GVPT 200: International Political Relations

Winter 2015 (online)

(Jan 5-Jan 23)

Instructor: Mr. Ping-Kuei Chen

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Videoconference or discussion via phone can be arranged upon request

**Introduction**

This course will serve as a broad introduction to the analytical study of international relations.

It is designed to prepare students for advanced IR courses. The course is devoted to the application of theoretical paradigm and concepts on various issue areas including power politics, theory of war and peace, international trade, and international monetary relations, non-state actors, and international institutions. Coverage does not include every aspect, but it addresses the core problems animating international politics today.

**Course Structure**

This is an online course that requires students to regularly access to the Canvas for course materials. The course consists of a total of 11 modules. It is highly recommended that students first read the assigned reading before going into the lecture notes. The course content helps explain the reading while providing more comprehensive accounts about the subject matter. Then you will be required to participate group discussions to respond to questions by the instructor or classmates on relevant issues.

**Grading**

Three exams given by the end of each week (75 percent of final grade, 25 each)

Participation in discussion (15 percent)

Participation in module (10 percent)

**Participation**

Participation in discussions is graded by weekly discussion on ELMS. I will post a question that draws from course materials and is related current event. The discussion opens on Thursday and closes by the end of the week. Each student is required to post two comments. The first one is their reflection to the discussion question. The second one is a response to other students’ comments. The comments should be a logical reasoning supported by empirical facts. Participation in module is graded by student’s access on ELMS materials. Students are expected to log-in ELMS every week and study all the materials.

**Grade Scale:** Grades will not be curved, but based on a straight scale

96-100 A+ 93-95 A 90-92 A- 88-89 B+ 83-87 B 80-82 B-

78-79 C+ 73-77 C 70-72 C- 68-69 D+ 63-67 D 60-62 D-

60 and below F

**Late Assignments:**

Late exams will not be accepted without prior approval—except in cases of emergency. To request an extension for an assignment you must contact me at least 48 hours prior to the due date of the assignment.

Late responses to discussion questions will be penalized 50 percent. Late comments on other students’ responses will be penalized 50 percent.

**Challenges:**

Students wishing to challenge a grade must do so within 2 days after the exam. Students should write a challenge through ELMS message, with a clear explanation the reasons for the challenge.

**Required Reading:**

All journal articles and book chapters are must-read and available on ELMs. I will assign news articles each week for discussion. Students will need to read those materials in order to contribute to discussion.

**Recommended Reading**

The articles we read in this course are mostly collected in an edited volume: Robert Art and Robert Jervis, *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, Pearson Education. The newest version is the 12th, but the 11th edition is fine, too.

**Honor code/Academic integrity**

It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html. Cheating and plagiarizing will result in an F for the assignment.

**Medically necessitated absences**

Students should be familiar with the policy of the University regarding medically necessitated absences. A student who experiences a prolonged illness preventing him/her accessing the course or a grading event is required to provide a documentation of the illness, verifying the dates of the treatment and the time period.

**Students with disabilities**

I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. In order to ascertain what accommodations may need to be provided, please inform me any needs at the beginning of the semester.

**Religious observances**

Please let me know in advance if a religious observance will cause you to miss an assignment.

**Resources**: these well-known resources will help you keep track on international affairs.

BBC <http://www.bbc.com/news/>

NY Times <http://www.nytimes.com/>

Financial Times <http://www.ft.com/home/us>

The Washington Post <http://www.washingtonpost.com/regional/>

Economist <http://www.economist.com/>

Foreign Policy <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/>

CNN <http://www.cnn.com/>

CIA World Fact Book <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

\*I reserve the right to change anything on this syllabus at any time, provided I give proper notice.

**MODULE DESCRIPTION**

MODULE I: GRAND THEORY AND CONCEPTS

The first part of the course will introduce to the class. In addition to summarizing course expectations, we will briefly survey major approaches to the study of international politics. We will also learn some key concepts that drive state actions in international relations. We will frequently revisit these concepts in the future.

Key questions

* What is the security dilemma? What make it more or less severe?
* How do states seek security?

MODULE II: INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND CONFLICT

The second part of the course examines international security and conflict. In week 2 we will take a closer look at the realist worldview of an anarchic international system in which states struggle for power and security. First we consider the causes of war, focusing in particular on rationalist explanations for armed conflict. Then we discuss democratic peace theory and its critiques. Finally we investigate the effect of nuclear weapon on international security.

Key questions:

* Wars are very costly, so why do they occur?
* Does democracy promote peace?
* Do nuclear weapons make the world more secure or more dangerous?

MODULE III: COOPERATION

Part 3 of the course focuses on what makes cooperation possible. Here we begin with what is meant by “cooperation.” We will discuss United Nations and the role that it might play in facilitating cooperation between countries. Then we will discuss international cooperation on environmental issue.

Key questions:

* What is meant by international cooperation?
* Why are states able to cooperate on some issues, but not others?
* How do international institutions affect the prospects for cooperation?

MODULE IV: INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

This part serves as an introduction to international political economy. We examine trade relationship between states and the struggle for liberalizing trade. Then we discuss globalization and its implications for state sovereignty, focusing in particular on the “race to the bottom” argument.

Key questions:

* Why do states trade with each other?
* Does globalization eliminate state borders?

MODULE V: CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In the final part of the class we will reexamine American hegemony in our time. The rise of China has been a popular topic in public discourse. How do we evaluate China’s rise? How is it going to affect the position of the US?

**Course Schedule**

**1/5: introduction, anarchy, power, and grand theories**

*Reading*: Jack Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories”, *Foreign Policy*, No. 145 (Nov. - Dec., 2004), pp. 52-62

**1/6: the security dilemma, seeking security in an anarchic world**

*Reading*: John Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Ch5; Charles Glaser, “The Security Dilemma Revisited”, *World Politics*, 50. Vol. 1, (1997), p. 171-201

**1/7: Why war? Bargaining model of war**

*Reading*: David Lake, “Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory”, *International Security*, vol.35, No. 3. (Winter2010/2011).

**1/8: The liberal peace and domestic causes of war**

*Reading*: Sebastian Rosato, “The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory.” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 97, no. 4 (November 2003), pp. 585-602.

**1/8: discussion opens**

**1/11 Exam I**

**1/12: Nuclear weapons**

Reading: Kenneth Waltz, “Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Would Mean Stability”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 91, 2012, pp. 2-5.

**1/13: Non-state actor and conflict: terrorism and civil war**

Reading: Walter and Kydd, “Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2006), pp. 49–80; Marc Lynch, “The Political Science of Syria’s Civil War”, *Foreign Policy*. Dec 19, 2013.

**1/14: Role of international organization, the United Nations and collective security**

John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions.” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/1995), pp. 5-49.

**1/15: Transnational advocacy network and global cooperation on environment**

David G. Victor, Charles F Kennel, and Veerabbadran Ramanathan, “The Climate Threat

We Can Beat: What It Is and How to Deal With It,”*Foreign Affairs*, Vol 91, issue3, 2012, pp. 112-121.

**1/15: discussion opens**

**1/18 Exam II**

**1/19: Martin Luther King Memorial Day, no class.**

**1/20: trade and protectionism**

*Reading:* Kimberly Elliot, “Big Sugar and the Political Economy of U.S. Agricultural Policy,” Center for Global Development brief, April 2005.

**1/21 International monetary relations and globalization**

Daniel Drezner, “Globalization and Policy Convergence.” *International Studies Review* 3 (Spring 2001): 53-78.

**1/22: The future of world politics: rise of China and American power**

*Reading*: Arvind Subramanian, “The Inevitable Superpower: Why China’s Dominance is a Sure Thing,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 90, No. 5 (September/October 2011)

**1/22 discussion opens**

**1/23 Exam III**