

Pol 454 (Honors Seminar)
Fall 2014
Tuesdays, 3:00-5:20

Theories of International Relations
Professor Volgy
Social Sciences 311

Syllabus

Office: Social Sciences 330
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COURSE GOALS:

There are three major goals for this course. 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 course 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/datalab.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. 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 you will have read the materials that are due for that day; that you will have thought about them; and 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; 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!

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 8 (October 14), and an in-class review the session before. 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; thus, 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 to 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 to 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?
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Calendar of Topics and Readings

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

Additional Required Readings: These are listed with the name of the author first, and ending in (*), and you can find them on my web page at: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~volgy/Pol454HonorsReadings.zip>

Week 1 **A short introduction to the course**

(August 26)

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Week 2 **What is Theory? How To Evaluate Theory?**

(September 2)

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*

 Bueno de Mesquita, Appendix B

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 (*)

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Week 3 Research Designs and the Data Lab

(September 9)

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 on my web page and the exercises/examples, and see if you can do the following: a) create descriptive statistics around a measure; b) run a correlation between two measures.

READINGS: Miller et al., 2014. "Meeting Expectations? Norms, Contestation, and Status Attribution in International Politics (forthcoming).

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Some Great and not so great Debates About Theoretical Approaches

Week 4 Realism and Neorealism

(September 16)

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 and power transition theorists different? Similar?

READINGS: Bueno de Mesquita, Chapter 4

Wohlforth, 1995. "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security* (*)

Waltz, 2000. "Structural Realism After the Cold War," *International Security*(*)

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Week 5 Liberal Institutionalism

(September 23)

Q: 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?

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

Bueno de Mesquita, Chapter 11

Week 6 Liberalism

(September 30)

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. Can you see how?)

READINGS: Bueno de Mesquita, Chapter 1; (optional, Chapter 2)

Moravchik, 1997, “Taking Preferences Seriously...” *International Organization*(*)

Week 7 The Constructivist and “Postie” Challenge

(October 7)

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?

READINGS: Bueno de Mesquita, Appendix A

Wendt, 1992 "Anarchy is What States Make of It..." *International Organization* (*)

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

Week 8 Midterm Exam

(October 14)

Theories at Different Levels of Analysis

QUESTIONS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ANALYSIS:

As you do the readings for the weeks below, please think about and be prepared to discuss the following:

- 1) What is the primary theoretical orientation of each piece? Is there a diversity of orientations at this level? If so, can they be meaningfully integrated?
 - 2) Can you make sense of the theory being presented in terms of independent, intervening, and dependent variables?
 - 3) Is there a serious attempt to operationalize key concepts? How successfully? Are there problems of validity and/or reliability?
 - 4) Is the evidence being presented robust?
 - 5) Is the puzzle being created salient? Does it get solved?
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Week 9 Theorizing at the Individual Level

(October 21)

READINGS: Jervis, 1988. "War and Misperception," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*(*)

Hermann and Kegley, 1995. "Rethinking Democracy and International Peace," *International Studies Quarterly* (*)

Bueno de Mesquita, Chapter 7

Week 10 Decision Making Theory

(October 28)

- 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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Week 11 Theories of Domestic Structure

(November 4)

- READINGS:** Bueno de Mesquita, Chapter 6
- Gartzke, 2007. “The Capitalist Peace.” *American Journal of Political
Science* (*)
- Gartzke, 1998. “Kant We All Just Get Along?” *American Journal of
Political Science* (*)
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Week 12 NO CLASS (Veteran’s Day)

(November 11)

Week 13 Systemic, Structural Theories

(November 18)

- READINGS:** Waltz, 1993. “The Emerging Structure of International Politics.”
International Security(*)
- Rapkin and Thompson, 2003. “Power Transition, Challenge and the
(Re)emergence of China,” *International Interaction* (*)
- Volgy et al, 2011. “Status and Membership in the Clubs.” (*)

Bearce and Bondanella. 2007. "Integovernmental Organizations, Socialization, and Member State Interest Convergence," *International Organization*(*)

Week 14 Research/Paper Chase begins

(November 25)

Week 15 Research Continues

(December 2)

Week 16 Research Continues/Course Wrap-up/Discussion of Final Exam

(December 9)

(December 12) **Research Papers Due**

FINAL EXAM DATE: *Friday, December 12, 3:30 to 5:30*