1 Description & Objectives

This graduate seminar offers an overview of major theories and analytical approaches in the field of international relations. Each week we will cover a particular theoretical lens or approach through which scholars have sought to make sense of the international environment. The readings in this module reflect research that aims to provide logically consistent and empirically supported explanations of outcomes in world politics. The overarching objective of the seminar is for students to become acquainted with scientific approaches to the study of international relations on a wide range of issue areas. My hope is for this module to also serve as a solid foundation for the development of dissertation research questions and design.

2 Module Requirements and Policies

2.1 Class Discussion (15%)

Student participation in class discussion and debate on the readings is a central element of the seminar. Students are expected to have read all required readings and to have acquired detailed knowledge and developed informed critiques of the readings prior to the class meeting. The objective of class discussion will be to critically assess the readings and offer insights on what direction new research could and should proceed in the field. Students will be evaluated on the quality of their input in class discussion and debate. Those who are deemed to be falling behind in class participation may be asked to submit additional response papers.

Some questions to keep in mind while reading: What are the central theories discussed in the study? Are the assumptions of the theory consistent or do they contradict each other? If the study seeks to test a theory with evidence, what are the findings? How would you rate the quality of the test, e.g. do the data adequately measure the theoretical concepts; is the design strong enough to adequately test the theory? Are there cases that the author has overlooked? How would you go about re-designing the test to overcome any limitations? Can the study be extended to cover other issue areas; if so, which ones?

2.2 Oral Presentation (5%)

Students will be required to give a 10 minute oral presentation of one response paper during the term. This means that if you are presenting in a given week, you must submit a response paper by the Sunday before the meeting. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first meeting. Presentations will be evaluated based on the quality of content and execution: organization, demonstrated subject knowledge, effective use of visual aids, engagement with audience, eye contact, and elocution. For some tips on effective execution of an oral presentation, see: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1857815/.
2.3 Response Papers (30%): 3 required + 2 extra

Students will be required to submit three (3) response papers over the duration of the term. Students also have the opportunity to submit up to two (2) extra response papers. The final grade will count the highest three submitted response papers.

Response papers are not mere descriptions or summaries of the readings, but rather offer critiques and/or provide connections with studies from other weeks' readings. Examples might include a critical evaluation of research design and suggestions for overcoming limitations, discussion on the assumptions of a theoretical approach, possible extensions of a theory, and/or critical evaluation of an empirical analysis. Response papers must engage with the required readings from the week, but may also include the suggested readings as well. Submitted response papers may be circulated in class to add to the discussion.

The required length of the response papers is between 600-800 words, double-spaced pages. The deadline for submission on turnitin.com is 6 PM on the Sunday before class. Late submissions will not be accepted. You may not submit more than one response paper per week. Submission of response papers must comply with the following schedule:

- One paper due between weeks 2-5
- One paper due between weeks 6-9
- One paper due between weeks 10-12

2.4 Policy Brief (20%)

Taking the role of policy analyst, your task is to prepare a concise and structured policy brief advising the head of a government agency (e.g. U.S. Department of State, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, U.K. Department for International Development, etc.), an intergovernmental organization (e.g., UNICEF), or a transnational advocacy network (e.g., Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, etc.) on why and how existing policy regarding a current world affairs issue should be changed and/or what new policy should be implemented. The objective of the policy brief is to encourage you to apply the theoretical frameworks and analytic approaches discussed in class to practical use. This short brief should not be just a summary of the issue (assume that the reader watches the news), but rather a theoretically informed and evidence based analysis of current policy effectiveness and advice on new policy.

The length of the policy brief is between 1,000-1,500 words, double-spaced pages. The policy brief must also include an executive summary of up to 200 words (does not count to overall word count). Be sure that the brief makes a clear argument, that it is focused, and that it is supported by theory and existing research in the literature. The deadline for submission on turnitin.com is 6 PM on Monday, November 11th.

2.5 Research Proposal (30%)

Students will be required to submit a long paper at the end of the term. The objective of the paper is to lay out a research design for a larger empirical project which seeks to explain variation in an outcome related to world politics. The paper must formulate a clear research question, connect a theory or theories covered in class to the outcome to be studied, derive a set of hypotheses which will be tested empirically, discuss how the test will be conducted (as well as how concepts will be measured and how the relevant data will be collected), and offer an informed discussion on the expected results of the test. The ultimate goal of the paper is to provide a solid foundation for the development of your dissertation.

The length of the paper should be between between 2,750 and 3,250 words (including reference list, footnotes, and title page), double-spaced pages. The deadline for submission on turnitin.com is 6 PM on Monday, December 16th.
2.6 Written Work Submission Guidelines

All written assignments are to be submitted Blackboard.

2.6.1 Academic & Professional Ethics

Please do not plagiarize. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter, with serious consequences that can result in receiving no credit for an assignment, a failing grade for the module, and even expulsion from the programme. It is never permissible to turn in any work that contains others’ ideas without proper acknowledgment. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the College Calendar (see http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/calendar). If you are paraphrasing, cite the source. If you are quoting, use quotation marks and appropriate citation. Remember that academic integrity is a reflection of one’s character. In addition, we strongly recommend that you visit http://www.plagiarism.org/ for more information on what is and is not plagiarism. Lastly, students are required to only submit “new work” in each module, which means work that has not been submitted previously in any other university module. Students who wish to use previously submitted work as part of a new project will need the approval of the lecturer.

2.7 Syllabus Modification Rights

I reserve the right to reasonably alter the elements of the syllabus at any time. More often than not this will mean adjusting the reading list to keep pace with the course schedule, although I may add reading assignments as well.

3 Readings

All required readings and suggested readings will be available on the Blackboard site of the course. This class does not have a textbook. Readings consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and articles from journals intended for wider audiences. Excellent introductions to the scientific study of international politics include the following:


4 Course Outline

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5 Course Schedule

Week 1. Introduction to the Field

Required:


Week 2. The Realist School

Required:


Suggested:


Week 3. Rationalist Perspective

Required:


Suggested:


Week 4. Ideas, Culture, and Identity

Required:


Suggested:


Week 5. Psychological Approaches

Required:


Suggested:


Week 6. International Institutions

Required:


Suggested:


Week 8. Domestic Groups and State Behavior

Required:


Suggested:


Week 9. Domestic Institutions and State Behavior

Required:


Suggested:

Week 10. Transnational Politics

Required:


Suggested:


Required:


Suggested:


Week 11. Hierarchy and Order

Required:


Suggested:


Week 12. International Systems Change

Required:


Suggested:


