Politics 120
INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
Oberlin College Spring 2013, 3SS credits
Section 1 meets TR 9:35-10:50 am in King 227
Section 2 meets TR 11:00-12:15pm in King 227

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Students can sign up for office hours at http://tinyurl.com/34ywc3f

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to provide students with a framework for understanding international politics. It introduces major concepts and contending approaches in the field of international politics (commonly still known as international relations theory or IR), examines historical watersheds from which policy makers frequently draw lessons, and surveys contemporary issues in the areas of international law and organization, international security, and international political economy.

We shall take up questions such as the following: What accounts for broad patterns of conflict and cooperation in the international system? How do international conditions – such as the distribution of power, the design of international institutions, or the prevalence of international norms – influence the behavior of states and non-state actors? How do national or individual characteristics – such as culture, type of political regime, or beliefs of individual leaders – affect foreign policy? What does it mean to be a powerful state? How has globalization affected the prospects for global economic prosperity? When humanitarian crises arise, who should intervene, and how? What new forms of warfare have arisen and how do they challenge conventional practices?

This course will help students develop analytical skills to understand the actors, goals, and tools that set international politics apart from domestic politics. It is not focused on the study of current events, but we will examine some of the most significant conflicts and transnational concerns of policy makers and publics today. Students will have the opportunity to hone their analytical writing skills in an essay-based exam, and in a final paper on a topic of their choice.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignments
Participation 10%
Quizzes 20%
Midterm 30%
Paper Proposal 10%
Paper 30%

Participation: Regular attendance in class, reading of the assigned texts before class, and constructive participation in class discussions are important for your success and learning in the course.

Quizzes: There will be four unannounced quizzes, two before and two after the midterm. These are intended to test your understanding of the day’s assigned reading. Quizzes are graded Pass/No Pass. The quiz component of your course grade will be A for 4xPass, B+ for 3xPass, B- for 2xPass, C for 1xPass, D+ for 0xPass. Quizzes are given at the beginning of class, and there are no makeups for lateness or unexcused absences.

Midterm Exam: The Midterm is scheduled for March 19. This is an in-class exam that will cover the readings and class material covered to that date. Format is a combination of identification terms and an argumentative essay. You will receive a study guide one week before the exam.

Paper Proposal: This 1-page proposal is due in class on April 23. In preparation for your course paper, the proposal should explain the intended paper’s topic, relevance, and the main sources you plan to draw from. Guidelines for the proposal will be provided after the spring break.

Paper: This 7-8 page paper is due in class on May 9, the last day of class. The paper should focus on a significant international problem, address how it has been managed to date, and suggest realistic options for addressing the problem more successfully. For this assignment, you need not engage in outside research – this is mainly an “analysis and prescription assignment” rather than a “research assignment” – so you are strongly encouraged to write about a topic we addressed in the course. Guidelines for the paper will be provided after the spring break.
ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Honor Code. All academic work for the course must meet the standards of the Honor Code. Please be sure you are familiar with the Honor Code and see me if you have questions about how it applies in the course. Recall also that on each assignment you complete, you are required to sign the Honor Pledge, “I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”

Exam and paper due dates. You should plan ahead to be able to meet these dates. Late papers will receive a lower grade: one-step grade reduction (e.g., from B to B–) if submitted after class but within 12 hours; 2-step grade reduction if submitted during the next 12-hour period, etc.; papers submitted more than 5 days late receive an automatic F. If you are unable to submit papers to me as due in class, be sure to do one of the following 1) hand them in personally to me or to Ms. Tucker in the Politics Department to have a proper record of the submission, or 2) email me an MS Word version of the paper. Do not slip papers under my office door unless you ok this with me beforehand! Only extreme circumstances, such as medical or family emergencies, may warrant exceptions to these terms.

NOTE: Students must complete all assigned work (exam, proposal, and paper) to be eligible for a passing grade in the course.

Attendance. Regular on-time attendance is requisite for the course. I consider up to 2 absences, due to illness or extracurricular activities, allowable; 3 is a stretch; more than this means that you are missing more than 15% of the course, which will affect your participation grade in an unfortunate way.

Disability Services. Please speak with Jane Boomer in the Office of Disability Services and with me as early in the semester as possible if you have a documented disability that requires accommodation. All discussions will remain confidential.
READINGS
The books listed below are required for the course. They are available for purchase at the Oberlin College Bookstore. A limited number of copies of Nye, M&S and Singer are in Mudd Library Reserves. Remaining assigned readings are available in Blackboard (BB).


I. CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Central Concepts in the Study of International Politics

Tuesday, 2/5: Introduction
- No reading.

Thursday, 2/7: A Primer on Levels of Analysis, Anarchy and Order in the International System
- Nye, chapter 2.

Tuesday, 2/12: States and Sovereignty
- Anne-Marie Slaughter, “The Real New World Order,” BB

Thursday, 2/14: Transnational Actors
- Nye, ch. 8.
- Moises Naim, “Five Wars of Globalization,” in M&S ch. 5.

Contending Theoretical Approaches and Their Real-World Applications

Questions to consider as you do the readings in this section: To what extent are the major schools of IR theory compatible? On what issues do they diverge irreconcilably? Do these frameworks seem useful tools for those who practice international politics?

Tuesday, 2/19: Realism
- John Mearsheimer, “Anarchy and the Struggle for Power,” in M&S ch. 3.
Thursday, 2/21: Realism in Practice: Balance of Power Politics and the Road to the First World War
- Nye, ch. 3.

Tuesday, 2/26: Liberalism
- Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics,” in M&S ch. 3.
- Robert Keohane, From After Hegemony, in M&S ch. 7.

Thursday, 2/28: Liberalism in Practice: Collective Security and the Road to the Second World War
- Nye, ch. 4.

Tuesday, 3/5: Constructivism
- J. Ann Tickner, “Man, the State, and War,” in M&S ch. 3.
- Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” in M&S ch. 3.

Thursday, 3/7: Constructivism in Practice: The Creation of New International Norms
- Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics,” in M&S ch. 7.

Tuesday, 3/12: Who Makes Foreign Policy? Bureaucratic Politics and Individual Leaders
- Seymour M. Hersh, “Offense and Defense: The Battle Between Donald Rumsfeld and the Pentagon,” The New Yorker, April 7, 2003. BB

Thursday, 3/14: Perceptions and Beliefs in Practice: U.S. Decision-Making for Intervention in the Vietnam War during the 1960s
Screening of portions of The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert McNamara.

Tuesday, 3/19: IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

Thursday, 3/21: Discussion – US-Iran Relations

SPRING BREAK, Week of 3/25
Tuesday, 4/2: Screening of Soldier Child
    - Peter W. Singer, Children at War, chs. 1 and 2.

Thursday, 4/4: No Formal Class (Mani away attending a conference), but get together with at least 2 of your classmates to brainstorm paper topics!

II. CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN IR

International Law and Organization

Tuesday, 4/9: International Law and Justice
    - Nye, pp. 196-206.

Thursday, 4/11: International Intervention
    - Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide,” in M&S ch. 7.

Tuesday, 4/16: Discussion – The Responsibility to Protect

International Security

Thursday, 4/18: Child Soldiers, the New War Fighters: Causes and Implications
    - Peter W. Singer, Children at War, chs. 3 and 6.

Tuesday, 4/23: Child Soldiers, the New War Fighters: Prevention through Law, Norms and Technology
**Paper Proposals Due in Class**
    - Singer, Children at War, chs. 8 and 9.

International Political Economy

Thursday, 4/25: The Structures of the International Economy
    - Nye, 255-275.
Tuesday, 4/30: Discussion – The Euro Crisis

Thursday, 5/2: Development Solutions – Globalization, Big Push, or Piecemeal?

Thursday, 5/7: Discussion – China in Africa

Thursday, 5/9: Conclusions from the Course
** Final Paper due in Class **

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