INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CORE SEMINAR
POLI 540, SPRING 2019
Monday 2:00-4:50 PM, 126 Herzstein Hall

INSTRUCTOR:

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Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE CONTENT:

This seminar is intended to introduce political science Ph.D. students to research in the subfield of international relations. Students will be expected to demonstrate their ability to evaluate arguments and empirical evidence, to recognize linkages among studies and scientific progress, and to identify new research questions. You should leave this course with a familiarity with some research in the subfield of international relations, new research ideas, and improved skills in analytical thinking, writing, and oral presentation.

CONNECTION TO PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This course contributes primarily to the first learning outcome for the political science Ph.D., but will also help you with your evaluation of research designs and methodologies, your communication skills, your teaching ability, and your professional development. The program learning outcomes for the political science Ph.D. are as follows:

- Demonstrate advanced knowledge of theoretical and empirical research in two of the following three sub-fields of Political Science: American politics, comparative politics, and international relations.

- Learn and apply social science research design and methodologies, including advanced statistical techniques.

- Demonstrate the ability to communicate their research effectively through multiple mediums including scholarly writing, oral presentation, and poster sessions.

- Demonstrate their competence as political scientists through research, teaching, and professional development activities.
EVALUATION:

Grades will be determined in the manner described below. The Rice University Honor Code applies to all assignments for this course.

25% -- Class Participation and Attendance

The quality of a graduate level seminar depends to a great extent on the efforts of the students. You play a big role in creating your course. I expect that you will come to class each week prepared to discuss the assigned material and that you will share your ideas, questions, and views actively. Because class participation is vital to your performance in this course, please see me at once if you feel uncomfortable speaking in class.

Please leave ample time to read the work assigned for each week carefully. While you are reading, you should consider the following questions:

What is the purpose of the study? Does the author intend to describe the state of the world or the state of the literature? Does the author intend to advance a new theory? Does the author intend to provide an empirical test of an existing theory? How well does the author accomplish his or her goal?

What is the author's argument? What research question is the author trying to answer, and how does he or she answer it? What are the assumptions (explicit and implicit) upon which the author’s argument is based? What are the independent and dependent variables, and what is the logic that links them together?

Is the theory logically consistent? Is it plausible?

Is the theory empirically relevant? Is the empirical record commensurate with expectations drawn from the theory? If the author provides empirical tests, are the research design, the operational measures of the concepts, and the methods of analysis appropriate? What further evidence would you use to evaluate the argument? What further testable hypotheses follow from this theory? How would you design a study that could determine the empirical relevance of the author’s approach in comparison to other approaches?

Is the research interesting? How does this argument fit into the literature? What does this study tell us that we didn’t already know? What should it tell us that it doesn’t? What questions still need to be answered?

What policy recommendations would you make based on this study?

How do the selections we read this week fit together? How do they fit into the course as a whole? Are we seeing progress in this research area?

What new research needs to be done in this area?
I hope that we will engage in vigorous academic debate, but during these class discussions, classroom etiquette is vital. Please work to ensure that you make comments in ways that invite discussion. Our classroom contains members with various life experiences, divergent perspectives, varying levels of experience with political science research, and different strategies for defending their views. Please state your opinions constructively and respectfully, listen carefully when your colleagues are speaking, and speak to me if you are offended by something that is said in class.

Obviously it is impossible to participate in a seminar discussion if you are not in attendance. I expect no absences in the course except in the case of illness or emergency, and I encourage you to discuss any circumstances with me that will preclude you from attending class. I also expect you to arrive on time. If you do need to miss class, please contact me ahead of time to let me know that you will not be able to attend and to make arrangements to complete an alternate assignment.

Grades for participation will be assigned at the end of the semester, but you may ask for feedback on your performance at any time. If you have concerns about the quality and quantity of your participation in the course, I hope you will speak to me.

**15% – Discussion Leadership (2 @ 7.5% each)**

Each week, approximately three students will be assigned to work together to lead the first portion of the class discussion. These students will prepare to introduce the week’s material and prepare questions to prompt class discussion. Note that while it is important to make sure that the class has an understanding of the readings, leading discussion should go well beyond simply summarizing the material. Steen, Bader, and Kubrin (1999, 171-2), for example, suggest the following in designing a graduate seminar discussion:

> Begin with questions that ask students to simply recall the substance of the material they have read. Such questions involve laying out the basic argument, or identifying the basic issues addressed by the author(s) . . . Once the substantive groundwork has been laid, the discussion can turn to questions that explore students' comprehension of the material. Comprehension questions ask students to generalize from the material, or to explore the material on a slightly higher level of abstraction. . . . The third stage in the discussion develops questions of analysis, which encourage students to explore the assumptions in an author's argument and to think about the implications of the argument for other substantive topics. . . . Finally, the discussion can move to evaluation and synthesis of the material, encouraging students to explore the validity of the argument and its effects.

The team will receive a single grade for all of the members. In exceptional circumstances, students may petition the instructor to consider separate grades if one or more members of the team does not fulfill responsibilities.

**40% – Analytical Papers (2 @ 20% each)**

Twice during the semester you will be given a prompt for an analytical paper. You will have one week

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to write each paper. The expectation is that the paper will be written based on the material you have been assigned to read for this class. You are not prohibited from engaging outside material, but you are also not required to do it, and I will be looking for evidence that you understand and engage the material assigned for this class. More instructions regarding the analytical papers will be provided when the prompts are distributed. The planned due dates are February 25 and April 15.

20% -- *Mock Comprehensive Exam*

At the end of the semester, you will take a mock comprehensive exam according to the rules for the written portion of the general exam in international relations. You will be able to choose to take the exam on any day during the final exam period.

**SPECIAL PROVISIONS:**

Students with documented disabilities who require special accommodations should express their needs to the instructor during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities must also contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center. The Department of Political Science is happy to do whatever we can to assure each student full and rewarding participation in classes.

**DISCUSSION SCHEDULE:**

In crafting this syllabus, I took into account the fact that the great majority of students taking this class are neither IR majors nor IR minors, and thus this will likely be the only international relations seminar most of you take in graduate school. As a result, I decided not to focus as much on classic works or “great debates” as some core syllabi might, and instead to offer opportunities to engage more current research on particular topics in the field. This syllabus should not be viewed as a comprehensive listing of all scholarly literature on international relations, nor of all the “good” or “important” work; that would be impossible to cover in one semester. The reading selections are skewed towards works that employ positivist approaches. Some issue areas are not well represented due to constraints of time; it is impossible to devote time to every issue area in which there has been substantial research in a single semester. Even for the topics that are covered, you will read only a representative sample of the existing literature. This selection of readings, however, should serve to provide an introduction to our scholarly understanding, and the readings included herein should point you in profitable directions for future study on topics that you wish to pursue further.

The readings listed for each date are those that will be discussed during that class period. Thus, you should complete these readings before the class meeting.

**Week #1: January 7: Introduction to Course; What is the Study of International Relations?**


Review syllabus thoroughly.
Week #2: January 14: Realism, Liberalism, Institutionalism, Constructivism, and Rationalism

Week #3: January 21: No Class; MLK Day

Week #4: January 28: Power, Hierarchy, and Interests

Week #5: February 4: Deterrence and War
Week #6: February 11: International Cooperation

Week #7: February 18: Conflict Management and Resolution

Week #8: February 25: International Institutions; 1st Analytical Paper due before class
**Week #9: March 4:** The Political Consequences of the Global Economy

**Week #10: March 11:** No class, Spring Break

**Week #11: March 18:** Diplomacy/Foreign Policy

**Week #12: March 25:** No class; International Studies Association Meeting

**Week #13: April 1:** International Norms
**Week #14: April 8: Democracy and International Relations**


Leeds, Brett Ashley and Michaela Mattes. n.d. Interests, Institutions, and Foreign Policy Change.

**Week #15: April 15: Course Wrap-Up; 2nd Analytical Paper due before class**


**May 1: Mock Comprehensive Exam due by 12:00 pm**