**Pol 454 (Honors Seminar) Theories of International Relations**

**Fall 2016 Professor Volgy**

**Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:00-3:15 Social Sciences 311**

**SYLLABUS**

Office: Social Sciences 330

Office Hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, from 12:00 – 1:30, and by appointment

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**COURSE GOALS**:

There are three major goals for this seminar. The first is a substantive one: to gain a clear understanding of alternative explanations of how international politics works and to integrate (to the extent possible) the best elements of those contending theoretical perspectives. This is not an easy task: there are several major contending frameworks that compete for providing the best explanations, and integrating them is not easy, especially since they provide directions based on contrasting assumptions about how international politics work.

The second goal of the seminar is methodological. Nearly all of social science (as is political science) is based on one of two research strategies: either a synthesis of the thoughts, explanations, theories, etc., of previous scholars; or, the creation of new ways of looking at the world. Either path is perfectly acceptable, as long as it gains us knowledge about the world around us. Both paths are driven by our *observations* of the world, and here, the issue of methodology raises its “ugly” head. How accurate are our observations about the world? How can we be more systematic in figuring out what is around us, and how well do our explanations fit the “reality” around us? This is the province of methodology.

There are a large variety of ways in which we can be systematic in our observations. We can carefully read and observe what others say and do. We can be systematic as well in rigorously defining and measuring our observations. It is this latter approach on which I want us to focus. It is the basis of much of political science and the study of foreign policy and international politics.

In this context, I have created an **international politics** **data lab** for you. It is located on my web page at: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~volgy/data.html>. The data lab will allow you to access a variety of data on international politics, and to test hypotheses about how international politics works, and/or to systematically describe phenomena in international politics. We will discuss this further as we proceed into the course.

The third goal is to give you some hands-on experience with the type of university learning that is consistent with the direction in which most honors students are moving: furthering their education beyond a bachelor’s degree through a variety of graduate programs. Nearly all those programs are based on seminar work, and involve substantial research projects. My hope is that by doing well on the first two goals, and doing them through this honors seminar format, you will receive a strong taste of what graduate work looks like, and will be better prepared for it.

**HOW TO GET TO THE GOALS**:

We will do so several ways. Part of the work involves reading, and the assignments are noted below. There is a “text” of sorts, *Principles of International Politics*. I know the author quite well, and you were the exact audience he had in mind. It is not an easy read, but should provide some good insights into explaining the ebbs and flows of international politics. I am only asking you to read four chapters from this book, so I won’t make you buy it. Instead, I’ve scanned those chapters and will make them available to you. Of course, if you wish to buy the book, you are welcome to do so. In addition, I’ve added additional articles that are also required reading—noted by this (\*) symbol—and I will distribute those in class.

Much of our efforts will involve seminar work: Since this is an honors seminar, a substantial part of our responsibilities will revolve around our classroom discussions. I expect all of us to come to class, well prepared to discuss the week’s subject matter. The responsibility in all seminars belongs jointly to the faculty member and the student. I expect that I will learn from you and you will learn from each other as much if not more than what you will learn from me. ***To do so requires not only doing the readings in advance of the seminar, but thinking critically about their contents, and coming to the seminar ready and prepared to discuss them.***

Finally, a substantial portion of this seminar will be devoted to not only analyzing the knowledge of others, but in creating our own knowledge base. Each of you will be asked to write an original paper, focusing on an aspect of the core theme of the seminar. To do a good job, we will talk extensively about social science methods and you will be expected to dirty your hands with actual data and its analysis.

**EXPECTATIONS:**

***Class participation*:** This is an upper division seminar based on the discussion method. Therefore, I expect that you will come to class well prepared. By this, I mean that not only have you read the materials that are due for that day but also that a) you will have thought about them; and b) you are ready to discuss them. I have limited the readings so that you will not be reading a large volume for any given session, and you will have virtually no readings the last four weeks; in turn, I expect that you will read what is assigned closely, and critically.

\*\*\*\*\* Specifically, you are asked to do the following with respect to the readings:\*\*\*\*\*

1. You need to read each assigned reading closely, and critically. By critically, I’m asking you to ask yourself at each major argument: Why is this? What evidence is there for this assertion? Can I think of an example that weakens this argument? To what extent is the argument refuted or contradicted by what we’ve discussed/read earlier? How good is the quality of evidence being used?
2. You need to take notes BEFORE COMING TO THE SEMINAR on both the key concepts/issues/ideas in the readings and on your criticism of them;
3. Your notes should be sufficiently thorough and clear to allow you to use them to: a) respond to questions/challenges/issues raised in class about the readings; and b) as the source with which to review the readings later without going back to the actual readings;
4. If you have to start looking back at the actual readings when class is taking place, you have not done a good enough job of taking notes!
5. Consult your notes BEFORE coming to class; this allows you to prepare for our class discussions. Think about the day’s subject before class starts!
6. CRITICAL: Note that I have some questions for you to think about and to answer in class under most headings. Please keep those in mind as you do the readings and thinking about the subjects, and be prepared to discuss them in the seminar!
7. In addition, I’ve noted two cases/problem in international politics below (p.6-7) which we will use as another tool/crutch with which to discuss these materials.

These basic points will allow you to do a good job in discussing the materials in class; they will allow you as well a strategy of getting the most out of the readings we have. It is a strategy all graduate students use in the social sciences.

***Examination policy:***There is a mid-term exam, scheduled for Week 7 (October 6). There is a time and place for a final exam, but the ***final is*** ***optional***: ***I have the option*** of requiring you to take it if our class discussions do not turn out as well as I expect and I’m having trouble evaluating you on your in-class performance. Otherwise, ***if I make it optional***, ***you may choose to take it*** if you feel that taking it would compensate for deficiencies either on the mid-term, class participation, or on the paper that is due.

I assumed that you will plan your schedule according to the schedule for the exams, and will take these exams on the assigned dates. If you cannot, for any reason, attend the midterm or the final (assuming that you wish to take it or if I choose to make it non-optional), you must notify me at least one week **prior** to the exam. I will not give make-up exams unless your failure to take the exam involved an extremely unusual hardship or unavoidable circumstance.

***Attendance policy:*** I consider what goes on during class to be a crucial component of this course. Just as importantly, this is a seminar rather than a standard course, and as in graduate seminars, missing a class is a serious “no-no”. Missing class will mean that it will be virtually impossible for you to do well in the course. Therefore it is assumed that you will come to every class. While attendance is generally on the honor system, I reserve the right to take attendance on occasion. So, for honors seminars, the policy is simple: COME PREPARED and THINKING ABOUT THE WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT; COME ON TIME; COME EVERY WEEK, and while in class, ENGAGE the topic every week.

***Plagiarism***: I’m assuming that as seniors and juniors, you are well aware of the University’s policies regarding plagiarism. In the academic world, stealing the work of others, or failing to give full credit where it is due (and not using full citations), is a capital, criminal offense, punishable—if not by guillotine—by expulsion from the course, and depending on the severity of the crime, from the University. If you don’t know what plagiarism is…or you are in doubt at any point in your work…feel free to ask before it is too late.

**GRADES:** Grades are unavoidable, even in honors seminars. In this one, the final grade will be based on the following:

***Exams*:** the midterm (and the possible final exam) will count for 40% of the course grade.

***Final paper****:* this paper is designed to synthesize what you’ve learned, and apply it to an important, substantive case in international politics; it will be worth 40% of the course grade.

***Class participation****:* I am serious about the discussion format for this course. Therefore, the **quality** of your class participation will be worth 20% of the course grade. Come prepared to discuss the materials, or to raise critical objections to the materials.

**CHOICES for grading: *In most graduate seminars there are no exams, only work in the seminar and on the paper. If you wish, I can give you that option, but it will have to be up to the class to so choose. If you choose that option, then your grade will be as follows: 45% participation in the seminar; 55% on the paper. We will talk about this the first day of class.***

**SEMINAR PAPER:**

You are being asked to write a paper at the end of the semester, on a key phenomenon in international politics. Your choice of topics is up to you, but with two suggestions: First, before proceeding, you clear the topic with me, and in the paper you will need to justify the topic/puzzle as a salient issue for international politics. Second, there is always a default option: What will be, and what should be the role of the United States in international politics? You may choose this option if you can’t find another, more salient puzzle to pursue. But you will need to justify this one as well, and the justification needs to be based on a theoretical framework that provides a broad explanation about how international politics works.

The purpose of this paper is to give you an opportunity to synthesize and apply the materials—both theoretical and empirical—we developed in the course. You will need to have a good command of how the international system works (and this of course depends on the theoretical approach you choose to understand international politics), and data to back up your assertions and/or hypotheses.

This assignment becomes manageable as long as you do three things: First, make a determination about what will be your topic of choice, very early in the semester. You can then use it as a skeletal device on which to hang alternative theoretical perspectives; second, at the end of each week’s seminar, you think about how the topic, our discussions, and how our common readings can apply to your paper.

Third, I’m going ask each of you to execute a piece of empirical research. There are a variety of ways of doing this, and these options will be discussed in class. One way is to generate behavioral data systematically. This is why I’ve created a data lab for you, allowing you manipulate existing data already available about international politics.

I will evaluate your paper on the following criteria:

* How well did you synthesize and apply our readings and discussion to the topic?
* How well did you integrate the data/observations with your theoretical perspective in your essay?
* How creative and insightful were you in developing your answer, while keeping within the bounds of what can be realistically expected in the emerging new world order?

**A couple of cases to have in common**

One way of thinking systematically about theories is to try to apply different ones to the same issue/case/problem, and see how the theoretical lens reshapes the problem at hand. So, with that in mind, I want you to think about the following cases/problems and use them as the backbone with which to try to understand the strengths and limits of each of the theoretical perspectives we are discussing. You should try to familiarize yourself with these two cases as we will be using them endlessly in the course:

1. There seems to be a new, unhappy status quo frozen in Eastern Europe between the Russian Federation versus the EU and the U.S. over what some consider the partial destruction of Ukranian sovereignty and the promotion of instability in Ukraine by the Russian Federation. How would you explain what the Russians are doing, the EU states are doing, and/or the US is doing, and what is likely to be the outcome of this conflict?
2. The claim is made that China is a rising global power, challenging the U.S. for supremacy in international politics. Some suggest that this challenge will likely lead to another Cold War (or worse) in the near future. Others suggest that relationships between the U.S. and China will likely to continue as they are (somewhat competitive but relatively tranquil). How would you try to predict, and therefore account for the future relationship between the two states?

**Required Text**: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita (BDM), ***Principles of International Politics*** (4th Edition), Congressional Quarterly Press (2010).

To get a flavor for the author, you can see BdM on the Colbert Report at: <http://thecolbertreport.cc.com/videos/vim94y/bruce-bueno-de-mesquita> (2012) or his TED talk (and predictions) on Iran: <https://www.ted.com/talks/bruce_bueno_de_mesquita_predicts_iran_s_future> (2009)

**Additional Required Readings**: These are listed with the name of the author first, and ending in (\*), and I will have all of them on a flash drive for you to copy to your computers.

**DATE TOPIC and READINGS**

**Week 1**

(August 23) **Introduction to course: objectives and requirements**

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(August 25**) What is Theory? How to Evaluate Competing Theoretical Perspectives?**

**Q:**  What is Theory? How do you know when you have a good one?

What is a theoretical approach? A paradigm?

What is a level of analysis, and can you distinguish between different levels? How?

**READINGS**: Bueno de Mesquita, Introduction, *Principles of International Politics*

Singer, “The Level of Analysis Problem,” in *The International System: Theoretical Essays* (\*)

Drezner, “The Night of the Living Wonks: Toward an International Relations Theory of Zombies.” *Foreign Policy*, July 2010 (\*)

**Week 2**

(August 30) **Research Design and the Data Lab**

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(September 1) **Walking through the use of STATA** (Guest expert: Paul Bezerra)

**Q**: Here, I want you to do two things in preparation for our discussions. First, think about the steps in executing a social science research design. For this, I’ve assigned a piece of research for you to read. Second, look through the data lab (volgy454.dta) on my web page and the exercises/examples (Pol454Workbook2.docx), and see if you can do the following: a) create descriptive statistics around a measure; b) run a correlation between two measures; c) run a regression. I am asking Paul Bezerra to come in on Thursday (Sept. 1) to walk through Stata with you in case you’ve had some difficulties.

**READINGS:** Miller et al., 2015. “Norms, Behavioral Compliance and Status Attribution in International Politics.” *International Interactions*

**Week 3**

(Sept. 6) **Theoretical Perspectives: Realism**

**Q:** What is realism? What are the major assumptions it makes about international politics? Does the type of approach Wohlforth takes different (and how?) from Starrs’s? Does realism operate at different levels of analysis?

What appear to be its strengths and weaknesses?

**READINGS:** Brooks and Wohlforth, 2015. “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the 21st Century…” *International Security* (\*)

Starrs, 2013. “American Economic Power Hasn’t Declined—It Globalized!” *International Studies Quarterly* (\*)

Jervis, 1996. “Realism in the Study of World Politics.” *International Organization* (\*) (you need to read only from page 980 to the end)

(Sept. 8) **Theoretical Perspectives: Neorealism, Power Transition, Global Leadership**

Q: What are the key similarities and differences between realism (discussed in the introduction) versus neorealism?

What do you see are each approach’s strength and weaknesses? Does one appear to be more useful than the other? What’s BDM’s critique?

What’s structural theory? In what ways are neorealists, power transition theorists, and long cycle theorists different? Similar?

Which, if any of these perspectives fits into you research interest?

**READINGS:** Waltz, 2000. “Structural Realism After the Cold War,” *International Security*(\*)

Schweller and Pu. 2012. “After Unipolarity…” *International Security* (\*)

Rapkin and Thompson, 2003. “Power Transition, Challenge and the (Re)emergence of China,” *International Interaction* (\*)

Bueno de Mesquita, Chapter 4

**Week 4**

(Sept. 13) **Theoretical Perspectives: Neorealism, Power Transition, Global Leadership (continued)**

**READINGS:** Kirshner, 2010. “The Tragedy of Offensive Realism.” *European Journal of International Relations* (\*)

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(Sept. 15) **Theoretical Perspectives: Liberal Institutionalism**

Q: What assumptions are unique to liberal institutionalism about international politics? What do you see as the key assumptions that differentiate between Liberal Institutionalism (LI) versus Realism and Neorealism? What assumptions about international politics do they have in common?

What are the major strengths and weaknesses of LI? To what extent is it a better approach (or worse approach) than realism or neorealism?

Which, if any of these perspectives fits into you research interest?

**READINGS**: Keohane, “Cooperation and International Regimes,” in *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Economy.* (\*)

Bueno de Mesquita, Chapter 11

Nye, Joseph S., Jr. 1988. “Neorealism and Neoliberalism.” *World Politics* (\*)

**Week 5 No Classes This Week: I’m in Hungary**

(Sept. 20)

(Sept. 22)

**Week 6**

(Sept. 27) **Theoretical Perspectives: Liberalism and Liberal Institutionalism Compared**

Q: What are the essential differences between liberal institutionalism and liberalism? Are these differences in terms of assumptions and/or levels of analysis?

Can you evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of these two variants of liberalism? Which appears to be more useful for what types of issues/puzzles?

(CAUTION: What BDM calls liberalism and what I am implicitly suggesting here as liberalism are distinctly different theoretical perspectives. Can you see how?)

Which, if any of these perspectives fits into you research interest?

**READINGS**: Moravchik, 1997, “Taking Preferences Seriously…” *International Organization* (\*)

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(Sept. 29) **Liberalism and the Democratic Peace, or the Capitalist Peace? Or the Territorial Peace?**

Q: How strong is the evidence for a democratic peace? For a capitalist peace? For neither?

What can explain the reason behind a democratic peace? Capitalist peace? How strong is the theory here?

How, if at all does any of this fit into your research interest?

**READINGS**: Dixon, 1994. “Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes.” *American Political Science Review* (\*)

Gartzke, 2007. “The Capitalist Peace.” *American Journal of Political Science* (\*)

Gartzke, 1998. “Kant We All Just Get Along?” *American Journal of Political Science* (\*)

Gibler/Braithwaite, 2013. “Dangerous Neighbors.” *British Journal of Political Science* (\*) (optional)

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**Week 7**

(Oct. 4) **Liberalism and the Democratic Peace, or the Capitalist Peace? Or the Territorial Peace? Or is it the nature of the SELECTORATE?**

Q: How different is selectorate theory from democratic peace theory? How different are its implications?

**READINGS**: BDM, *Principles*, Chapter 1, Chapter 9

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(Oct. 6) **MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 8**

(Oct. 11) **Theoretical Perspectives: The Constructivist Challenges**

Q: What are the central assumptions surrounding the Constructivist approach that differentiate it from the previous ones? How different are the key assumptions? How different are the key explanatory variables?

How, if at all does any of this fit into your research interest?

**READINGS**: Wendt, 1992 “Anarchy is What States Make of It…” *International Organization* (\*)

Laffey and Weldes. 2008 “Decolonizing the Cuban Missile Crisis.” *International Studies Quarterly* (\*)

Miller et al., 2015. “Norms, Behavioral Compliance and Status Attribution in International Politics.” *International Interactions* (\*)

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(Oct. 13) **The Constructivist Challenges** (continued)

**Week 9**

(Oct. 18) **The Geopolitical Challenge: Regions and Neighborhoods in International Politics**

Q: In what ways does the geopolitical approach differ from the discussion of previous theoretical approaches? To what extent does it seek to utilize those approaches?

In what ways can this approach be useful for your own research project?

**READINGS**: Dodds, 2014. “Classical Geopolitics Revisited.” *The ISA Encyclopedia of International Relations* (\*)

Hemmer and Katzenstein, 2002. “Why Is There No NATO in Asia?” *International Organization* (\*)

Acharya, 2007. “The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics.” *World Politics* (\*)

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(Oct. 20) **Regions** (continued)

Q: What theoretical perspective(s) is used in the Volgy piece? How are regions conceptualized and measured? Why?

What meaning, if any, does this have for your research project?

**READINGS**: Volgy, 2016. “Is A Region Like Pornography?” *International Studies Review* (\*)

**Week 10**

(Oct. 25) **Decision-Making Theory**

Q: Can you detect the competing theoretical orientations at this level of analysis?

What can this level of analysis explain that other approaches at other levels cannot?

Under what conditions could you/would you use this approach for your research question?

**READINGS**: Allison, 1969. “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis, *American Political Science Review (\*)*

Haas, 2001. “Prospect Theory and the Cuban Missile Crisis.” *International Studies Quarterly* (\*)

McKeown, 2001. “Plans and Routines, Bureaucratic Bargaining, and the Cuban Missile Crisis.” *The Journal of Politics* (\*)

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(Oct. 27) **Do Individuals Matter? When and How?**

Q: Look closely at the Byman piece: how does it force us to rethink our theoretical perspectives? And how could we test their hypotheses? And should we be worried about a Trump (or a Clinton) presidency?

How, if at all does any of this fit into your research interest?

**READINGS**: Byman and Pollack, 2001. “Let Us Now Praise Great Men.” *International Security* (\*)

**Week 11**

(Nov. 1) **And What about Globalization?**

**Q**: What is meant by globalization?

To what extent does globalization intersect with your own research project? How?

READINGS: <http://groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/users/rauch/misc/globalization/>

<http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/>

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(Nov. 3) Globalization, Soft Power, and Status Considerations

Note: I’m leaving this session open for right now. What we take up here depends on how much we are behind through the course and whether or not we need this extra session to catch up. If we don’t, then I will ask you to read (and for us to discuss): Volgy et al., Status and Membership in the Clubs”.

**Week 12 Paper Chase**

(Nov. 8)

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(Nov. 10)

**Week 13 Paper Chase**

(Nov. 15)

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(Nov. 17)

**Week 14 No Classes: Thanksgiving Break**

(Nov. 22)

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(Nov. 24)

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**Week 15 Paper Chase**

(Nov. 29)

(Dec. 1)

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**Week 16**

(Dec. 6) **Course Wrap-Up/ Discussion of final exam**

**Date for scheduled final exam: December 13, 3:30-5:30 PM**

**Final paper due: no later than December 13.**