

Diablo Valley College
Political Science 250 - 8609 / International Relations / Fall 2009

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Instructor: John Kropf – Office Hours 6:30 – 7:00, Room LA 220
Schedule: Wednesdays, 7:00 – 9:50 p.m., Room LA 220, Aug 19 – Dec 16, 2009

Course Description: Welcome, one and all, to the fascinating subject of international relations! I have always felt that “IR” is the most interesting and exciting field in the social sciences. It is truly multidisciplinary, meaning that we utilize many disciplines to help us understand why the world works the way it does. This means you should feel free to use history, political science, economics, law, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, and even the natural sciences in the course of your investigations. While this course is meant as an introduction to IR, it will nevertheless contain some very challenging theories and concepts. Do not shrink from that challenge! If you devote some serious effort to this course you will find it to be very rewarding, lots of fun, as well as having many connections to your everyday life.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, students will...

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the major theoretical approaches to world politics and the methodologies used to study them.
2. Understand some of the more important problems in world politics from the past, the present, and challenges for the future.
3. Think and argue *critically* about issues in international relations.

Course Texts: For this course, there is 1 required text: Genest, *Conflict and Cooperation: Evolving Theories of International Relations, 2nd Edition*. Other readings will be found on the class website.

Course Methodology: Classes will consist primarily of class lectures and discussions, which will amplify and clarify text materials. Students will be expected to read assigned materials prior to the lecture and discussion. Failure to keep up with the readings will probably lead to significant confusion on your end, so do your best to stay current on the readings, and please do not save all your reading for the night prior to the writing of a research paper.

Course Evaluation: Student progress will be evaluated through exam essays and discussion questions related to your readings. You should expect a mid-term exam and a final exam, both of which will be in research paper / essay format. Late work is accepted on a case-by-case basis but will of course, lower your grade. PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY WRITTEN WORK THROUGH E-MAIL, HARD COPIES ONLY. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken formally at each session. Discussion forms an important component of this course, so class participation is strongly encouraged. Student participation in class is an indicator of student interest and shows that the student is keeping up with the assigned readings. Also, since a significant portion of your grade is based on participation, this means that missing more than two classes will almost certainly lower your overall letter grade. Your final grade will break out as follows:

Study Questions Journals – 20%	Final Research Paper – 30%
Mid-term Research Paper – 30%	Class Participation – 20%

Important Dates:

September 11, 2009 – Last day to drop class *without* a “W” appearing on your transcript.

November 20, 2009 – Last day to drop class *with* a “W” appearing on your transcript.

*One final note: Dropping this class is YOUR responsibility. *DVC policy mandates that I cannot withdraw you from this class after November 20th through the final grading period.*

Political Science 250 / International Relations Outline

This schedule is tentative and can be adjusted to accommodate student/instructor interest
GE = Genest text; WEB = Readings from Class Website

Part One – Introduction and Historical Overview

August 19: Introduction to and Description of the Course. An outline of how the course will be conducted and a short discussion of the topics to be covered. Descriptive/explanatory theory vs. prescriptive theory; the “level of analysis” problem in IR; concepts, generalizations, theories, and laws; the use of case studies.

Video: None

Readings for 8/26: GE – Chapter 1, pp. 1-38.

August 26: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *The Historical Context of Contemporary International Relations.* A brief look at the “Pre-Westphalian World;” the emergence of the Westphalian system and development of sovereignty; Europe in the 19th century; absolutism and nationalism; balance of power theory; the origins of the Cold War; the post-Cold War era; unipolarity, bipolarity, multipolarity, finishing with the terrorist attacks of 9-11, the war on terrorism and Iraq.

Video: “Our Own Private Bin Laden,” a documentary film by Samira Goetschel.

Readings for 9/2: GE – Chapter 2, pp. 39-122.

Part Two – Theoretical Perspectives in International Relations

September 2: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *System Level Theories – Realism.* A look at the terms and concepts that surround the oldest theory for understanding and explaining international politics. Classical realism, neorealism, and a critique of realist theory will be included.

Video: “The Prince.” *Discovery Books* on Video.

Readings for 9/9: GE – Chapter 3, pp. 123-190.

September 9: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *System Level Theories – Liberalism.* The next system level theory we will examine seeks to “promote global order through expanded political and economic ties.” The discussion will include institutional and economic transnationalism, and a critique of transnationalist theory.

Video: “The Ascent of Money,” featuring Niall Ferguson.

Readings for 9/16: GE – Chapter 4, pp. 191-256.

September 16: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *System Level Theories – Class System Theory.*

In our last system level theory we will examine and discuss class system theory or globalism. Derived from earlier Marxist theories, it suggests that classes, and the divisions between them, define and determine the course of international politics. Early Marxism, imperialism, dependency theory and a critique of class system theory will be included.

Video: “Blood and Oil,” a documentary film based on the book by Michael Klare.

Readings for 9/23: GE – Chapter 5, pp. 257-370.

September 23: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *System Level Theories – Postmodernism and Feminist Theory.* This week we will wrap up our system level of analysis with a look at one of the newer approaches to IR theory, postmodernism. In particular, we will focus on the emergence of feminist theory as the newest perspective. Does gender play a role in the conflict between nations? What do feminists and other post-moderns have to say about the war on terrorism?

Video: “Regret to Inform,” a documentary film by Barbara Sonneborn.

Readings for 9/30: GE – Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 370-485.

September 30: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *State Level Theories – Political Culture and Decision-Making Process Theories.* Moving on to state level theories of international relations, we will examine how the type of government can be a major determinant in the behavior and foreign policy of a state. We will also look at how foreign policy decisions are made and the impact that foreign policy bureaucracies have on the government's decision-making process. Video: "The Power of Nightmares" a documentary film from BBC's Adam Curtis. Readings for 10/7: GE – Chapters 8, 9, and 10, pp. 487-583.

October 7: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *Individual Level Theories – Human Nature, Cognitive, and Peace Studies Theory.* Our final level of analysis will involve studying the effect that individuals play in the conduct of international relations. We will be looking at all three tonight, so this should be a busy night. Tonight's lecture and discussion will focus on how the classic "nature vs. nurture" debate affects IR theory. The last discussion involving theory will focus on the newest theory of IR—the peace studies perspective. For the peace studies approach, we'll examine the principles of positive and negative peace and discuss whether an IR theory based on social justice and human rights can be legitimately incorporated into the field of IR. A discussion of the readings and a critique of these three theories will follow. Video: "The Power of Nightmares," Part 2. Readings for 10/21: WEB – Readings from the "Conventional Perspectives" column.

OCTOBER 14 – MID-TERM EXAMINATION

Part Three – Issues and Problems in International Relations

October 21: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *International Political Economy and Globalization – The North.* This week we'll examine how economics plays an increasingly important role in the conduct of international relations. We will first look at how the institutions and processes in the developed world such as the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, and MNC's, and how these northern NGO's impact IR. Video: "The End of Poverty?" a documentary film from Cinema Libre. Readings for 10/28: WEB – Readings from the "Critical Perspectives" column.

October 28: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *International Political Economy and Globalization – The South.* In the second half of the class, we'll discuss how the process of globalization is affecting nations in the poorer south. We'll look at three approaches (liberal, structuralist, and mercantilist) to development and examine the problem of debt. A discussion of third world responses to economic disadvantage will also be debated. Video: "The End of Poverty?" Part 2. Readings for 11/4: WEB – Kaplan, Klare, and Smith.

November 4: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *National, International, and Global Security Theory (1945- through the 21st Century).* We will look first at how national security theory evolved from the ashes of World War II. Terms and concepts that guided American foreign policy planners will be examined and then debated. Two central questions: How was the Cold War with the Soviet Union related to our security? Is a new Cold War emerging? In the second part of our examination of the subfield of "security studies" we will look at the latest theories of security such as regional, transstate, international, and global security. Have economic/environmental/social issues taken the place of more traditional military concerns? Is access to resources (oil) a security interest? Video: "Oil, Smoke and Mirrors," a documentary film by Ronan Doyle. Readings for 11/18: WEB – Carroll, Lewis, Mead, and Barber.

NOVEMBER 11 – VETERAN'S DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

November 18: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *Religion and Nationalism*. This lecture and discussion will look at the ways in which nationalism and religion drive world politics. Concepts such as the state and nation-state and how these two devolve into nationalism will be examined, along with a focus on how religion shapes international relations. We will devote considerable attention to Islam's effect on contemporary U.S.-Arab world relations.
Video: "Beyond Our Differences" a documentary film from the Bill Moyers Journal.
Readings for 12/2: WEB – Krauthammer, Kagen, Chomsky, Parenti, et.al.

NOVEMBER 25 – CLASS CANCELLED – MAKE UP HOURS TBA

December 2: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *United States Foreign Policy*. This night will also be devoted to discussing how the United States, as the sole military and economic superpower, conducts itself through its foreign policies in the international arena. We will also take a critical look at Barak Obama's foreign policy team—who they are, what they have accomplished, and how their plans have gone so far in the first term. Would a John McCain or any Republican presidency (or a Republican Congress) have significantly altered our foreign policy or international affairs? Discussion of the final exam.
Video: "Preventive Warriors" a documentary film by Michael Burns.
Readings for 12/9: WEB – Hardin, Homer-Dixon, and Wallis.

December 9: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *International Relations and the Global Environment*. Our last night will be a wrap up of the entire course—a chance to talk about where the discipline of IR has been and where it's going (hopefully somewhere!). Tonight's reading and discussion are focused on the ecological challenges that face the international community in the 21st century. Topics to be addressed include sustainable development, population issues, resource issues and cooperation, and the problem of pollution. Central to our discussion will be the question of whether international environmental organizations can meet the challenges ahead.
Video: "The Ecological Footprint," a documentary film featuring Mathis Wackernagel, Ph.D.

December 16 / FINAL EXAMINATION. Good luck to all and have a great winter break!