INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

Course Details
Compulsory, 4 Credits
Class Hours: 9 AM- 11 AM (Monday, Thursday)
Contact Hours: TBC

Instructor Details
Prof. Rajen Harshe
Akbar Bhawan

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This foundation course on International Relations (IR) theory will familiarise students with some of the major debates within the discipline. It will also introduce them to key interdisciplinary conversations between IR and other disciplines such as history, philosophy and sociology. Although the course content is largely theoretical, we will refer to historical and contemporary developments as illustrative examples. We hope that this course will be a learning experience to nudge students to think creatively and critically.

The course has four units which are further divided into sub-units. Each sub-unit has a background reading that offers a basic introduction to the topic. Students are requested to familiarize themselves with the introductory reading before the lecture and follow up with the specified essential and suggested readings. During class discussion, they will be expected not just to summarise, but also critically evaluate the essential reading and attempt to uncover all possible shades of an argument.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Mid-semester examination- 20%
End-semester examination- 30%
Essay submissions and presentations- 50%
COURSE STRUCTURE

Unit I: Introduction to IR Theory

Unit Description
The unit introduces students to the field of IR theory. It seeks to succinctly explain the function of theory and its centrality in the field of international relations.

1. Explaining theory

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings


Unit II: Disciplinary Evolution and Scope

Unit Description
Unit two presents the disciplinary lineage of IR through its debate-defining great debates. It also introduces students to the various analytical levels that inform the theoretical postulates of different approaches in IR.

2. Evolution and scope

Required Readings


Recommended Readings:


Chris Brown, ‘The Development of International Relations Theory in the Twentieth Century’ in Brown, Understanding International Relations, Basingstoke: Palgrave


Unit III: Major Approaches in IR

Unit Description
The unit presents a comprehensive overview of the major theories in IR, covering the entire disciplinary spectrum from mainstream approaches such as realism and liberalism to the critical approaches such as postcolonialism and feminism. A further delineation of certain major theories into sub-schools offers a nuanced understanding of the subject.

3. Realism

Required Readings


Recommended Readings:


Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," World Politics, 40, April 1988

Waltz, Kenneth (1979), Theory of International Politics, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.


Gilpin, Robert (1981), War and Change in World Politics, New York: Cambridge University Press


4. Liberalism

Required Reading


Recommended Readings:


Scott Burchill (2005), ‘Liberalism’ in Burchill et al., Theories of International Relations, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan


Nye, Joseph (2004), Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, Public Affairs


5. Constructivism

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Readings:**


6. Critical Theory

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Andrew Linklater, "Marxism" in Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater (eds.) *Theories of International Relations*, New York: St. Martinís, 1996, pp. 119-144


7. Feminism

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Readings:**


8. Postcolonialism

Required Reading:


Recommended Readings:

Darby, Philip, “Postcolonialism” in Philip Darby (ed.), At the Edge of International Relations: Post-colonialism, Gender and Dependency (London: Continuum, 1997)


Acharya, Amitav and Barry Buzan (eds.) (2010), Non-Western International Relations Theory, Abingdon: Routledge.


9. Postmodernism

Required Reading:


Recommended Readings:


10. English School

Required Reading:


Recommended Readings:


Unit IV: Dialogues with Other Disciplines

Unit Description
Unit four presents a critical assessment of IR’s level of engagement with other disciplines such as history and sociology. The scope for deeper inter-disciplinary conversations points to potential avenues for the growth of IR as a discipline in the future.

11. Interdisciplinarity

Required Readings


12. Historical sociology

Required Reading:


Recommended Readings:
Margaret Hermann, “One Field, Many Perspectives,” in Donald Puchala (2002), ed., Visions of International Relations: Assessing an Academic Field, University of South Carolina


Puchala, Donald (ed.) (2003), Theory and History of International Relations, Routledge


