

# THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Rand Blimes

346 MARB, TTH 9:30–10:45

Office: SWKT 770

Office hours: Mon 9:30–11; Wed 12–1; and by appointment

rand.blimes@byu.edu

## About the Course

This course is an introduction to the scientific approach to the study of international relations. We will critically consider theoretical explanations for why and how states interact the way they do. We will trace the scientific process from large, generalizable theories, to the hypotheses derived from these theories, and finally examine how scholars provide evidence for these theories. Students will examine and evaluate theories with respect to both internal logic and ability to explain real-world events.

This course has two closely related goals. The first is to introduce you to the commonly used theoretical frameworks IR scholars use to provide an organized way to think about how the international system works. You will critically analyze IR theory both in class discussions and in written assignments. By the end of the class you should understand the core set of IR theories and have formed some of your own opinions about how valid these theories are. The second goal is to practice applying these rather abstract concepts (often called models) to the real world. By the end of the semester, you should be able to dazzle friends and enemies alike with your depth of understanding for any international interaction past, present, or future. Please note that this will make you far more interesting at parties than you currently are, and is therefore an extra incentive for you to work hard in this class.

You will quickly notice that class readings and discussions are often set up as a debate. Political science is still a young discipline, and there are very few “facts” we have identified. Different scholars have provided different, often contradictory, answers to the same questions. I will do my best to cover as many different opinions as possible. It is your responsibility to put some thought into our subject material and decide what answers seem most correct to you. Please note that while you will be required to understand all of the concepts we cover, you do not have to believe any of them. It is up to you to critically decide whether you believe the theories we will cover are valid or not.

I expect that you will have done all the reading before each class, AND that you will have spent some time processing the information you have read. Please show up to class ready to discuss and defend your opinions.

## Materials

The following books are required for the course. All are available at the book store.

Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, *International politics: Enduring concepts and contemporary issues*, 8th ed.

Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Cote, Jr., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Theories of war and peace*

Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*

In addition there will be several articles you can access online.

## Expectations

You will be required to keep up with daily readings for the class. I expect you to come to class having read and thought about the readings each day. Each class will consist of both lecture and discussion. You will not be able to get a good grade in this class by simply memorizing a set of facts. You will have to form some opinions and be able to defend them. Class discussions are a great time to practice doing this (because you will definitely have to do it on the tests and in papers). Vigorous discussion in class will make the time go by quickly, and the class will be far more interesting for all of us if you participate.

I set up class so that there will be disagreement in our discussions, and I hope that you fight like the proverbial cats and dogs over some of the controversial issues we will cover. That said, I expect you to be respectful of all class members at all times. Disagree politely.

I also expect you to keep up with world events. Please give a quick reading of the New York Times, BBC, or your preferred international news source every day so we can discuss current happenings in class.

## Grading

Your grade for this class will be made up of two exams and a series of written work.

3 Exams 60%

Abstracts 10%

Research Design 30%

*Exams.* Each exam will last one hour and will consist of short identification and essay questions. There will be one exam covering realism, one covering liberalism, and one covering the entire class.

*Abstracts.* Each day you will read one or two articles for class. For each article, you should write an abstract of about 5–6 sentences, briefly summarizing 1) the main argument(s), 2) the logic the author uses to make her argument, and 3) the evidence used to support the argument. I will collect these each day. You must be present in class to turn in your abstract.

*Research design.* You will write a ten to fifteen page, double-spaced paper that draws on a theory covered in class to generate one or more hypotheses and explain how you might go about testing your hypothesis (please note that you do not have to carry out the testing). This paper should have three parts. In the first part, you will discuss the problem you wish to address and explain why it is important. In the second part you will describe how you have derived your hypothesis from theory, and make a logical argument for your hypothesis. Finally, you will explain how you would go about testing your hypothesis to see if you are correct. More information detailing the exact layout and evaluation of this paper will be given to you. The paper is due at the time of the final exam.

Please note that I do not accept any late work. One thing you should be learning while you are here is how to meet deadlines. Barring extraordinary circumstances, if you do not deliver a hard copy of the assignment into my hand by the due date, you receive a zero for the assignment.

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty in fulfilling any assignment will be grounds for failing the course. Thus, for instance, you must not represent someone else's work as your own in carrying out your paper assignment. And, when presenting another person's ideas or data, you must provide explicit citation to acknowledge your intellectual debt. Quotation marks must be used when you are quoting someone. Minor changes that try to paraphrase someone else's ideas do not relieve you of the responsibility of acknowledging your intellectual debt. When in doubt, you should err on the conservative side (that is, by citing your sources) or you should at least consult with me. You are responsible to learn about the Honor Code adopted by the University. You can find relevant information at the following website:

[http://www.byu.edu/honorcode/honor\\_code.htm#HONESTY](http://www.byu.edu/honorcode/honor_code.htm#HONESTY)

## Special Considerations

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. BYU's policy regarding sexual harassment extends to students as well as faculty. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 378-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 378-2847.

If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (378-2767).