

INR 3603: THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Spring 2026, MWF 11:45 AM - 12:35 PM

@ NRN 1020 (Norman Hall)

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Office hours: Wednesdays 1-2 pm *Or by appointment

Course Description and Required Texts

What are theories of International Relations? What, and to whom, do they address? In what historical contexts did they arise? In this course, we will carefully read six books written by major scholars of international relations, each of whom shares the assumption that the varied interactions among states and nonstate actors in the global arena are vital elements of the world system. But they differ from each other in the conceptual perspectives they use to analyze international politics, such as the meanings and practices of “power,” “security,” and “cooperation.”

The primary objective of this course is to appreciate how the variety of perspectives we will read and discuss shapes different understandings of “international relations,” and their implications for studying global politics today. The six books and scholars differ from one another not only in their theoretical perspectives, but also in their analytical lenses. Some of the analyses consist primarily of abstract reasoning about global politics, while others are empirical in their orientation, ranging from archival and textual analysis, through historical case studies, to feminist and critical analyses applied to both abstract and empirical reasoning. The secondary objective of the course is to familiarize you with some of the ways in which social scientists establish their claims to knowledge of their subject matter, especially from critical perspectives. Finally, a third objective is to reflect on the particular historical contexts and dynamics of global politics within which these scholars wrote, and to consider how their theories are still applicable today.

Please purchase the following required books:

- Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*. [Any edition is fine]
- Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. [Any edition is fine]
- Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*.

- Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*.
- J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*.
- Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations*.

Please let me know if you need any assistance accessing these books. An e-book version of Waltz's book is accessible via the UF Libraries portal online (to access the libraries remotely, make sure to activate your VPN). Copies of the other five books are available to check out at UF Library West.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on (a) two “thought pieces,” (b) two short “reaction pieces,” and (c) class attendance.

Thought Pieces: 750-1,000 words (double-spaced), take-home essay assignment (2 total essays). For each essay assignment, you will be challenged to demonstrate a firm grasp of the theoretical perspectives covered in class. For example, I may ask you to interpret a recent international political event from the perspective of one (or more) of these theories. Or, I may provide you with an official policy statement, such as from NATO Heads of State and Government, and ask you how one (or more) of the theorists we read would react to it. The first thought piece assignment will be posted on Canvas on **March 2 at 12 pm and will be due on March 11 at 12 pm**. The second/final assignment will be posted on **April 20, at 12 pm, and will be due on April 29, at 5 pm**. These dates are indicated in red font on the class weekly schedule below. Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 3 points (that is, 3 percent of the maximum total score for the class) per 24 hours.

Short Reaction Pieces: three times during the semester, you will be required to respond briefly to a prompt and/or short article /video interview related to the reading materials assigned that week. The reaction pieces should be 500 words each (double-spaced). The prompts and additional resources needed will typically be posted on Canvas before class at 12 pm, and the assignment will be due one week later at 12 pm. The relevant dates are indicated in red font on the course schedule. Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 0.5 points per 24 hours.

Class attendance: Class attendance is of utmost importance. I expect you to attend class sessions regularly and to complete all the readings in a timely fashion, as specified by the schedule below. Ten percent (ten points) of the total grade for the class will be based on attendance. I will randomly take attendance ten times during the semester.

The final grade for the course will be distributed as follows:

• Thought piece #1	25% (25 points)
• Thought piece #2	25% (25 points)
• 2 Reaction pieces	40% (40 points; 20 points each)
• Attendance	10% (10 points)

For each assignment, you will receive a numerical score, not a letter grade. Your final cumulative score will be translated into a letter grade according to the following schedule: 94 points or higher = A; 90–93.9 = A-; 87–89.9 = B+; 83–86.9 = B; 80–82.9 = B-; 77–79.9 = C+; 73–76.9 = C; 70–72.9 = C-; 67–69.9 = D+; 63–66.9 = D; 60–62.9 = D-; <60 = E.

Other Matters/Policies

Individual extra-credit work is not allowed.

Deadline extensions may be granted under special circumstances; if you anticipate such circumstances, please do not hesitate to ask for an extension. But you must do so prior to the deadline; retroactive extensions will not be granted.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>). Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies posted at

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. More information about in-class recording is available at

<http://aa.ufl.edu/policies/in-class-recording/>

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Class/Reading Schedule

January 12 Introduction and Course Overview

I. REALIST PERSPECTIVES

January 14 Waltz, chapter 1 (pp. 1–15)

January 16 Waltz, chapter 2 (16–41)

January 19 No Class (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

January 21 Waltz, chapter 3 (42–79)

January 23 Waltz, chapter 4 (80–123)

January 26 Waltz, chapter 5 (124–158)

January 28 Waltz, chapter 6 (159–186)

January 30 Waltz, chapter 7 (187–223)

February 2 Waltz, chapter 8 (223–238)

In Class: *Conversations with History: Kenneth Waltz*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9eV5gPlPZg>

Jane Rosenzweig, "The Whistle-Blower Knows How to Write," New York Times, Sept. 27, 2019, at
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/27/opinion/whistleblower-complaint.html>

Reaction piece #1 posted on Canvas at 12 pm

II. A LIBERAL-INSTITUTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

February 4 Keohane, Preface & chaps. 1–2 (5–30)

February 6 Keohane, chaps. 3–4 (31–64)

February 9 Keohane, chapter 5 (65–84)
Reaction piece #1 due at 12 pm

February 11 Keohane, chapter 6 (85–109)

February 13	Keohane, chapter 7 (110–134)
February 16	Keohane, chapter 8 (135–181)
February 18	Keohane, chapter 9 (182–216)
February 20	Keohane, chapter 10
February 23	Keohane, chapter 11
	Reflecting on Keohane and a Liberal Perspective: “Discord in Global Politics: An Interview with Professor Robert Keohane” https://harvardpolitics.com/interview-with-professor-robert-keohane/

III. A CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

February 25	Finnemore, chapter 1 (1–33)
February 27	Finnemore, chapter 2 (34–68)
March 2	Finnemore, chapter 3 (69–88) Thought piece assignment #1 posted on Canvas at 12 pm
March 4	Finnemore, chapter 4 (89–127)
March 6	Finnemore, chapter 5 (128–149)

IV. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND GLOBAL NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS

March 9	Doty, Preface & chapter 1 (vii–22)
March 11	Doty, chapter 2 (23–50) Thought piece assignment #1 due on Canvas at 12 pm
March 13	Doty, chapter 3 (51–78)
March 16	NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK!)
March 18	NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK!)

March 20 NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK!)

March 23 NO CLASS (STEPH'S AT ISA CONVENTION 2026)
READING AT HOME: Doty, chapter 4 (75-99)

March 25 NO CLASS (STEPH'S AT ISA CONVENTION 2026)
READING AT HOME: Doty, chapter 5 (99-124)

March 27 NO CLASS (STEPH'S AT ISA CONVENTION 2026)
READING AT HOME: Doty, chapter 6 (125-144)

March 30 Doty, chapters 7-8 (145-173)
Reaction piece assignment #2 assigned on Canvas at 12 pm

V. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES OF GLOBAL POLITICS

April 1 Tickner, Preface & chapter 1 (ix – 26)

April 3 Tickner, chap. 2 (27 – 66)

April 6 Tickner, chapter 3 (67 – 96)
Reaction piece assignment #2 due on Canvas at 12 pm

April 8 Tickner, chap. 4—5 (97 – 144)
 “J. Ann Tickner on how gender impacts politics & international relations,” *Academic Influence*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUmt90ZXQ-A>

VI. HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF BUILDING A DISCIPLINE: COLOR LINES AND IDENTITY INTERSECTIONS IN IR

April 10 Vitalis, Preface and Introduction (i–24)

April 13 Vitalis, chaps. 1—2 (25-54)

April 15 Vitalis, chaps. 3—4 (55–84)

April 17 Vitalis, chaps. 5—6 (85–120)

April 20 Vitalis, chap. 7—8 (121–157)
Thought piece assignment #2 posted on Canvas at 12 pm

April 22 Last Class!!
 Chapter 9- Conclusion (158—183)

April 29 Final Thought Piece Due 5:00 pm
