_essay_#.doc or .whatever. In either case, # should be replaced by the assignment number and yourlastname is, of course, your last name. I will send an acknowledgment by e-mail when I receive your assignment, and will return the essays (but not the journals) with comments embedded in the text when I have graded them. If you cannot see the comments, or if the file fails to open properly, please e-mail me *immediately* so that we can resolve the problem.

Semester grades will be calculated as follows:

class discussion.....	50%
weekly journals.....	10%
class kickstarts	10%
website (collective grade for the entire class).....	5%
three essays	25%

At appropriate times during the semester I will be providing letter grades for the various components of the course. The university also forces me to provide a letter grade for your overall semester performance. What do these grades mean? A letter grade for an individual assignment is my assessment of the extent to which you have met the goals and requirements of the assignment, whereas your semester grade is my assessment of the extent to which you have met the course requirements consistently throughout the semester. I do not grade on a curve; grades represent less how you perform relative to your classmates and more how you perform in absolute terms.

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- A: outstanding work
- B: solid, capable work
- C: satisfactory work
- D: unsatisfactory work
- F: failure to meet minimum goals

I will also provide more detailed feedback about your performance in these and other aspects of the course periodically, or upon request. Make an appointment or drop by my office.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. The General Education Program requests that all General Education instructors reproduce this statement on academic integrity in their syllabi, and even though this is not a General Education course, I think this is a good statement of policy and principle: "Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code, which can be found in the University catalog. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course."

Let me add that Web-based plagiarism does you no good, particularly since I have access to the very same InterNet search engines that you do; you probably won't get away with it, and the penalties are *quite* severe if you are caught. And just so there's no ambiguity: the Academic Integrity Code applies to all course work, including website pages, and any material used during your turn kickstarting the class discussion. We will go over appropriate ways to acknowledge the use of material authored by others at various points during the semester, as the occasion warrants.

But let's hope that this is the only time that the issue of plagiarism will come up during the semester.

Readings

I have ordered all of the books that we will be using in this class at the university bookstore, and have asked that the library place them on reserve. Unfortunately, the library does not have all of the editions that I would greatly prefer that we use. So the best option, I think, is to purchase the books. That said, I have made sure that a) we are reading all, or a substantial portion, of the books that I have ordered, and b) the editions of many of the books I have ordered are produced by Hackett Press, which produces affordable and high-quality editions of important philosophical texts. It will make our class discussions considerably easier if everyone has the same pagination and translation, so *please* obtain the correct editions of each of these books:

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (trans. Rex Warner; Penguin)

Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings* (trans. David Wootton; Hackett)
Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed. Richard Flathman and David Johnston; W. W. Norton)
Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (ed. Peter Laslett; Cambridge)
Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (trans. Donald A. Cress; Hackett)
Kant, *Perpetual Peace and other essays* (trans. Ted Humphrey; Hackett)
Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (trans. Leo Gross; Hackett)
Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (ed. Michael Cox; Palgrave Macmillan)
Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (Routledge)

There are also a few articles that I have assigned for the later part of the semester; these are available through one of the university's online journal archives. (If you haven't become familiar with the library's online journals, well, you're missing out on some of what your tuition dollars pay for, and you should learn how to access those online resources as soon as possible. The library even offers classes on how to do this; check their website at <http://www.american.edu/library> for details.) And for the penultimate week of the course you will be choosing which of three books to read; I have not ordered any of those from the bookstore, so you're on your own locating copies (the library owns several copies of each, and various online sources also have copies for sale).

Daily Schedule

On or before the Monday preceding each class session, I will podcast a short lecture of reading notes and things to think about in and surrounding the week's text. Podcast lecture will be available for download from my syndication site www.kittenboo.com; files will be in enhanced AAC format, which means chaptered audio with slides, playable in iTunes or QuickTime Player (both of which are free downloads from www.apple.com). I am not *requiring* that you download and listen to these lectures, but I am making them available as a resource to you as you work your way through the texts.

17 January Introduction

24 January Thucydides. Read Book I, all (pp. 35-123); Book II through "The Policy of Pericles" (pp. 124-164), Book III through "Civil War in Corcyra" (pp. 194-245); and Book V, "The Melian Dialogue" (pp. 400-408).

31 January Machiavelli. Read the whole of *The Prince*, and all selections from Book One and Book Two of *The Discourses*, plus Book Three chapters 1, 9, 31, and 41.

- 7 February Hobbes. Read The First Part (pp. 5-91); The Second Part, #17-21 (pp. 93-122) and #29-31 (pp. 162-188); The Third Part #32-33 (pp. 189-200); and the "Review and Conclusion" (pp. 253-260).
- 14 February NO CLASS—PTJ in Vienna
- 21 February Locke. Read the entire "Second Treatise." Book One Chapters VI and IX are helpful too, and Book One Chapter XI is a riot. Seriously.
- 28 February Rousseau. Read *The Social Contract*.
- 6 March Kant. Read the essay "To Perpetual Peace" (pp. 107-143); also "What is Enlightenment?" (pp. 41-48).
- 13 March NO CLASS—Spring Break
- 20 March Hegel. Read the entire book, including the brief appendix of excerpts from the *Philosophy of Right*.
- 27 March Carr. Read the entire main text, plus Cox's introduction and his note on the textual variants between the two edition of the book.
- 3 April Theories of State Behavior, a.k.a. "mainstream U.S. IR theory"
John Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19:3 (1994); Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51:4 (Autumn 1997); Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46:2 (Spring 1992). [Recommended: Samuel Barkin, "Realist Constructivism," *International Studies Review* 5 (2003).]
- 10 April Theories of System Structure, a.k.a. "the sociology of the international"
Kenneth Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18:4 (Spring 1988); Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium* 10:2 (June 1981); Justin Rosenberg, "Why is there no International Historical Sociology?" *European Journal of International Relations* 12:3 (2006).

- 17 April Theories of Boundary Processes and Sovereign Practices
Erik Ringmar, "On the Ontological Status of the State," *European Journal of International Relations* 2:4 (1996); Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, "What's At Stake in the American Empire Debate," *American Political Science Review* 101:2 (2007); Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003).
- 24 Choose Your Own Adventure: contemporary IR theorizing
Select *one* of the three following books: Iver B. Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending, *Governing the Global Polity: Practice, Mentality, Rationality* (University of Michigan Press, 2010); Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (Zed Books, 2007); or Charlotte Epstein, *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse* (MIT Press, 2008).
- 8 May (rescheduled make-up class to be held during our final exam period, details to follow but I'm betting on the same time as class and in the same location) Post-colonial IR. Read Inayatullah and Blaney, all.