Theory and Practice of International Politics

Class meets Tuesdays 3-5:40 pm in Cate 4, 451 seminar room

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Office Hours: M, W 3:30-4:30 pm, and by appointment in Cate 4, 401

Course Description

This course provides a wide-ranging introduction to international politics. War, democratization, nationalism, multilateralism, revolution, globalization, religious fundamentalism, resource scarcity, global warming, and human rights are some of the very many topics that come under the broad heading of international politics. These issues manifest themselves both within and between nation states. Therefore, in this class, “international politics” will be understood to include the political science subfields of both international relations and comparative politics.

International relations (IR) is the study of the relations among nations. What is the nature of the international system? What are the primary drivers of state behavior? How do states make their foreign policies? We will explore realist, liberal, constructivist, and political psychological answers to such questions.

Comparative politics (CP) is the study of politics beyond our borders—the domestic politics of foreign countries. “Comparative” can refer to a method: the explicit analysis of patterns of similarity and difference across (usually country) cases. But our understanding of foreign countries also frequently involves an implicit comparison to that which we know best—ourselves. Our assumptions about politics everywhere are derived from the American experience. Studying the world will help expose those assumptions, allowing us to move beyond the navel-gazing often apparent in the U.S. media coverage of the world to try to understand foreign countries in their own terms.

“Theory and practice.” Theories simplify to elucidate complex realities. We will take a utilitarian approach to the theories we explore. Do they help us better understand the world, or do they distort our understandings? What can theories developed to explain interstate cooperation and conflict, revolutions, nationalisms, and social movements of the past teach about such phenomena today?

The goal of this course is not to teach you what to think about international politics; it is, instead, to provide you with some analytic tools and concepts that you can use to think critically and for yourself about the world beyond the USA.
**Coursework and Grading**

Your final grade will be based upon three short analytic papers, a book review essay, a small group multi-media project, a policy memo, and class participation:

- **30%** Short analytic papers on readings / class discussant (3 @ 10% each)
- **20%** Book review essay
- **25%** Small group multi-media project
- **15%** Policy memo
- **10%** Class participation

You will write three short (3-4 double spaced pages) **analytic papers** (30% of final grade) on the required readings of the week. To stimulate class discussion, these will be e-mailed to the instructor and the entire class by 5pm of the Monday immediately prior to Tuesday’s seminar. During class itself, students will also be expected to help guide group discussion of the readings, and elaborate on points raised in their papers. Papers should not simply summarize the readings; instead, they should explore how the readings relate to one another and how they help us understand international politics. They can interrogate everything from key concepts used, theoretic points, (unstated) assumptions, to methodological issues. Can divide the labor.

You will write one **book review essay** (8-10 pages, double spaced, 20% of final grade) on two or three of the optional books associated with one week’s readings. This is not a book report. No summaries. Instead, it is your critical reading of the strengths and weakness of the books in relation to one another. For an example, click [here](#). The review essay will be due via e-mail to the full class at 5pm the day before we discuss the broader topic in class. You will present your review in class.

See the detailed explanation below about the **small group multi-media project** (20%).

**Policy memo** (15%). In the second week of class, you will choose one of the following broad topics on which to write a policy memo, due and presented to the class on week 15: small arms trade, WMD, nuclear proliferation, human security, to include health, food, and gender, resource, energy and environmental security, human rights challenges, cyber security, genocide, regional and country specific threats, and any other instructor approved topic that falls under the broad ruberic of international politics.

You will play the part of a policy analyst at the US Department of State, and direct your two page, single spaced **policy memo** to Secretary of State John Kerry. You are required to address a real challenge facing the world (and the US) today, and therefore need to narrow your topic. For instance, if you are interested in WMD, you might address the situation in Syria, or if you are interested in Africa, you could address the specific issue of food security and market price fluctuations. Your brief should include a:

1) **Statement of the issue:** Introduce your topic, make a case for its importance, how it affects the US and the world at large, and why new policies can help.

2) **Policy options:** discuss the advantages and disadvantages of three or four different policy options to address the challenge.
3) **Policy Recommendation**: explain what your policy option is, why it should be implemented, and why it is better than the current policy and other policy options. What are its intended outcomes? Why it is good for the USA and the international community?

4) **Sources**: List the sources you used in your research.

A sample policy brief, which you can use as a rough template, is attached to the end of this syllabus. Helpful tips on writing policy briefs can be found online [here](#).

Your **class participation** grade (10%) will be based upon the quality of your contributions to seminar discussions. You are expected to attend seminar having read the assigned materials. You are also expected to read critically. What are the author’s arguments? Are they persuasive? Why do you think that the authors take the positions that they do? Do you agree or not?

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**Small-group Multi-media Project:**

**Sochi Media Coverage in Comparative Perspective**

This class is not just about political science, it also involves doing political science. In week 2, you will join a team of three students responsible for putting together a multimedia presentation on **patterns of international media coverage of Russia** during the Sochi Winter Olympics in February. Each team will have 30 minutes to make their presentations and answer questions week 15.

Note that this project requires your team to pose the questions and uncover the puzzles that you will solve. We now live in a world of data overload, and need to develop data mining skills, such as uncovering interesting nuggets that beg explanation.

**Grading Criteria**: The group presentations will be graded 75% substance and 25% presentation.

**75% Substance**

1) **What?** Uncover interesting patterns in the ways that US and foreign media cover Russia.
   - **Media** is defined broadly: blogs, newspapers, TV, movies, music, cartoons, computer games – whatever you can find surfing the web or otherwise.
   - **Patterns** refers to similarities and differences in coverage (for instance, of Topic, Argument, Assumptions, and/or Tone) between media you explore.
   - **Interesting**: Patterns that seem obvious are not interesting. Patterns that are puzzling, by contrast, beg explanation and make for an interesting presentation.

2) **Why?** Come up with hypotheses/explanations about why these patterns of similarities or differences exist.
25% Presentation: Clear, creative, concise

1) Be clear: Substance doesn’t speak for itself; communicate your ideas precisely.
2) Be creative: A picture (or a sound, movie clip, etc.) can be worth a thousand words. Integrate multiple media into your presentation to get your ideas across.
3) Be concise: You only have 15 minutes to present, so limit yourselves to the multi-media slides that best capture your most interesting material.

Grading Process: Your team grade will be determined half by your classmates and half by me. Each presentation will be graded for both substance and presentation.

Teamwork: How you run your teams is your own business, but I grant each team the right to vote out any member that does not meet team expectations. Expectations can be formalized in a signed team contract, which might include pledges to attend weekly group meetings and/or complete various web-based or other research assignments. Any student voted out of a team will have to put together their own individual PowerPoint presentation.

Classroom Policies

*Respect is required.* While the discreet consumption of coffee and other beverages is permitted, eating, which might disrupt your classmates, is not. Please turn off all cell phones and other devices that might disrupt seminar. Disparaging comments or behaviors towards your classmates will not be permitted. Anyone disrupting the educational atmosphere of the classroom will be asked to leave.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Anyone experiencing harassment in the classroom should contact the instructor immediately. Harassment anywhere on the OU campus should be reported to the OU [Office of Equal Opportunity](http://www.ou.edu/provost/equal-opportunity/).

Plagiarism & Cheating

Academic honesty is presumed and required of all students at OU. Use of the work of others is positively encouraged and is central to scholarship, but it must always be properly credited. When it is not credited, and when the thoughts/words/ideas of others are passed off as your own, that is PLAGIARISM. Plagiarism is serious academic misconduct and will be reported to the appropriate university office; penalties are severe. Visit [www.ou.edu/provost/integrity-rights/](http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity-rights/) for details of the university’s academic honesty code. If you are in doubt about how to handle quotations or citations, please consult the instructor.

Disabilities

Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him/her from fully demonstrating his/her abilities should contact me personally within the first two weeks of class.
Outline of Seminar Topics

WEEK 1  COURSE INTRODUCTION

   I. THEORIES

WEEK 2  REALISM (IR)
WEEK 3  LIBERALISM (IR)
WEEK 4  CONSTRUCTIVISM (IR)
WEEK 5  POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY (IR)
WEEK 6  DIPLOMACY & FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS (IR/CP)
WEEK 7  MODERNIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION (CP)
WEEK 8  MARXIST, DEPENDENCY, AND WORLD SYSTEMS: LATIN AMERICA (CP)
WEEK 9  RATIONAL CHOICE AND ITS (CULTURAL) CRITICS (CP/IR)
WEEK 10 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

   II. THEMES

WEEK 11 NATIONALISM
WEEK 12 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS & THE INTERNET: CHINA
WEEK 13 REFORM AND REVOLUTION: 1989 & ARAB SPRING
WEEK 14 RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS AND 9-11: US & THE MIDDLE EAST

   III. PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 15 GROUP PROJECTS
WEEK 16 POLICY PAPERS
Course Readings and Division of Labor

REALISM (IR)
Required readings (Short papers by 1.__________________ 2.__________________ )
- Wohlforth, William (2012) “Realism and Foreign Policy.”

Mini-debate: Realism and China’s Rise

Optional books (reviewed by _____________)
- Schelling, Thomas (1966) *Arms and Influence*.

LIBERALISM (IR)
Required readings (Short papers by 1.__________________ 2.__________________ )

Optional books (reviewed by _____________)

CONSTRUCTIVISM (IR)
Required readings (Short papers by 1.__________________ 2.__________________ )
- Flockhart, Trine (2012) “Constructivism and Foreign Policy.”


Optional books (reviewed by ____________ )


**POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF IR**

Required readings (Short papers by 1. ____________ 2. ____________ )


• Lebow, Richard Ned (2006) “Fear, interest and honour: Outlines of a theory of international relations,” *International Affairs* 82 (3)


Optional books (reviewed by ____________ )

• Jervis, Robert. (1976). *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*

• Lebow, Richard Ned. (2008). *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*

• Gries, Peter (2014) *The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs*

**DIPLOMACY & FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS (IR/CP)**

Required readings (Short papers by 1. ____________ 2. ____________ )


• Alisson, Graham (2012) “The Cuban Missile Crisis”


Optional books (reviewed by ____________ )

• Alisson, Graham (1971) *Essence of Decision*


MODERNIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION (CP)
Required readings (Short papers by 1. ______________ 2. ______________ )
• Rostow, W.W. (1960), The Stages of Economic Growth, Ch. 2.

Optional books (reviewed by ______________ )
• Huntington, Samuel P. (1968) Political Order in Changing Societies.
• Huntington, Samuel P. (1991) The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century
• Putnam, Robert (1993) Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy

MARXISM, DEPENDENCY, AND WORLD SYSTEMS: LATIN AMERICA (CP)
Required readings (Short papers by 1. ______________ 2. ______________ )
• Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (1848), “The Manifesto of the Communist Party” skim
• Lenin, Vladimir I. (1916), Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism skim
• Frank, Andre Gunder (1972). “The Development of Underdevelopment,” in Dependence and Underdevelopment, Cockcroft, Gunder Frank, and Johnson, eds.

Optional books (reviewed by ______________ )
• Cardoso and Faletto (1979) Dependency and Development in Latin América.
• Evans, Peter (1979) Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil.

RATIONAL CHOICE AND ITS (CULTURAL) CRITICS (CP/IR)
Required readings (Short papers by 1. ______________ 2. ______________ )

**Debate: Walt vs. Powell & BBDM:**

**Optional books (reviewed by ______________ )**

**NATIONALISM**

**Required readings (Short papers by 1. ______________ 2. ______________ )**

**Optional books (reviewed by ______________ )**
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1990) *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*

**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE INTERNET: CHINA**

**Required readings (Short papers by 1. ______________ 2. ______________ )**

**Debate: China:**
- Leibold, James (2011) “Blogging Alone: China, the Internet, and the Democratic Illusion?” *JAS*

**Optional books (reviewed by ______________ )**
REFORM AND REVOLUTION: 1989 & ARAB SPRING

Required readings (Short papers by 1.________________ 2.______________)

Mini Debate I: Arab Spring
- Jones, Seth G. “Mirage of the Arab Spring” Foreign Affairs
- Berman, Sheri (2013) “The Promise of the Arab Spring,” Foreign Affairs

Optional books (reviewed by ________________)
- Skocpol, Theda (1979). States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China.

REPRESENTATIONAL FUNDAMENTALISMS, 9-11, AND TERRORISM

Required readings (Short papers by 1.____________ 2.______________)
- Gries, Peter (2014) The Politics of American Foreign Policy, Ch. 8: The Middle East.

Mini debate after 9-11

Optional books (reviewed by ________________)
Sample Policy Memo

To: Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services  
From: Amber Johnson, Special Adviser  
Date: February 8, 2013  
Re: Federal Mandate for Infertility Treatment Coverage by Insurance Providers (this is the problem or issue you are addressing in the brief)

Statement of Issue: 6 million Americans currently suffer from a medical disorder resulting in infertility. Because only 14%-17% of insurance companies provide coverage for fertility services, including assisted reproductive technologies, access to treatment is restricted to the affluent who pay high out-of-pocket expenses. Without insurance coverage, costs are spread across a small fraction of the population, increasing per capita rates for treatment and encouraging physicians to favor quicker and cheaper practices that compromise quality of care and raise health care costs.

(In this brief, the author follows her summary of the issue with a series of bullet points that list other factors that make this an important or pressing issue.)

- **Reproduction is a “major life activity”** according to the Supreme Court. By denying access to effective treatment for most socioeconomic groups, current policy violates the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Costs of infertility treatments without insurance coverage are a significant barrier to access.** An infertile couple will pay an average of $59,484 in medical expenses per live delivery with assisted reproductive technologies.
- **Premium increases to provide insurance coverage for infertility treatments are low.** The monthly cost of providing infertility treatment in Massachusetts, which mandates coverage, is approximately $0.26 per person.
- **Exclusion of infertility coverage increases multiple gestation, the main cause of neonatal morbidity in IVF patients.** With financial and time pressure from patients with limited funds, doctors have incentives to maximize pregnancy outcomes that may negatively affect maternal and neonatal health and increase hospital costs.

Policy Options

- A federal mandate for annualized case rate packages, would require all insurance companies to provide infertility treatment. Local provider communities would decide on specific treatment algorithms and base their one-year case rates of unlimited services on these algorithms. Patients would receive treatment at designated centers. Supported by infertility interest groups such as RESOLVE and many women’s groups.
  - **Advantages:** Provides coverage to all patients, reducing per capita costs and allowing insurance companies to negotiate discounts for services. Resolves ethical issue of discrimination under ADA. Eliminates incentives for couples to seek premature ART, reducing the risk of multiple gestation and limiting related health care costs. Eliminates discrepancies between states.
  - **Disadvantages:** Increases premiums for all payers, most without infertility problems. Encourages more people to seek treatment, increasing costs. Reluctance to increase premiums and payments from providers, who argue that infertility is not a life-
threatening disease. Mixed support from reproductive specialists, who will either benefit or lose business through designation of treatment centers.

- A restricted federal mandate, similar to the above option in structure, would limit coverage only to those with higher probability of success, such as younger women with no male-factor infertility. Limits could also be placed on the number of treatment cycles performed.
  - **Advantages:** Less costly than a full federal mandate. Provides coverage for couples with best chances of success, limiting costs. May encourage couples with little hope of conceiving to consider adoption. Insurance company support more likely for limited mandate.
  - **Disadvantages:** Limits on treatment will encourage overuse of ART and incidence of multiple gestation. Would not fully resolve discrimination issue, because clear restrictions are difficult to set. Consumer savings from reduced benefits would be small relative to total premiums.

- Optional state mandates, already successful in areas such as Illinois and Massachusetts, would leave discretion to state legislatures. As already reflected in current legislation, the scope and restrictions of the initiatives would vary considerably, and the federal government would make no requirement stipulating mandatory coverage.
  - **Advantages:** Doctors, providers, and patients could be encouraged to limit costs without government intervention. More individualized policies depending on state demographics. Less opposition from national insurance providers.
  - **Disadvantages:** Many current state policies have significant restrictions on coverage. Variety in state policies could not address problem of multiple gestation and overuse of ART as effectively. Insurance companies who provide coverage in states without mandate will pay disproportionately high costs as more people enroll in their plans.

**Policy Recommendation:** With rising usage rates of infertility treatment, along with rising rates of multiple gestation, quick reform is necessary to ensure patients have access to cost-effective, quality care. Although state reform has worked in some areas, the time needed for broad implementation in states without current initiatives hurts the health of patients. A federal mandate without significant restrictions, streamlining care and providing consistency between states, will increase access to many people in a short amount of time. While this option costs money, individual burden will be very minimal. Additionally, the costs of infertility treatments and ART have been steadily falling with rising use, suggesting that infertility treatments will be more affordable as the market grows through expanded insurance coverage.

**Sources:**

