POLS 680:
Theories of International Relations
Northern Illinois University
Fall 2017

Thursday 12:20 - 3:00 pm | Dusable Hall 464

Professor:

Dr. Ches Thurber
Office: 414 Zulauf Hall
Email: cthurber@niu.edu
Office Hours: Mon / Wed 9:00-10:30

Course Description:

This course is intended as the graduate-level survey of international relations as a disciplinary subfield of political science. The course traces the evolution of main paradigmatic traditions of realism, liberalism and constructivism (with some attention to their alternatives), explores how those traditions grapple with enduring questions, such as the causes of inter- and intra-state war, economic relations among states, and the development of global governance, and highlights current debates in the field, such as the roles of psychology, domestic politics, and non-state actors in world politics. The course serves as the foundation for preparation for the Ph.D. candidacy exam in international relations. It will also be valuable for those preparing to teach undergraduate IR courses, those looking to broaden their proficiency in the field of political science, and those interested in how the academic field of international relations contributes to important policy debates.

Course Materials:

There are no required texts for this course. All materials will be posted on Blackboard. This being said, if you intend to take a comprehensive examination in International Relations, it may be worth your while to purchase some of the books from which we read multiple chapters in this course.
Evaluation:

1. **Class attendance, preparation and participation: (30%)**
   The time we spend in class is for me the most important of this course. As such, punctual attendance is mandatory. But more important than just being present at a desk is that you are actively engaged. I expect that you have done the readings and that you try to participate in discussion each and every class section.

2. **Reading Analyses: (30%)**
   For each week, you will be required to draft written summaries on each of the readings. These summaries will be invaluable as you prepare for comps as well as help ensure a high level of discussion in seminar.

3. **Book Review: (40%)**
   The main written assignment for this course is a 10-15 page review of three books recently published in a specific area of IR. You should be looking for 3 books published in the last 5 years by the top presses (Cambridge, Cornell, Princeton, Oxford, Columbia) that share a similar theme. You will write a *World Politics* style review in which you both assess the strengths and weaknesses of the books individually, as well as provide a broader analysis of the state of the literature on this subject, its larger contributions to the field of IR, and the opportunities for future research. The point of this exercise is to explore what a good book-length research project looks like (what a good dissertation should aspire to eventually become!) as well as to familiarize yourself with the leading-edge of research in your area of greatest interest.

Course Policies:

1. Successful completion of this course requires consistent, punctual attendance, completing the readings prior to the start of class, and active participation. If you must miss class due to a conflicting responsibility or an emergency, it is your responsibility to contact me to discuss the situation. I will generally require a short written assignment to be submitted in lieu of class attendance. Any more than 1 absence without prior notification and make-up work will affect your final grade.

2. If you think you need to delay submitting a written assignment, you should talk to me, generally at least two weeks before the due date. Such extensions are never guaranteed, but will be based on university policy, exigency of the circumstances, and timeliness of the request (the earlier the better). Any missed written assignment submitted after the deadline without prior authorization from me will not be accepted and a grade of 0 will be assigned.
3. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will lead to an F for the course. If you are unsure as to whether your approach for any given assignment may constitute plagiarism, please be sure to double check with the professor prior to handing in your assign-ment. Political Science department resources pertaining to plagiarism may be found at: http://www.niu.edu/polisci/audience/plagiarism.shtml

4. If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu. Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations.

5. It is my personal policy to allow graduate students to call me by my first name, "Ches." This reflects the idea that I view you all as colleagues-in-training. Please let me know how you prefer to be addressed, both in name and pronoun, if it differs from what is in the college directory. I will make every effort to address you in the way you wish to be addressed. Please try and do the same for your fellow classmates, as well as for other faculty in the department.

6. I am committed to your success in this class – if you feel that you are not performing to your expectations, please come and see me. I am available to answer any questions you may have about course assignments, requirements or content. I generally answer e-mails within 24 hrs on weekdays, and would be happy to schedule an appointment to meet with you if you are unavailable during my posted office hours.
Tentative Course Outline:
Updates will be announced in class and posted on the course website.

Week 0 (Aug. 30): APSA Conference - No Class

Week 1 (Sep. 7): Historiography of the Field


- Kenneth N. Waltz, Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Selections.

Suggested:


- J. Ann Tickner, Gender in International Relations Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), Ch. 1


Week 2 (Sep. 12): The Realist Tradition


Suggested:

Week 3 (Sep. 21): The Liberal Tradition


Suggested:

Week 4 (Sep. 28): The Constructivist Tradition

Submit a proposal of the three books you plan to review for the book review assignment


Suggested:


Week 5 (Oct. 5): Race, Gender, and Critical Approaches


Suggested:

- Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*


Week 6 (Oct. 12): Inter-State War


Suggested:


Week 7 (Oct. 19): Intra-State War


Suggested:


Week 8 (Oct. 26) : International Political Economy


Week 9 (Nov. 2): Institutions and Global Governance (Glas)


- Deborah D. Avant, Martha Finnemore, and Susan K. Sell, *Who Governs the Globe?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Ch. 1

*Suggested:*


Week 10 (Nov. 9): Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy


Suggested:


- Snyder and Borghard, The Cost of Empty Threats
Week 11 (Nov. 16): Cognition, Emotions, and Leadership


Nov. 23: Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 12 (Nov. 30): Environment and Health


Suggested:

- Keohane and Victor, "The Regime Complex for Climate Change"
Week 13 (Dec. 7): Non-State Actors in Global Politics


Dec. 14 11:59PM: BOOK REVIEW ASSIGNMENT DUE