

International Relations Theory and the International System

Tuesday and Thursday in-person instruction: 3:30 to 4:50 BUCH A202

Instructor: Robert M A Crawford/ Email: robert.crawford@ubc.ca

NOTE: This course requires your physical presence at UBC and regular attendance, while not graded, is expected.

Course Description

This course examines the origins, development, and current status of theoretical inquiry in world politics. It examines past and unfolding debates over the defining features, core problems, and appropriate theoretical methods and aspirations for International Relations (IR), and critically evaluates the various “schools” of IR identified by its practitioners. As a survey course it explores the most prominent themes in international relations scholarship ranging from the broader traditions of ancient and modern political philosophy and related fields to the purportedly more “scientific” and rigorously theoretical perspectives characteristic of twentieth century social science. It traces the pre-disciplinary roots of what is today called “IR theory” in broader, earlier traditions of thought and questions the once pervasive view that IR theory is an exclusively modern undertaking. The course is grounded in the premise that any serious encounter with theory in international relations must take account of the reality its status as academic field, bound up as it is in competing conceptions of its historical origins, and competing views about what constitutes theory and intellectual progress. It is also bound up with the very great power interests it claims to explore, as the clear dominance of British and American perspectives attests (one of our readings even refers to our field as "an American social science)! While the course is organized around analysis of

distinct theories it also seeks to alert students to conflicting views about the nature and limits of knowledge, underlying assumptions about what constitutes the “reality” of world politics, and the intricate ways in which the normative, legal, and practical aspects of international relations are fused and tainted by the state power so many of its theories claim to analyze objectively. As a survey course it presents but does not simply rehearse the major debates, perspectives, and schools that define your required readings, and reveals deeper disputes that have come to threaten the very existence of a once more or less united, coherent IR discipline.

Course Content

This course undertakes an overview of theoretical approaches to the study of international politics and, where relevant, traces their antecedents in earlier discussions. It begins with an examination of two mainstream and still dominant theoretical traditions: Realism and Liberalism, along with spin-off theories (Neorealism and Neoliberalism for example), followed by so-called “middle-ground” approaches like the English School and Constructivism. We will also explore a wide variety of approaches that challenge traditional theories, offer rival perspectives on international relations and, in some cases, reject IR theory itself. These approaches include Marxist IR and its many derivatives, Critical Theory (aka Frankfurt School Philosophy), Feminism (in its many forms), Poststructuralism, and Postcolonialism. Substantive issues that invariably arise in any discussion of theory will include problems of war and the conditions for peace, international conflict and cooperation, world order/society and the role of international institutions, long-standing but often neglected issues of empire, race, class, and gender, emerging debates around globalization, and how to handle the rising power of multinational corporations, and threats like pandemics, climate change, and other global crises.

Prerequisites: No previous completion of an introductory course in international relations (e.g. POLI 260 or its equivalent) is required. While the subject matter of the course is demanding

many of the readings and lectures provide deeper context and background for the subject as a whole. Non POLI and non IR majors are welcome.

Format

The format of the course will be two in-person lectures per week with archived resources on this course Canvas site. There will be some reading and lecture summary PDFs on Canvas, but lectures will not be recorded.

Required Course Reading

Textbook: Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, 5th Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021 (while not ideal, you may if necessary use the 4th edition).

Additional Required reading: There will be a collection of supplementary required readings available via free PDFs on Canvas and/or links in this syllabus.

Course assignments and Evaluative Procedures

Midterm 20% (Oct 19)

Research Essay 40% (**NEW DEADLINE Nov 30**)

Final Exam 40% (TBA)

Midterm exam

The midterm will be held in class on **Thursday, October 19** during regular class time. Students will be responsible for all

material covered prior to the exam up to and including the Oct 10-12 lectures on "the Neo-Neo debate." The exam format will be discussed in class but is likely to consist of short answers and/or mini essays.

Research essay

You are required to write a research essay based on a set of topics to be distributed early in the academic term or, with our permission and knowledge only, an original topic of direct relevance to the course. The approximate length required is 3,000 to 3500 words (e.g. roughly 12 pages double-spaced, normal 1" margins and 12 pt. font.). Please do not exceed 3500 words (for more guidance see **Course Policy Statement** below). The paper will be due simultaneously on Canvas and TurnItIn by midnight **Thursday, November 30**).

Final exam

There will be a final examination during the regular examination period. You will be accountable for the readings assigned for each class and all lecture material. The exam will be cumulative but weighted post-midterm. The exam format will be discussed in the final weeks of regular class instruction .

Course Policies

Materials & attendance

You are responsible for all material covered in lectures and assigned readings. Regular attendance is a normal expectation for success but not monitored. Keynote slides will be posted after each weekly unit is completed, but these are for reference and not meant to substitute for in-person lectures.

Email

We welcome and respond as quickly as possible to emails, but complicated issues are best dealt with in person (i.e. via office hours). Please feel free to email but do not ask myself or the TA questions you know cannot be properly answered in a short response. Please also be aware that we are not on 24 hour call. Emails sent late at night will not be returned until the next morning and emails sent over the weekend are not likely to be read or addressed until regular UBC work hours resume.

Academic concessions

Please note that UBC Senate recently passed revisions to the Academic Concession policy [Academic Concession Policy](#) that are now in effect. For in-term concession options please contact Arts Academic Advising for adjudication of the first request for concession during the term. For more information, click on the link above. If you're having trouble academically due to physical or mental health, family matters, and more, please see Arts Academic Advising (Buch. A201 604-822-4028). Students who miss exams for non-medical reasons will not have an opportunity to rewrite. For accommodation related to disabilities, please see Access and Diversity in Brock Hall.

You should also be aware that UBC has set up an “Early Alert” system to help students when they are experiencing difficulties and help to get back on track. This is a confidential system that sends an email to advisors who will then contact students to offer them help, references to support services if need be, etc. Students can decide not to take the offer of help; this is a purely voluntary system. This information goes only to early alert advisors; it does not go to anyone else, and doesn’t end up on a permanent record anywhere. Please see more about “early alert” here: [Early Alert](#) and please note that we would never refer a student to the attention of “Early Alert” without their knowledge.

Other helpful resources can be found in the following links:

<https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/academic-learning-resources>

<https://students.ubc.ca/health>

<https://students.ubc.ca/health/crisis-support>

Written Work (formatting, style, submission)

Research papers must be double-spaced, have proper margins (1") and normal sized font (e.g. 12 pt.), include a title page, bibliography, and references, have numbered pages, and follow a properly utilized, academically recognized form of citation. While I recommend and prefer APA feel free to use the style that works for you, but please be consistent (e.g. do not mix styles). If you have any questions about these or other matters, please ask.

Papers must be uploaded to Canvas on time. You are also required to submit your paper assignment to TurnItIn and advised to consult department and university policy on plagiarism (see below).

Course policy on lateness, missing work, and regrading

Late work will be penalized 2% per business day. Missing work will receive a zero unless alternative arrangements are made on the basis of a recognized hardship per the Academic Concession Policy above.

Students should retain a copy of all returned assignments. If you believe the grade does not adequately reflect the quality of your work, be specific about why you think you deserve a higher

grade. It is best to do this within a week of the time the assignment is returned/graded.

Final exams (including take home exams) are not returned but students have the right to review their final exam with me, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the most serious form of academic misconduct and established cases are treated severely and, at a minimum, will result in a mark of zero. It is your responsibility to be aware of what constitutes plagiarism; the following links will make clear university policy and help you to avoid all forms of academic misconduct (What is misconduct? [Misconduct Defined](#); How to avoid the dreaded P)[Academic Integrity](#).

The UBC Political Science Department requires that all undergraduate papers be submitted to TurnItIn, a service that compares submissions to thousands of published documents, essays-for-purchase, all other student papers submitted to the website, and so forth to detect levels of overlap in wording and generate “originality reports.”

Because TurnItIn servers are located outside of Canada, you are permitted, if you wish, to submit work that is anonymous as per BC’s Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy policy. The easiest way to do this is to use an alias when using TurnItIn and then share the alias with your TA and I so we can match you to submitted work. To submit your assignment, log onto the site TurnItIn.com and click on the “create a user profile” link and select “student” on the pull-down menu. To enrol, you will be asked to enter your “class ID” and “class enrolment key” The information you will need is as follows:

course ID: **40533122**

enrollment key: **Waltz**

You will not receive credit for your papers unless they are submitted to TurnItIn. The due date for TurnItIn is the same as the assignment due dates above. Please note that your submissions will NOT be available to anyone to read as a public document—so you do not need to worry about other students finding your paper on the internet and copying it for their own use. Please also retain all rough work used in the preparation of your assignments, and be ready to submit this work if and when you are requested to do so.

ChatGPT and Other Generative AI Tools

Academic integrity is a key expectation for students in completing their own work. We are aware that AI tools can produce essays in seconds, and are even capable of completing multiple-choice exams and short answer questions. The use of these tools is forbidden in all aspects of this course and any violation of this policy will be treated as academic dishonesty.

UBC Statement of Values and Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support

are available here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>)

Learning Goals

The course aims to introduce, develop, critically assess, and distinguish between mainstream and critical theories of international relations. On completion of the course students will be able to:

- Identify the major tenets, authors, proponents, intellectual foundations, and analytical aspirations of classical realism, neorealism (also known as structural realism), liberalism, neoliberalism, constructivism, Marxist and related approaches, and a host of theories grouped under the broad label of critical theory, including poststructuralism, various feminisms, and approaches grounded in traditions of political philosophy that predate the modern discipline of International Relations (IR)
- Understand distinctions among the major theories of IR and be able to appreciate and reflect on how theory and practice intertwine in forming both discrete theories of international relations, and the creation of the modern discipline of IR as a free standing academic field
- Be able to transcend the narrow constraints of traditional conceptions of social science and develop an appreciation for, and knowledge of, IR approaches drawn from other disciplines
- Discuss critically, and write knowledgeably about, major IR theories, relating these both to contemporary events and historical processes
- Show how theory and practice intertwine in forming mainstream and critical IR theories think and write critically about key debates in contemporary IR theory

Major journals of relevance to this course: *International Organization*, *International Security*, *Review of International Studies*, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Review of International Studies*, *British International Studies*, *International Affairs*, *International Theory*, and *Millennium*.

Other Resources

Websites and blogs: Websites, blogs and social media are an increasingly common, powerful, and rigorous means of conducting, and thinking about, IR theory and you may wish to be part of the conversation. There are a number of blogs devoted to international studies. Major blogs include *The Duck of Minerva*, *The disorder of things*, and *e-International Relations*. I also have my own blogs, in various places, and I'm happy to share links if you ask.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

Sept 7 Introduction to Course

Assigned Readings: None

Sep 12-14 Introducing the Basic Vocabulary of International Relations

Assigned Reading

Dunne text: Steve Smith, Introduction, “Diversity and Disciplinarity in IR Theory”; and Milja Kurki and Colin Wight, chapter 1, “International Relations and Social Science”

Extra short reading: A. C. McKeil (2012) “Is IR a Force for Good in the World Today?” (<https://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/24/is-ir-a-force-for-good-in-the-world-today>

Links to an external site.
)

Sept 19-Sept 21 **Stories without origin: Realist visions of world politics as eternal recurrence**

Assigned Reading

Dunne text: Richard Ned Lebow, “Classical Realism” and John Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism”

Daniel Garst (1989) “Thucydides and Neorealism,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 33: 3-27. [Garst-1-1.pdf](#).

[Download Garst-1-1.pdf](#).

Kenneth Waltz (2012) “Why Iran should get the bomb,” article: [Waltz.pdf](#)

[Download Waltz.pdf](#)

Plus interview with author Waltz interview <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/kenneth-waltz-on-why-iran-should-get-the-bomb>

Links to an external site.
)

Thucydides: The Melian Dialogue

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lrbnqYAXqzYrQdVnkxcPQ0ITFoY6R_Cv/view?usp=sharing

Links to an external site.

)

Sept 26-28 **Foundations: IR as a Modern Academic Discipline**

Assigned Readings

Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira and John Hobson (2011)
“The Myths That Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and
1919,” *Millennium*, 39(3): 735-758 <https://Carvahlo>

Links to an external site.

E. H. Carr (chapters 1 and 2), *The Twenty Years Crisis*. London:
Macmillan, 1939 [Carr-1.pdf](#)

[Download Carr-1.pdf](#)

Kal Holsti (1985) *The Dividing Discipline*. Boston: Allen and
Unwin, chapter 1 [Holsti-1.pdf](#)

[Download Holsti-1.pdf](#)

Oct 3-5 **Setting: IR and its paradoxical connection to national interests**

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: Tim Dunne, “The English School”

Richard Devetak and Richard Higgott (2009) Chapter 20, *The
Australian Study of Politics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave [Devetak
International Relations Theory in Austra.pdf](#)

[Download Devetak International Relations Theory in Austra.pdf](#)

Stanley Hoffmann (1977) “An American Social Science: International Relations,” *Daedalus*, 106, 3, pp. 41-60 [Hoffmann-1.pdf](#)

[Download Hoffmann-1.pdf](#)

Robert M. A. Crawford (2001) “Where have all the theorist gone?,” in Robert M. A. Crawford and Darryl Jarvis, *International Relations: Still an American Social Science?* Albany: State University of New York Press [Crawford-1.pdf](#)

[Download Crawford-1.pdf](#)

Lindsay Cunningham-Cross and William Callahan (2011), “Ancient Chinese Power. Modern Chinese Thought,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 4, 2011, 349–374 [Ancient Chinese Power Modern Chinese Tho.pdf](#)

[Download Ancient Chinese Power Modern Chinese Tho.pdf](#)

Oct 10-12 **Fusion: the Neo-Neo debate**

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: Bruce Russett, “Liberalism” and Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Neoliberalism”

Robert Keohane (2012) “Hegemony and After,” *Foreign Affairs*, 91(4): 114-118 [Keohane-1.pdf](#)

[Download Keohane-1.pdf](#)

Oct 17-19 **Evolution: From Neo-Liberalism to Constructivism**

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: K. M. Fierke, "Constructivism"

Alexander Wendt (1992) "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46(2): 391-426 [Wendt-1.pdf](#)

[Download Wendt-1.pdf](#)

Richard Price (1998) "Dangerous Liaisons? Constructivism and Critical International Theory" (with Christian Reus-Smit, co-author), *European Journal of International Relations*, 4:3, pp. 259-294 [Dangerous Liaisons-1.pdf](#)

[Download Dangerous Liaisons-1.pdf](#)

Oct 24-26 **IR Theory as Political Philosophy**

Assigned Readings

Toni Erskine, "Whose progress, which morals? Constructivism, normative IR theory and the limits and possibilities of studying ethics in world politics," *International Theory*, vol. 4, no. 3 [whose-progress-which-morals-constructivism-normative-ir-theory-and-the-limits-and-possibilities-of-studying-ethics-in-world-politics.pdf](#)

[Download whose-progress-which-morals-constructivism-normative-ir-theory-and-the-limits-and-possibilities-of-studying-ethics-in-world-politics.pdf](#)

R. B. J. Walker (1995) "International Relations and the Concept of the Political," in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, *International Relations Theory Today*, Oxford: Polity Press [scanWALKER-1.pdf](#)

[Download scanWALKER-1.pdf](#)

William Wallace (1996) "Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations," *Review of International Studies*. Vol. 22 [Wallace.pdf](#)

[Download Wallace.pdf](#)

Oct 31-Nov 2 **Marxism: Theory and practice in IR**

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: Mark Rupert, "Marxism"/Steven Roach "Critical Theory"

Chris Brown (1995), International Theory and International Society: The Viability of the Middle Way? *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 183-196 [Brown Int Community.pdf](#)

[Download Brown Int Community.pdf](#)

Nov 7-9 **From pillars to “posts”: theories about theory**

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: David Campbell, "Poststructuralism"/Shampa Biswas, "Postcolonialism" [Biswas.pdf](#)

Download Biswas.pdf

Chris Brown (1994) “Turtles all the Way Down,” *Millennium*. vol. 23, no. 2 Brown Turtles all the way-1.pdf

Download Brown Turtles all the way-1.pdf

(Midterm break) Nov 16 **Worlding the Other**

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: J. Ann Tickner and Laura Sjoberg, “Feminism,” (ch. 10).

Cynthia Weber, Amy Lind, V. Spike Peterson, Laura Sjoberg, Lauren Wilcox, and Meghana Nayak, (2014) “The Forum: Queer International Relations,” *International Studies Review*. 16, 4: 596-623. Zalewski

Do We Understand Each Other Yet Feminis(1)-2.pdf

Maryisa Zalewski (2007) “Do We Understand Each Other Yet? Troubling feminist encounters within International Relations,” *British Journal of Politics and IR*, 9(2), 2007: 302-312 Zalewski

Do We Understand Each Other Yet Feminis(1)-2.pdf

Download Zalewski

Do We Understand Each Other Yet Feminis(1)-2.pdf

Nov 21-23 **Beyond isms: no more boundaries?**

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: Robyn Eckersley, "Green Theory"/Colin Hay, "IR Theory and Globalization"

Felix Berenskoetter (2012) "The end of IR theory as we know it," The Disorder of Things <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2012/08/03/the-end-of-ir-theory-as-we-know-it/>

Links to an external site.

Nov 28-Nov 30 Reflections

Assigned Readings

Dunne text: Ole Waever, "Still a Discipline After All These Debates"

Tim Dunne, Lene Hansen, and Colin Wight (2013) "Abstract and Introduction," *European Journal of International Relations*. Special Issue: "The End of International Relations Theory"? 19(3). [DunneHansenWight_EJIREndofIRtheory.pdf](#)

Download DunneHansenWight_EJIREndofIRtheory.pdf

Dec 5-7 Last day of class (TBD)

Acknowledgment: UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.