

INR 3603: Theories of International Relations

Summer A 2025| M, T, W, R, F | 3:30 PM – 4.45 PM

AND 0101 (Anderson Hall)

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Description

This course introduces the principal theoretical approaches to the study of international relations (IR). These theories serve as lenses through which we interpret the complex and often chaotic world of international politics. They help us organize information in ways that enable coherent analysis and explanation. Depending on the theoretical lens we use, we may arrive at different interpretations of the same events. Each perspective presents a version of reality—not by inventing it, but by emphasizing different aspects and framing them in distinct ways. While it is possible to read international politics without theory, doing so limits our understanding and can lead to contradictions or incoherence. In this course, we read theory not as an abstract exercise, but as a practical tool for making sense of international politics.

As we study these theories, we will pay close attention to the claims and propositions they make, the assumptions they rest on, the historical and intellectual contexts in which they emerged, and for whom and what purpose they were intended. While some theories may share certain features, many differ significantly in their foundations and implications. We will engage these theories through close readings of six books authored by major scholars of International Relations. To avoid placing undue burden on students and to allow for deeper engagement, not all theories are discussed in this course. The selected theories have been deliberately chosen based on their prominence and influence within the discipline.

Objectives

At the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to:

1. Understand what theory is and explain its roles in the study of International Relations.
2. Describe, compare, and critically evaluate major theoretical approaches in International Relations.
3. Engage thoughtfully and critically with key texts in the IR canon.

4. Analyze contemporary issues in global politics using multiple theoretical frameworks.

Textbook

This course uses the following textbooks:

- Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*. [Any edition]
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. [Updated edition, published in 2014]
- Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. [Any edition]
- Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, [Edition: 1994]
- Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*.
- J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*.

Requirements

Grades will be based on attendance, thought essays, and two exams.

- **Class Attendance:** Attendance and participation in lectures are required and will be monitored. Students are expected to attend regularly, complete the assigned readings on time, and contribute meaningfully to class discussions.
- **Thought essays.** Students will complete two take-home essays of approximately 700–1,000 words each. These assignments are an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the theories and their implications. Prompts may vary but will typically ask students to analyze specific international political events and compare how different theories interpret them. Late submissions will be penalized.
- **Exams.** There will be two exams covering the course material. Each exam will include a combination of multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions based on the assigned readings and lecture content.

Assignments	Percent of grade	Important dates
Attendance	10%	Throughout the course
Thought essay 1	20%	May 23 rd
Thought essay 2	20%	June 13 th
Exam 1	25%	June 2 nd

Exam 2	25%	June 20 th
Total	100%	

Grading scale

Score	Grade	Score	Grade
94-100	A	77-79	C+
90-93	A-	74-76	C
87-89	B+	70-73	C-
84-86	B	67-69	D+
80-83	B-	64-66	D
		60-63	D-

Make-up policy

Requirements for make-up exams and assignments in this course are consistent with [university policies](#), which include health reasons (with documentation), religious holidays, official university activities, court-imposed legal obligations, or important conferences. Except for sudden health-related reasons, make-up exams or assignments require prior approval requested at least one week in advance.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible

sanctions. Click [here](#) to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Recording lectures/discussion

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. In such a proceeding, the recording may be used as evidence either in support of or against the interests of the person making the recording. All other purposes are prohibited. Recording other students during discussion is prohibited. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available [here](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

Schedule

Date	Topic	Required	Recommended
Week 1			
May 12	Introduction		
May 13	Realism: introduction and the first image	Waltz, chaps. 1-2	Waltz, chap. 3
May 14	Realism: the second image	Waltz, chap. 4	Waltz, chap. 5
May 15	Realism: the third image	Waltz, chap. 6	Waltz, chap. 7
May 16	Realism: anarchy and the struggle for power	Mearsheimer, chapters 1-2	
Thought essay assignment #1 posted on Canvas at 11.59pm			

Week 2			
May 19	Realism: power	Mearsheimer, chap. 3-4	
May 20	Realism: great power strategies	Mearsheimer, chap. 5	Mearsheimer, chap. 8
May 21	Realism: the rise of China	Mearsheimer, chap. 9	Mearsheimer, chap. 10
May 22	Liberalism: concepts	Keohane, chapters 1-3	
May 23	Liberalism: cooperation, interna- tional regimes, rational choice	Keohane, chapters 4-5	
Thought essay #1 due at 11.59pm			
Week 3			
May 26	No class		
May 27	Liberalism: functional theory, bounded rationality	Keohane, chapters 6-7	
May 28	Liberalism: hegemonic cooperation in the post war era	Keohane, chapter 8	
May 29	Liberalism: the incomplete decline of hegemonic regimes	Keohane, chap. 9	Keohane, chap. 10
May 30	Liberalism: the value of institutions	Keohane, chapter 11	
Week 4			
June 2	Exam 1		
June 3	Democratic Peace 1	Russet, chapters 1-2	
June 4	Democratic Peace 2	Russet, chapters 4 & 6	
June 5	Constructivism: defining state in- terests	Finnemore, chap- ter 1 (1-33)	
June 6	Constructivism: norms and state structure	Finnemore, chap- ter 2 (34-68)	
Thought essay assignment #2 posted on Canvas at 11.59pm			
Week 5			
June 9	Constructivism: norms and war	Finnemore, chap- ter 3 (69-88)	

June 10	Constructivism: norms and development	Finnemore, chapter 4 (89-127)
June 11	Constructivism: politics in international society	Finnemore, chapter 5 (128-149)
June 12	Feminist perspective: engendered insecurities	Tickner, chapter 1
June 13	Feminist perspective: gendered perspective on national security Thought essay #2 due at 11.59pm	Tickner, chapter 2
Week 6		
June 16	Feminist perspective: gendered perspective on economic security	Tickner, chapter 3
June 17	Feminist perspective: gendered perspective on ecological security	Tickner, chapter 4
June 18	Feminist perspective: toward a nongendered perspective on global security	Tickner, chapter 5
June 19	No class	
June 20	Exam 2	