

## POLS 324

# International Relations Theory

Old Dominion University, Fall 2020

Asynchronous Online Course

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To set up an appointment: <https://calendly.com/cxwu/fall2020>

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## Course Description

This course surveys the major theories and themes in philosophical and scientific thoughts about international relations (IR). It gives special consideration to the historical evolution of IR scholarship, and to the most prominent debates among scholars. In IR, we often use paradigms to organize our thinking, the scholarly study of world politics, and even practice in foreign affairs. The first half of the course traces the evolution of the major paradigms in the American IR circle as well as alternative perspectives such as the English School and the Feminist theory. The second half of the course focuses on what scholars call “middle-range theories” in various topics. The middle-range theories move beyond the paradigm debate (i.e. whether power matters) towards conditional generalization (i.e. when and how power matters). In other words, such theories focus on situations, strategies, or tools that are of direct concern to policy makers. This course combines theory with empirics. We will work on applying theories of IR to contemporary issues and understanding the fundamental problems international actors face and the broad patterns of their interactions with one another.

**Course Format:** This is an asynchronous online course. Except special notice, two lecture videos will be posted on Blackboard earlier each week; after watching the lectures, students will participate in online discussions on the assigned topics on Blackboard by the end of each Friday. I will join discussions on Blackboard and hold *optional* Zoom discussion sessions on Friday at least once every month (with date/time TBD).

## Support for Online Classes

- General tips for online learning: <https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1239490473556877312.html>
- Remote Learning at ODU: <https://www.odu.edu/academics/student-computing/remote-learning>
- Zoom, Team, or Drive: <https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/occs/docs/zoom-students.pdf>
- Blackboard Tips: <https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/occs/docs/bb-students-best-practices.pdf>

- Blackboard Discussion Boards: <https://ualr.edu/blackboard/welcome/how-to/discussions/>
- Blackboard Tests: <https://ualr.edu/blackboard/welcome/how-to/bb-tests/>

## Course Requirements

### 1. Student initiatives

Success in this class requires intensive reading and class participation. The assigned articles and chapters can be quite dense. You must complete and take notes on all assigned readings prior to the class. A rule of thumb is that you will need to spend about 2–3 times the time we meet in class to read and take notes every week.

### 2. Class participation (20 points)

**Active participation in a civil manner is necessary to succeed in this course.** Participation grade will be evaluated over the whole semester. Students are expected to engage actively in weekly discussions by **(i) raising questions about readings and lectures, (ii) participate in discussions and/or debates on the topics provided by the instructor, (iii) contributing to review sessions, and (iv) presenting current news on foreign relations on a regular basis.** Questions and comments must be

- related to class and/or the course material;
- respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement;
- aimed to advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs;
- delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner.

**Since each discussion topic is tied to the sessions on the same week, you are expected to follow the designated discussion topics as we go through the lecture materials. For each topic, you can pose your thoughts on the Blackboard's Discussion Board by the end of Sunday, or join live-streaming sessions if available (see the course schedule for specific deadlines).**

### 3. Random quizzes (10 points)

Throughout the course, the instructor will give seven written exercises or quizzes on Blackboard. Written exercises ask students to express your opinion about a question relevant to our course. Quizzes are designed to provide a quick evaluation of how well students understand lectures and/or readings.

Students will earn a maximum of 10 points this way, accounting for 10% of their total grade. Students must complete the quizzes before the designated deadlines to receive credits. **A thoughtful response or a correct answer will earn the writer full credit (2 points), a messy, incomplete response will earn half credit (1 point), and no response will earn no credit.**

**While NO “make ups” are available for this portion of the course, the instructor will offer at least 7 opportunities to earn these 10 points.** Students who have already earned 10 points will receive **a point extra credit on the final exam for each additional assignment** (maximum 2).

### 4. Short essay (20 points)

You will write one short essay, **4-5 single-spaced pages long.** You can choose **one** topic from the six essay topics provided in the course schedule. The essay will apply the relevant theories or scholarly works to a contemporary issue. **Your essay should (a) include a clearly-articulated thesis statement/argument**

**with the support of relevant and reliable evidence, and (b) address all the questions listed under a given topic in a coherent way.** Beyond the reading materials of the relevant week, you are encouraged to include the readings from other weeks or external materials.

Each essay topic has a specific deadline, the same as the deadline of online participation. Below is the summary of the six topics and the relevant deadlines. Find more details in the course schedule. To facilitate your submission, an assignment link will be created for each essay topic on Blackboard.

1. Power and the International System (Deadline: Sep 20, 11:59 pm)
2. The US and International Institutions (Deadline: Sep 27, 11:59 pm)
3. The Big Picture of the US-China Relations (Deadline: Oct 4, 11:59 pm)
4. Dangerous Game across the Taiwan Strait? (Deadline: Nov 8, 11:59 pm)
5. International Institutions and COVID-19 (Deadline: Nov 15, 11:59 pm)
6. President Trump's Trade Policy (Deadline: Nov 22, 11:59 pm)

Here are some on-campus resources to help you improve writing skills:

- The Writing for College Success Program: <https://www.odu.edu/academicsskills>
- The Writing Center: <https://www.odu.edu/al/centers/writing-center>
- The Center for High Impact Practices: <https://www.odu.edu/chip>

### 5. Two Exams (25 points for each)

Both of the exams are **non-cumulative, closed-book** format. You will take the exams at the location of your choice via Blackboard or ProctorU. More instructions will be provided later. The first exam covers the lectures and readings until October 12. The second exam covers the rest of materials. A study guide will be provided before each exam, along with a review session.

## Grading

The course grade consists of the following components:

- 20 points: **Class participation**
- 10 points: **Random quizzes**
- 20 points: **Short Essay (the deadlines vary with topics)**
- 25 points: **Exam I on Oct 14 (60 minutes)**
- 25 points: **Exam II on Dec 11 (60 minutes)**

There are 100 possible points, which will correspond to the following letter grades:

93-100: A	90-92: A-	87-89: B+	83-86: B
80-82: B-	77-79: C+	73-76: C	70-72: C-
67-69: D+	63-66: D	60-62: D-	0-59: F

The instructor will round up scores of 0.5 and higher, and round down scores of less than 0.5.

## Course Policies

- *Classroom Conduct:* Cell phones are to be silenced during class. Please be on time for class. It is inconsiderate and disruptive to arrive late to class or to leave class early. In circumstances where you need to leave early, tell the instructor beforehand. Repeated disruptions of class will lead to a reduction in your final grade.
- *Missing Class:* Although there is no attendance point *per se*, missing lectures will prevent you from performing well in the course, for (i) some of lecture materials are not covered in the readings and (ii) you are likely to miss in-class exercises and quizzes, which, again, the instructor does *not* offer “make-ups.”
- *Missing Exams:* In case of illness and personal emergency, the instructor will provide make-up exams **only when provided with proper documentation**. Exams missed due to a university-sponsored event or religious holiday may also be excused, but it is the responsibility of students to inform the instructor of the absence **at least ten days in advance**, with proper documents. Vacation and other social engagements (e.g. weddings) will NOT be excused.
- *Late Submission:* Due to the requirement of peer review, the late submission of your short proposal will NOT be accepted. Late essays will be penalized 5 points per day (on a 100-point scale, see the grading scale on the last page), including weekends and holidays.
- *Grade Appeals:* If you wish to challenge a grade you received on a specific question on an exam or an essay, you must submit a **written note** (email acceptable) explaining why you think you deserve more points within **one week** upon receiving the grades. Once the instructor receives your written note, she will regrade the entire exam/essay and your grades may increase, decrease or remain the same.
- *Syllabus changes:* The readings and course schedules are subject to change, but any changes will be announced in class, with an updated syllabus on Blackboard.

## Required Readings

All the readings will be available on Blackboard. Students are expected to complete readings by the day for which they are assigned, and are encouraged to meet with the instructor or the TA during office hours to discuss the assigned readings and/or further interest in specific topics.

## Course Schedule

### Part I: Conventional Schools of IR Theories

#### Session 1 (Aug 31): Course Overview

- Keohane, Robert O. 2011. “Big Questions in the Study of World Politics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.1–6.

#### Session 2 (Sep 2): IR 101 Recap (scopes, evolution, applications, advantages/disadvantages of theory)

- Reus-Smit, Christian, and Duncan Snidal. 2011. “Overview of International Relations: Between Utopia and Reality,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.8–20.

- Recommended: Snyder, Jack. 2004. "One World, Rival Theories." *Foreign policy* 145: 53–62.

**Discussion** (Sep 4): Getting to Know Each Other

- Why do you study IR? What questions or issues interest you most? What are your reactions to the readings (e.g. big questions, the role of theory, etc)?

*No class on Labor Day Holiday*

**Session 3** (Sep 9): Realism I: Classic Realism

- Wohlforth, William C. 2008 "Realism" in *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp. 1–7.
- *No discussion on Sep 11*

**Session 4** (Sep 14): Realism II: Structural Realism

- Wohlforth, William C. 2008 "Realism" in *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp. 8–15.

**Session 5** (Sep 16): Realism III: Power Transition Theory

- Cooley, Alexander, and Daniel Nexon. 2020. "How Hegemony Ends." *Foreign Affairs*, 99(4): 143–156.

**Discussion/Essay Topic #1: Power and the International System (Deadline: Sep 20, 11:59 pm)**

- What constitutes national power? How does the scope of power evolve since the end of WWII? Do non-state actors have power as well?
- Based on your understanding of national power, how do you characterize the current international system? Is it a unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar system?

**Session 6** (Sep 21): Institutionalism I: Why States Cooperate?

- Katzenstein, Peter J., Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner. 1998. "International organization and the study of world politics." *International Organization* 52(4): 645–685. (Read pp.658–663)
- Bollyky, Thomas, and Chad P. Brown. 2020. "The Tragedy of Vaccine Nationalism." *Foreign Affairs*, 99(5): 96-108

**Session 7** (Sep 23): Institutionalism II: The Role of (Powerful) States

- Arthur, Stein. 2008. "Neoliberal Institutionalism," in *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp: 201–211.
- Ikenberry, G. John. 2020. "The Next Liberal Order." *Foreign Affairs*, 99(4): 133–142.

**Discussion/Essay Topic #2: The US and International Institutions (Deadline: Sep 27, 11:59 pm)**

- Despite the tradition of isolationism, why did the US take the lead in building international institutions (and alliances) after the end of WWII? What are the benefits for the US?
- What costs does the US pay for leading the liberal world order? How do you evaluate Washington's decisions in withdrawing from key international agreements and organizations?
- Will international cooperation be sustained without the US leadership? Why or why not?

**Session 8** (Sep 28): Liberalism I: The Second Image

- Moravcsik, Andrew. 2011. "The New Liberalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp. 1–16.

**Session 9** (Sep 30): Liberalism II: Variants of Liberalism

- Weiss, Jessica Chen. 2019. "A World Safe for Autocracy?" *Foreign Affairs*, 98(4): 92–102.
- Lippert, Barbara, and Volker Perthes. 2020. "Strategic Rivalry between United States and China." *SWP Research Paper*, April: pp.12–24.

**Discussion/Essay Topic #3: US-China Relations in the Big Picture (Deadline: Oct 4, 11:59 pm)**

- How do you characterize the current US-China competition through the lens of realism? How about the lens of liberalism or institutionalism (pick one)?
- Which perspective makes more sense to you and why? Make sure to address what you think the other perspective misses.

**Session 10** (Oct 5): Constructivism and Wrapped Up

- Hurd, Ian. 2008. "Constructivism." in *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.298-305.
- Katzenstein, Peter J., Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner. 1998. "International Organization and the Study of World Politics." *International Organization* 52(4): 645–685. (Read pp.670–678)

**Session 11** (Oct 7): Non-American Perspectives

- Dunne, Tim. 2011 "The English School," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp.1–12.
- Kang, David C. 2013. "International Relations Theory and East Asian History: An Overview." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 13(2): 181-205 (Read: pp. 181–194).

**Review Session** (Oct 9): Q & A

- Live-streaming review session (time TBD); study guide available later.

**Session 12** (Oct 12): Alternative Perspectives

- Tickner, Judith Ann. 2004. “Man, the State, and War: Gendered Perspectives on National Security.” in *Essential Readings in World Politics*, eds. Karen Mingst and Jack Snyder, W.W. Norton and Company: 94–101.
- Zvobgo, Kelebogile, and Meredith Loken. 2020. “Why Race Matters in International Relations?” *Foreign Policy*, July 19.

### **Session 13 (Oct 14): Exam I**

- *No discussion on Oct 16*

## **Part II: Modern Approaches of IR Theories**

### **Session 14 (Oct 19): A New Framework: Interests, Institutions, and Interactions**

- Frieden, Jeffry A., and David A. Lake. 2005. “International Relations as a Social Science: Rigor and Relevance.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 600(1): 136–151.

### **Session 15 (Oct 21): War’s Inefficiency Puzzle**

- Fearon, James D. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414. (Read: pp.379–390)

### **At-home Activity (Oct 23): Some game theory stuffs**

- Watch six video clips in “International Relations 101” (From #14 to #19): [Links](#)

### **Session 16 (Oct 26): Rationalist Explanations of War I**

- Fearon, James D. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414. (Read: pp.390–400)

### **Session 17 (Oct 28): Rationalist Explanations of War II**

- Fearon, James D. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414. (Read: pp.401–410)

### **Discussion/NO essay topic: Rationalist Explanations for War Recap (Deadline: Oct 25, 11:59 pm)**

- How can we make war less likely?

### **Session 18 (Nov 2): Domestic Politics and War I**

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, and Alastair Smith. 2012. “Domestic Explanations of International Relations.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15: 161–181 (Read: pp.163–171).

### **Session 19 (Nov 4): Domestic Politics and War II**

- no new readings

**Discussion/Essay Topic #4: Dangerous Game across the Taiwan Strait? (Deadline: Nov 8, 11:59 pm)**

Suppose you were a foreign policy advisor to Tsai Ing-wen, President of the Republic of China (Taiwan). Write a policy brief to address the following questions.

- Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tension between the US and China has been rising rapidly, including the tit-for-tat consulate closures, large arms sales to Taiwan, HHS Secretary's official visit to Taiwan, and frequent military exercises in the South China Sea. To what extent is the ongoing tension between the US and China driven by domestic politics of both countries?
- How would you estimate the risk of a militarized conflict between the US and China on the Taiwan issue in 2020? Given your estimates, what policy recommendations would you offer to President Tsai for dealing with Washington and Beijing?

**Session 20** (Nov 9): International Institutions I: Why do States Comply?

- Carraro, Valentina. 2019. "Promoting Compliance with Human Rights: The Performance of the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies." *International Studies Quarterly* 63(4): 1079-1093. (Skim: pp. 1083-1093)
- "China delayed releasing coronavirus info, frustrating WHO." *The Associated Press*, June 2, 2020. Link: <https://apnews.com/3c061794970661042b18d5aeaaed9fae>

**Session 21** (Nov 11): International Institutions II: Conditional Influence

- Gilligan, Michael J., and Leslie Johns. 2012. "Formal Models of International Institutions." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15: 221-243 (Read: pp.228-238).
- Patrick, Stewart. 2020. "Why the System Fails?" *Foreign Affairs*, 99(4): 40-50.
- (O) Paul Poast's twitter thread on the role of IO (<https://twitter.com/ProfPaulPoast/status/1240600123597561857>), and on the US leaving WHO (<https://twitter.com/ProfPaulPoast/status/1266705531168833538>).

**Discussion/Essay Topic #5: International Institutions and COVID-19 (Deadline: Nov 15, 11:59 pm)**

Pick one or two institutions to address the following questions.

- How effective have international institutions been in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic? Make sure to explicitly evaluate the functions of international institutions, such as sharing information, promoting compliance, or enforcement.
- What factors do you think contribute to their effectiveness or lack of it?

**Session 22** (Nov 16): International Political Economy I: The Dominance of Liberal Views

- Lake, David A. 2009. "Open Economy Politics: A Critical Review." *The Review of International Organizations* 4(3): 219-244 (Read: pp.224-240).
- Baccini, Leonardo. 2019. "The Economics and Politics of Preferential Trade Agreements." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 75-92 (Read: 76-84).

**Session 23** (Nov 18): International Political Economy II: The Reemergence of Mercantilism

- Gilpin, Robert. 2004. "The Nature of Political Economy." in *Essential Readings in World Politics*, eds. Karen Mingst and Jack Snyder, W.W. Norton and Company: 403–409.
- Lighthizer, Robert. 2020. "How to Make Trade Work for Workers?" *Foreign Affairs*, 99(4): 78–92.
- (O) Bown, Chad, and Douglas Irwin. 2019. "Trump's Assault on the Global Trading System." *Foreign Affairs*, 98(5): 125–136.

**Discussion/Essay Topic #6: President Trump's Trade Policy (Deadline: Nov 22, 11:59 pm)**

- How do you characterize the trade policies under the Trump Administration? To what extent do they deviate from the trade policies of previous administrations, if any?
- In your view, does Trump's return to mercantilism mark a temporary or permanent shift in the US economic policies? How does such return affect the global economic order?

**Session 24** (Nov 23): Nexus of Globalization and National Security: Decoupling?

- Lippert, Barbara, and Volker Perthes. 2020. "Strategic Rivalry between United States and China." *SWP Research Paper*, April: pp.25–38.
- Schuman, Michael. 2020. "Why America is Afraid of TikTok?" *Atlantic*, July 30.
- (O) Campbell, Kurt M. and Jake Sullivan. 2019. "Competition Without Catastrophe." *Foreign Affairs*, 98(5): 96–110.

*Thanksgiving Holiday: Nov 25–29*

**Session 25** (Nov 30): Alliances and War: Deterrence or Provocation?

- Benson, Brett V. 2012. *Constructing International Security: Alliances, Deterrence, and Moral Hazard*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 8 (Read: pp.169–183).
- (O) Leeds, Brett Ashley. 2003. "Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3): 427–439.

**Session 26** (Dec 2): Civil War

- Walter, Barbara F. 2009. "Bargaining Failures and Civil War." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 243–261 (Read: 243–255).
- Walter, Barbara F. 2017. "The New New Civil Wars." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20: 469–86.
- (O) The Political Science of Syria's War, *POMEPS Briefings*, December 18, 2013.

**Discussion/NO essay topic: The Syrian Civil War (Deadline: Dec 6, 11:59 pm)**

- How does the scholarly works of civil war help us understand the origin and development of the Syrian Civil War?

**Session 27** (Dec 7): Global Governance and Transnational Actors

- Ruggie, John G. 2004. "Reconstituting the Global Public Domain: Issues, Actors, and Practices." *European Journal of International Relations* 10(4): 499-531 (Skim pp.499–506; Read pp.507–522).

**Session 28** (Dec 9): Review

- Prepared with questions

**Session 27 (Dec 11): Exam II**

## University Policies

**Honor Code:** The Old Dominion University Honor Code is in effect at all times in this class. Your name on an exam, paper, or homework assignment constitutes your acceptance of the Honor Code:

“I pledge to support the Honor System of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of dishonesty or deception such as lying, cheating, and plagiarism, which are honor violations. I am further aware that as a member of the academic community it is my responsibility to turn all suspected violators of the Honor System. I will report to an Honor Council hearing as summoned.”

**Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcomed and unsolicited conduct of a sexual nature, physical or verbal, by a member of the university community of the opposite sex, or the same sex in an official university position. Sexual harassment in any situation is reprehensible. It is the policy of Old Dominion University to provide students and employees with an environment for learning and working which is free of sexual harassment whether by members of the same sex or the opposite sex, which is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. (For more information: <http://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/col-dept/al/docs/6320.pdf>)

**Students with Special Needs:** Students are encouraged to self-disclose disabilities that have been verified by the Office of Educational Accessibility by providing Accommodation Letters to their instructors early in the semester in order to start receiving accommodations. The Office of Educational Accessibility is located at 1021 Student Success Center (<http://www.odu.edu/educationalaccessibility/>) and their phone number is (757)683-4655. Accommodations will not be made until the Accommodation Letters are provided to instructors each semester. All students are expected to fulfill all course requirements.

**Plagiarism:** “A student will have committed plagiarism if he or she reproduces someone else’s work without acknowledging its source; or if a source is cited which the student has not cited or used. Examples of plagiarism include: submitting a research paper obtained from a commercial research service, the Internet, or from another student as if it were original work; making simple changes to borrowed materials while leaving the organization, content, or phraseology intact; or copying material from a source, supplying proper documentation, but leaving out quotation marks. Plagiarism also occurs in a group project if one or more of the members of the group does none of the group’s work and participates in none of the group’s activities, but attempts to take credit for the work of the group.” Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. (For more information: <https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/col-dept/al/docs/about-plagiarism2.pdf>)

**Course Evaluations:** Student opinion surveys are submitted on-line. You will be notified by email when you should evaluate this course. You will need your UIN and password. Please take the time to evaluate this course when asked to do so. All evaluations are anonymous. The link to the Course Evaluation System is available here: <http://www.odu.edu/coursesurvey>.

**Email:** Students are required to use valid Old Dominion University email accounts to send official information and notices and are held responsible for accessing electronic mail to obtain official University communications. Students should use their secure ODU email account to communicate with professors.

**Final Grades:** Instructors are not permitted to give out grades via telephone or email. In order to find out what grade you received in this course, you must go to LeoOnline at the university home page: [www.leonline.odu.edu](http://www.leonline.odu.edu). You will need your UIN and password.