History 454: International Relations Theory for Historians
Fall 2010
Wednesdays, 2:30-4:20 PM

Instructor: Leonard V. Smith
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:00-2:30; Wednesdays, 9:00-12:00; Thursdays 12:00-2:30; and by appointment

It is tempting to think that historians and political scientists have a great deal to say to each other. But in fact, the reverse is commonly the case. Historians sometimes find limiting political scientists' fixation on stuffing “the facts” into rigid theoretical models. For their part, political scientists can find frustrating historians' abiding attachment to narrative, and the ambiguous claims of narrative on “truth.” Yet historians of international relations rely constantly on international relation (IR) theory, and most political scientists can hardly make do without historical examples. This course is about exploring this curious disciplinary divide, and rethinking how the two disciplines can inform each other.

This course unfolds in two not-quite-equal parts. In the first part of the course, we will be working our way as historians through the broad schools of IR theory. Our goal is not to become experts, but to arrive at a common language of analysis and to think about how IR theory itself has been conditioned by historical events. We will also consider what kinds of historical narratives are implicit in various theoretical constructs. In the second half of the course, we will examine a variety of important, recent works in “international history,” the successor to “diplomatic history.” This part of the class will focus on how historians draw intentionally or unintentionally from varieties of IR theory.

Requirements:

The format of the course is discussion. Regular and intensive participation by each member of the class is essential to the success of the enterprise. Though grading remains more an art than a science, approximately 50 percent of each student's final grade will depend on her or his ability to contribute to class discussion.

This course has no prerequisite, though some background in international relations, or United States or European history, would be helpful. For the second half of the course, it is particularly important to have a working knowledge of the Cold War. I am happy to help with general historical background as needed.
I. Readings:

The readings for the first part of the course have been made available in .pdf format on
Blackboard. Students are encouraged to print them out, but they are not officially announced.

- "Cold Interventions and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism" (2007)
  - Michael Byrnes, "Cold War Intervention and the International Origins of Anti-colonial Nationalism" (2007)


  - "Making of Our Times" (2005)

- Matthew Connolly, "A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence"


- Matthew Connolly, "Fatal Misconceptions: The Strange Case of Global Capitalism"
  - "Population" (2008)

II. Presentations:

Students should expect to make several short (10-15 minute) presentations regularly over the course of the semester. The purpose of the presentations is to lay out the main ideas of the assigned readings or to initiate discussion. The presentations should lay out the theoretical arguments in the readings and begin to critique them. At least two and often three students will present per week. Collaboration among students is encouraged, and students are expected to attend all presentations on the same book to which they have been assigned.

III. Papers:
Rewrites will be allowed for the first two papers if students are not satisfied with their grades. Rewrites are due one week after the original paper is handed back.
United National General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Secondary Sources:


September 29  IR Theory and Political Economy

Readings:


October 6  Constructivism

Readings:


FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13
PART II: INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

October 13       The Long Shadow of Realism


October 20       The West Outside the West


Fall Break!!

November 3       Money Changes Everything?


November 10      The Cold War as World War


November 17      Decolonization and the World


SECOND PAPER DUE BY 4:00 PM THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18

November 24      No Class (Day before Thanksgiving, and instructor is in Australia)

December 1       Challenging the Cold War Order


December 8       International History: Present and Future

FINAL ESSAY DUE AT THE TIME DETERMINED BY THE COLLEGE MASTER SCHEDULE FOR SEMINARS: MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 11:00 AM

Additional Ground Rules:

1. Deadlines and page-limit requirements are to be taken most seriously. I am not in the business of persecuting students if a genuine problem exists, but in principle I strongly dislike giving extensions. Normally, I take off 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24 hours a paper is overdue.

2. Three excuses for requesting extensions will never be acceptable: 1) a self-defined character flaw of procrastination; 2) extracurricular activities, including performances and political activism; 3) work in other classes. Two possible exceptions exist for unacceptable excuse #3. I am prepared to exercise some indulgence concerning students doing Seniors Honors projects or, in the case of Conservatory students, students playing Senior recitals. This is because of the "once in a lifetime" character of these projects.

3. Papers must be word-processed, double-spaced with one-inch margins. I reserve the right to return any paper that is not legible. Papers must be submitted in hard copy. E-mailed papers will not be accepted, except under special circumstances determined by the instructor.

4. All written work at Oberlin College is covered by the Honor Code. No graded essay will be read until the Honor Code is signed.

5. All written work for the course must be completed in order to pass. That is to say, if two instead of three papers are turned in, a student will fail the entire course. Incompletes are governed by the rules of Oberlin College; unofficial incompletes will not be given.

6. No permission is granted to upload ANY materials from this course on to a third party web site. Such materials are for the use of students in this class only.