SIS 601: International Relations Theory*

Nathan A. Paxton

Spring 2012

Office Hours: W, 2-5pm; R, 3–4.30 p.m.; or by appointment.
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Course Description and Objectives

Interdisciplinary perspectives; major paradigms of thought; definition of boundaries of the field; normative and analytic goals and definition of priorities.

Learning Objectives

· Develop a foundational understanding of competing schools of thought in IR.
· Integrate theory and practice through applying the IR theory to current events and historical cases via written work.
· Understand the sub fields within IR.
· Examine the philosophical traditions, ethical debates, and concepts of service that emerge from different schools of thought.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

· Compare and contrast major schools of thought in IR.
· Explain current events and historical cases drawing on IR theory.
· Identify and discuss the diverse subfields within IR.
· Define major historical trends in the development of the international system.

*Syllabus ©2011–12, Nathan A. Paxton. This syllabus has benefited from the syllabi of similar courses given by Profs. Steven Walt, Boaz Atzili, Henry Farrell, and Charles Glaeser.


Academic Integrity

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University’s Academic Integrity Code, which can be found in the University catalog. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course. You can read the University’s full Academic Integrity Code here: http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm

Emergency Preparedness

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (http://www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.

Academic and Disability Support Services

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please don’t hesitate to consult with me. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.

- Academic Support Center (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.
- Counseling Center (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.
- Disability Support Services (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities.
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me in a *timely* manner with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

**Assignments**

This is a professional-school course in international relations theory. As a result, there are not a lot of assignments or make-work. You will be primarily evaluated upon your ability to apply the theories, ideas, and concepts to real-world cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Memo</td>
<td>45%</td>
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Table 1: Assignments

Students will receive detailed information about what all these assignments will specifically comprise as we proceed through the semester.

1. **Participation** (see also “Attendance and Participation” below): This is a seminar class, rather than a lecture (although it will be a combination sometimes), and therefore the students’ active participation is crucial. The discussion will be based on the reading material, and your evaluation will be assessed on a weekly basis. You are expected to contribute substantive comments, debate the meaning, contributions, and pitfalls of the readings and the ideas behind them.

2. **Midterm paper**: This will be a take-home, time-limited assignment.

3. **Policy Case Memo**: This will be a ∼10 pp. paper, and students will examine a case of international politics in light of the logic and predictions of three different theories of international relations. More details will be forthcoming in about one month.

**Policies, Expectations, and Rules**

**Grading**

No written work will be accepted for credit which you cannot verbally explain and defend in a cross-examination with the instructor, should he deem it necessary.

You will earn grades according to the criteria in Table 2.

I expect that American University students, on average, will be able to perform at roughly a B level.
Table 2: Grading Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Superior, outstanding scholarship and intellectual achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>High attainment and notable degree of scholastic performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory performance, average level of achievement. Understands the essential elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Deficient but passing. A grade of D indicates a bare minimum performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure to meet minimum standards.</td>
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**Attendance and participation**

You should attend all meetings of the course. I will assess participation based upon your in-class participation.

Students must, of course, participate in seminar each week. This requires actively contributing to our discussions, but quality is prized over quantity. Students will have to orally participate in each session to do their best, but I am more interested in excellent comments than in multiple comments. *Talking a lot is no guarantee of a high grade, but speaking not at all or infrequently will guarantee a low grade.*

While students can do very much to affect their overall participation grade, the determination of their performance level is ultimately mine.

Please note: if you need to miss class for a religious holiday observance, please simply inform me. We will work out alternative means for you to make up any assignments or material.

**Computers**

I highly prefer that you do not use computers during seminar, as the temptation to check one’s e-mail, sports scores, IM, and so forth is often too great for even the most hearty of us.

If you wish to use a computer in class or seminar, I will require you to use the computer for *note-taking only*. Should I discover that you are using the Internet, playing games, or any other activity that is not directly related to our work in the classroom, you will lose all in-class computer privileges for the rest of the term.

**Submitted Work**

*All final written work must and will be turned in as PDF files.* I will not accept Microsoft Office, Apple iWork, OpenOffice, or any other proprietary format. Why? First, these formats are proprietary software, requiring the recipient to have the exact same software (or operating system!) as you used to prepare them; this is neither considerate nor financially feasible. In addition, these file formats have often been used by invidious people to transmit all sorts of computer maladies, and I prefer not to infect my computer with whatever infections yours may have. I will not look at work turned in using those formats and I will consider subsequent PDF files late work.

**Syllabus changes**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus—whether in schedule, readings, or other details—but will make all such changes public and will provide them to students as soon as such
determination occurs.

**Required Materials**

You will need the following books for this course. They are widely available and you should find no barriers to accessing or purchasing them.


If you have little background in International Relations theory, I highly suggest the following book to you. I will not *require* reading assignments from it, but I will most strongly suggest them to you.


Finally, I will assign case studies (TBD) from several sources.

**Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments**

**January 19, 2012: Introduction**

Readings:


**January 26, 2012: Alternatives to the “-isms”**

Readings:

February 2, 2012: Realism

Readings:

- Doyle: Part I Intro (p.41), Ch. 1–3

February 9, 2012: Realism II

Readings:


February 16, 2012: Liberalism, antecedents, and descendents

Readings:

- Doyle: Part II Intro, Ch. 7, 8

February 23, 2012: Constructivism

Readings:

March 1, 2012: Rationalism and games

Readings:


March 8, 2012: NO CLASS — Spring Break

*You will receive your midterm assignment this week.*

March 15, 2012: Domestic Politics and Psychological Theories

Readings:


March 22, 2012: Sovereignty and the State

Readings:


March 29, 2012: Institutions in International Politics

Readings:

- Doyle: Ch. 6

April 5, 2012: No class. Religious observance

April 12, 2012: International Conflict: Religion, Alliances, Terrorism

Readings:


April 19, 2012: Intrastate conflict: Ethnic and civil conflict, humanitarian relief

Readings:

- Doyle: Ch. 11

**April 26, 2012: Trade, Finance, Globalization**

Readings:


