

Introduction to International Politics

Course Handbook

September 11th– December 11th, 2015

Instructor:

Roberto ORSI

(r.orsi@pari.u-tokyo.ac.jp)

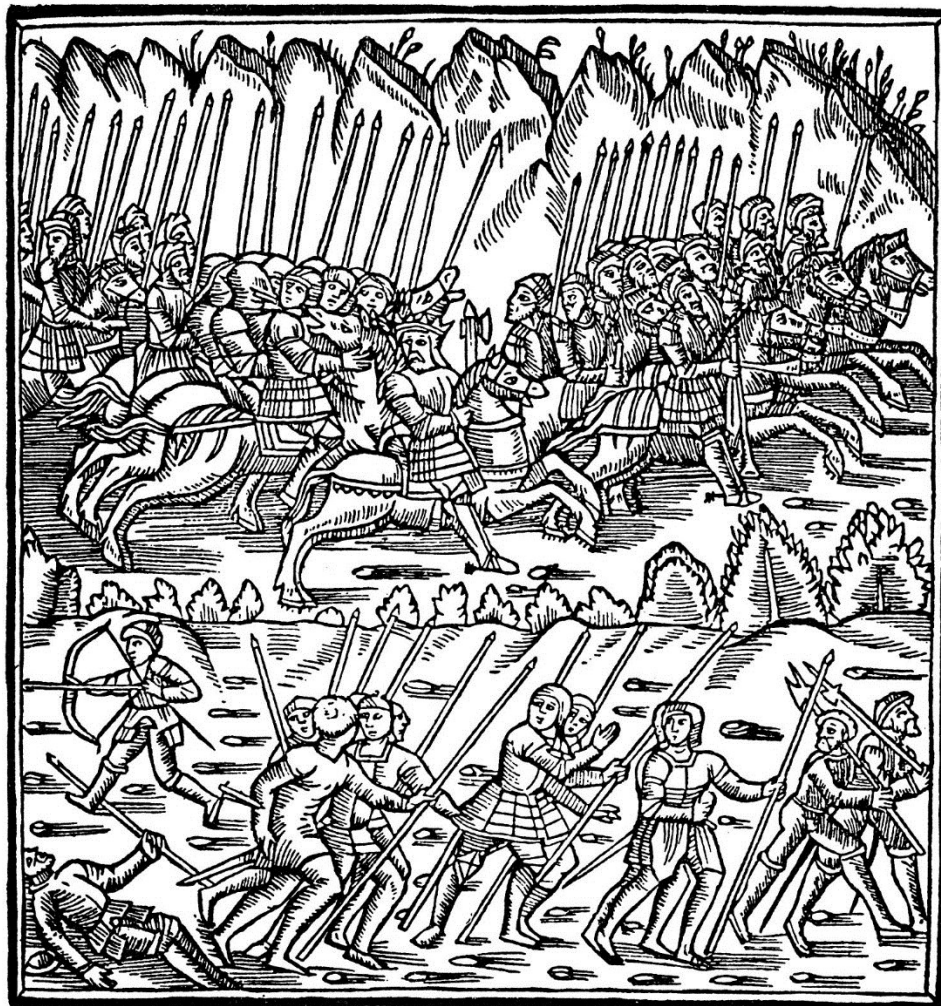


Table of Content

Overview	3
Minimal Background for Attending this Course	3
Learning Outcomes	3
Structure of the Course.....	4
Assessment	4
Calendar	5
General Readings	6
Description of the Lectures & Readings.....	6
Lecture 1: Introduction to the Course – What is International Politics?	6
Lecture 2: Realist Approaches to International Politics.....	6
Lecture 3: Liberalism and International Politics	7
Lecture 4: Marxist and post-Marxist Theories of International Politics	8
Lecture 5: Geopolitics	8
Lecture 6: The International Political Economy.....	9
Lecture 7: International Organisations	9
Lecture 8: The International Management of Environmental Questions.....	9
Lecture 9: Macro-Regions/ Americas.....	10
Lecture 10: Macro-Regions/ Asia-Pacific	10
Lecture 11: Macro-Regions/ Middle East and South Asia.....	10
Lecture 12: Macro-Regions/ Africa	11
Lecture 13: Macro-Regions/ Europe and Central Asia.....	11
Lecture 14: Wrap-up Lecture	11

Overview

The course provides an overview of the main outstanding issues in international politics. First, it looks at the very definitions of this field of studies under a number of theoretical perspectives, and then focuses on several emerging problems of global nature, dealing thereafter with the each macro-region of the world (The Americas, Asia-Pacific, Sub-Saharan and North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, Europe and Central Asia). For each region, a specific problem has been chosen in order to illustrate local dynamics and global ramifications. Besides the theoretical and methodological discussions characterising international political studies, the course highlights – by making a systematic use of illustrative examples – the relevance of geopolitics, of international economic questions, of international organisations, and of environmental concerns. The course is intended for an audience of post-graduate students with no or limited background in international studies, and aims to provide the information and analytical tools for an effective orientation in the contemporary global political setting.

Minimal Background for Attending this Course

Although this course has an introductory nature, its attendance requires the student to possess a minimal background knowledge in political geography and history, not different from the one necessary in order to understand articles and other publications on current affairs (e.g. *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, etc...). For the various theoretical parts, a certain familiarity with the basic concepts of political theory is an advantage, as well as a minimal degree of knowledge concerning Western intellectual history. Students who will feel uneasy about any part of the course are required to raise the issue immediately with the course coordinator Dr. Orsi, who will provide additional bibliographical suggestions and explanations.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, the student should have familiarised with a series of ongoing discussions concerning the nature of international politics, but in its theoretical articulation and in its several sectorial dimensions. International political theory will be introduced through an analysis of the major schools of thoughts providing a definition of what international politics is about (ontology) and how it is supposed to be studied (epistemology). For this initial part (Lectures 1-4), the students will become familiar with the concepts of realism, *Realpolitik*, anarchy, power, national interest, zero-sum-game, relative vs. absolute gain, polarity, globalisation, sphere of influence, intervention, human rights, emancipation. A second group of four lectures introduces specific sub-disciplines and study fields in international politics, dealing with geopolitics, international political economy, international organisation, and international environmental issues. Student will become acquainted with the influence that geography exercises on the life of political communities, and how much of international political debates and struggles revolve around the position of a certain state within the economic architecture of the globe. International organisations will be illustrated as the key component of a highly interconnected world in need of governance structures, however tenuous. A strong emphasis will be put on environmental questions, particularly climate change, and the student will familiarise with the specific difficulties characterising environment protection in a globalised world with high levels of resource competition. Finally, the student is required to develop a solid background knowledge of the political

and economic situation in the various regions of the planet, being able to link it to the previously exposed theoretical debates in a critical fashion, being conscious of the rapidly changing character of international politics.

Structure of the Course

The course is divided in 14 teaching units of 100 minutes each. Each teaching unit comprises 50 minutes of lecture, a ten minute break, and about 40 minutes of seminar. The seminar is structured around exercises and discussions related to the topic of the lecture previously delivered, and requires the student to have covered the readings in order to be able to actively participate in class discussions.

Assessment

The student's performance is assessed with regard to attendance and in-class performance, and the production of essays.

10% of the overall assessment is determined by evaluating the student's degree and quality of participation in class activities, including attendance.

90% of the assessment is determined by three essays (each with a 30% weight) which the student will submit to the course leader in the weeks following lecture 4, then lecture 8, and the last one shortly after the end of the course, respectively. Each essay should be about 1,500 word long and referenced. It should consist in the answer to a question chosen from a list which the course leader will circulate in advance. The course leader will announce the related deadlines during the course.

Discipline

Students are required to attend all the lectures once they have committed to the course. This includes all activities in preparation for each teaching unit, particularly the readings which are indicated in the present syllabus or those which will be indicated by email to the students by the course teacher.

Students should actively engage in class discussion, as this is a core part of the training in political disciplines, not only in order to potentiate the student's knowledge of the various subjects, but to enhance his/her ability to communicate complex ideas in an effective way.

Please come to the lectures on time.

Calendar

The lectures take place every week starting from Friday September 11th 2015, from 14:55 to 16:40, in Room S.Law 203 (School of Law Building, Room 203), according to the following calendar

Date	Lecture
September 11, 2015	1. Introduction to the Course - What is International Politics?
September 18, 2015	2. Realist Approaches to International Politics
September 25, 2015	3. Liberalism and International Politics
October 2, 2015	4. Marxist and post-Marxist Theories of International Politics
October 9, 2015	5. Geopolitics
October 16, 2015	6. The International Political Economy
October 23, 2015	7. International Organisations
October 30, 2015	8. The International Management of Environmental Questions
November 6, 2015	9. The Rapprochement between the US and Cuba
November 13, 2015	10. China's "Silk Roads"
November 20, 2015	11. The Syrian Civil War and Foreign Intervention
November 27, 2015	12. The US-China Rivalry for Influence in Africa
December 4, 2015	13. The Crisis in the Ukraine
December 11, 2015	14. Wrap-up Lecture

General Readings

- E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, Palgrave Macmillan

Every student is required to read this book in full. It is one of the classic of the discipline, and it contains *in nuce* most if not all the major successive developments in the study of International Relations.

- Martin Hollis, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, Oxford University Press, 1991.
- John Masker, *Introduction to Global Politics. A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- John Ravenhill, *Global Political Economy*, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Scott Burchill *et al.*, *Theories of International Relations*, Fourth Edition, Palgrave Macmillan 2009.
- Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations, Theories and Approaches*, Fifth Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Description of the Lectures & Readings

Lecture 1: Introduction to the Course – What is International Politics?

This lecture will provide first a description of the course, of its purpose and aims, and of its articulation in the various lectures, seminars and assessment activities. Secondly, a sketch of the general nature of international politics will be provided, showing the complexity of the debate on this point as a confluence of numerous schools of thought and overlapping instances of critique.

Readings:

R. Duvall and Ç. Çıdam, "Power in the Analysis of World Orders", in F. Dallmayr (ed.), *Civilizations and World Order* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 35-49.

See also:

M. Wight, "Why is There No International Theory?", in H. Butterfield and M. Wight (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966); reprinted in J. Der Derian (ed.), *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

Edward Keene, *International Political Theory: A historical Introduction*, (Cambridge, Polity, 2005), "Introduction".

Lecture 2: Realist Approaches to International Politics

Earliest reflections on the nature of international politics, and arguably the most resilient, have been developing as a set investigations, by both philosophers and historians alike, on the nature of power in human societies, the challenges of state politics, and ultimately about human nature itself.

Most strands of realist thought appears indeed to be articulating an image of the international politics' essence as grounded in a relatively pessimistic anthropology, namely in the idea that humans

innately tend to conceive unlimited desires and reciprocal instances of competition. Consequently, if a certain degree of order is to be maintained, humans must somehow be restrained, this being ultimately the task of political authority (the sovereign).

Where a supreme political authority does not exist, as in the inter-state dimension, there is *anarchy* (literally: absence of a ruling principle). An anarchical system of inter-state relations may not be necessarily chaotic, as within anarchy certain types of order can arise by means of reciprocal fear, deterrence, balancing, bandwagoning and so on. Realist theories of international politics investigate the ways in which a certain degree of order can be achieved and maintained in the framework of an anarchical system of inter-state relations, emphasising the importance of security and the strive for relative gains which characterise such environment.

Readings:

W. Wohlforth, "Realism", in C. Reus-Smit and D. Snidal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Chapter 7, pages 131-149.

See also:

Ken Booth (ed.), *Realism and World Politics*, 2011.

Colin Elman, Michael Jensen (ed.), *The Realism Reader*, Routledge 2013. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15.

Lecture 3: Liberalism and International Politics

In contrast to realist conceptions of international politics, liberal approaches, while recognising the importance of power politics, maintain that order can be successfully and durably shaped at the international level by forces other than sheer power competition among sovereigns.

Liberalism is a very broad "umbrella term" for a vast set of political theories and orientations, which finds itself in continuous change. However, it is possible to identify a few distinctive features of liberal thought. As the realists tend to emphasise the supreme importance of the state as a collectivity, the liberals have shifted their focus on the dignity of the individual human being and his freedom. Domestically, liberal political theories have concentrated on designing political systems aimed at the protection and enhancement of the individual in his moral, intellectual and material dimensions: imposing limits to the power of the state in restricting freedoms (of religion, of expression, of assembly, of press etc...) and rules for the protection of private property and markets. Liberal domestic conceptions of order are generally grounded on the separation of the various powers of the state (legislative, executive, and judiciary) in a system of checks and balances, and on the rule of law.

On the side of international politics, liberal thinkers have traditionally emphasised the possibility of maintaining peace through the *socialisation* of states by means of international institutions, primarily international law, diplomacy, and international organisations. The basic idea is that, precisely as the individuals agree to create the authority of the state in order to create an overarching power to rule them, so the states can voluntarily subscribe to a system of norms of conduct and to the authority of international organisations governing them.

Readings:

Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, any edition (originally published in German as *Zum ewigen Frieden*, Riga 1796).

See also:

Beate Jahn, *Liberal Internationalism: Theory, History, Practice* (Basingstoke: 2013).

Edwin de Haar (ed.), *Classical Liberalism and International Relations Theory: Hume, Smith, Mises, and Hayek* (New York: 2009).

Lecture 4: Marxist and post-Marxist Theories of International Politics

Marxist theories of international politics are grounded in the work of Karl Marx (1818-1883), who constructed a critique of political economy with vast ramifications in political theory and sociology. His major claim in relation to political life (both domestic and international) is that politics is not determined in its essence by the life of state or state leadership, but by the relations of production in a society, and the underlying conflict of interests between the owners of the means of production and those whose labour is exploited by the former for profit. Marx's work took consequently the shape of a critique of capitalism and of capitalistic societies.

Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, and of twentieth century up to today, Marx's theories have been subjected to numerous re-formulations. In the study of international politics, some Marxist and post-Marxist theories continue to focus on power relations as determined by the organisation of economic production and capitalistic accumulation, but the main focus of post-Marxism appears to have shifted towards the establishment of the a critique of political power in the name of humanist values and emancipation. Post-Marxist approaches to international thought have also incorporated numerous methods for the investigation and evaluation of political cultures stemming from the so-called "linguistic turn" in philosophy taking place in the second half of the twentieth century.

Readings:

Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory", in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10, 2 (1981).

See also:

Alexander Anievas (ed.), *Marxism and World Politics*, London 2010.

Justin Rosenberg, "Why is there no International Historical Sociology?", in *European Journal of International Relations*, 12, 3 (2006).

Lecture 5: Geopolitics

The conduct and study of international politics is heavily influenced, if not sometimes determined, by geography, i.e. by the sheer conformation of the land upon which the various political communities and their interests insist. This lecture examines the role that geography plays in international politics by looking at the material elements which inform the life of a state and of an economy with relation to the logistics of warfare and of trade. In doing so, it also illustrates the ways in which geopolitics has risen as a distinct discipline, out of an international environment dominated by fierce international competition for land acquisition and conquest, in the nineteenth century.

Readings:

Colin S. Gray, and G. R. Sloan, *Geopolitics, Geography, and Strategy*. London: Frank Cass, 1999.

Jason Dittmer and Jo Sharp, *Geopolitics: An Introductory Reader*, Routledge 2014.

Lecture 6: The International Political Economy

A large part of international interactions occur as a consequence of economic interdependence, because of international trade and the related political questions. With the European exploration of the globe starting in the fifteenth century, the world has gone through various rounds of globalisation, i.e. the establishment of world-wise networks of trade, financial flows, and economic interests. The study of the International Political Economy focuses precisely on aspects of economic interactions among different political communities, and their political implications: from international regulations to trade, from resource control to monetary wars.

Readings:

John Ravenhill, *Global Political Economy*, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Axel Hülsemeyer, *International Political Economy: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2010, Part I, II and V.

Lecture 7: International Organisations

Today's international political landscape is characterised by the presence and the activity not only of states, but of public actors which have been established by means of international treaties to perform a variety of tasks. These international organisations often possess an international juridical status, and play an important role in global and regional questions, both concerning classical political issues (security, diplomacy, international crises, etc...) or more specific and/or technical activities (trade, monetary policy, nuclear energy, healthcare, etc...). International organisations have been a growing presence since the end of the nineteenth century, with a large expansion in the interwar period (League of Nations) and especially after 1945 with the establishment of the UN system, the CEE (1957) later evolving in the EU, and many others. This lecture will also concentrate on the rise of multilateralism as a way of conducting diplomacy and international politics in alternative to bilateral negotiations.

Readings:

Paul F. Diehl and Brian Frederking (eds.), *The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, fourth edition, 2010.

J. Samuel Barkin, *International Organization: Theories and Institutions*, second edition 2013.

Lecture 8: The International Management of Environmental Questions

Starting from the 1960s, concerns have emerged regarding the environmental damage which the industrial activities characterising a modern, developed society inflict on the natural environments of the planet. Environmentalist thinkers have developed a critique either of the current technological civilisation, and/or of capitalism, for its failure in accounting for the huge environmental externalities which are damaging the planet as a habitat for both the humans and all other living species. Currently,

environmentalism has concentrated its effort in explaining the impending risks of a civilisational collapse arising from anthropogenic climate change on the one hand, and of future resource shortages on the other, particularly concerning the future availability of affordable petroleum supplies. Environmentalism poses a series of challenges to international politics, as the urgency of many environmental issues is currently recognised, by a coordinated action still fails to materialise, especially with regard to climate change.

Readings:

John S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

Anthony Giddens, *The Politics of Climate Change*, Polity, Cambridge 2009.

Lecture 9: The Rapprochement between the US and Cuba

The lecture focuses on international relations within the Americas. The US and Cuba have a very long history of relations stretching back at least to the 1898 US-Spanish war which determined the independence of the island from Madrid, although Cuba became, according to certain historical reconstruction, a “de facto protectorate” of the US. Following the 1958 Communist revolution and the pro-Soviet orientation of the regime in Havana, the US imposed an embargo on the island, which has lasted until relations were restored this year. This rapprochement is analysed in order to bring to the surface the various questions of relations between the US, its immediate periphery, and Latin America in general, discussing strategic, economic, immigration issues.

Readings:

To be indicated at later stage.

Lecture 10: China’s “Silk Roads”

The Chinese government has been engaged in the past few years in the drafting and early stages of implementation of a large scale project for the construction of (mostly) transport infrastructures in the Eurasian landmass. Such initiative appears to be linked both to a domestic restructuring of the Chinese economy, and to a new political role which Beijing intends to play regionally and globally. The lecture explores and concept and implications of the “silk roads” initiative from the perspective of the various geopolitical actors involved.

Readings:

To be indicated at later stage.

Lecture 11: The Syrian Civil War and Foreign Intervention

The complex web of rivalries and alliances in the (broad) Middle East will be described in this lecture focused on the ongoing Syrian Civil War (which started in 2011). Such conflict is part of a larger picture of proxy wars between regional and global actors, in an area of the world which has an extraordinary geopolitical/strategic value mostly due to its enormous petroleum reserves. The ongoing Syrian crisis will be explored in its humanitarian, geopolitical, and ideological components, highlighting the role of the US, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and of the global jihadists movement.

Readings:

To be indicated at later stage.

Lecture 12: The US-China Rivalry for Influence in Africa

The African continent has been largely neglected by great powers after the end of the Cold War, slipping ever further to a peripheral role in world affairs, which was reflected in the high level of political and military chaos in the 1990s. However, the situation has been changing with a significant easing of most large-scale conflicts in the past decade, and most importantly with the increasing Chinese interest in the region, to which the US has responded with a series of steps, particularly in terms of economic and military initiatives. China has been among the top investors in Africa in the context of surging raw material consumption requiring vast investments, particularly in mining. From the perspective of numerous African nations, the question is whether this renewed interest in Africa will actually last, and whether it may signify the return of a kind of neo-colonial bond.

Readings:

To be indicated at later stage.

Lecture 13: The Crisis in the Ukraine

The ongoing conflict in the Donbass region of the Ukraine is considered the most challenging and serious military crisis in Europe since the end of WWII, together with Moscow's annexation of Crimea. The war has vast ramifications and strategic implications for Russia, several European countries, the EU at large, and the US. This lecture provides an historical introduction to the conflict by looking at the emergence of a post-Cold War order in Europe and its problems, highlighting the centrality security-energy nexus, but also the role of ideological confrontation between the European Union and Russia.

Readings:

To be indicated at later stage.

Lecture 14: Wrap-up Lecture

In the final lecture, the various topics addressed in the course will be summarised again, trying to illustrate the challenges for regional and global politics in the future, and possible trajectories for the evolution of international politics and International Relations as a discipline.