

INR 3603: THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Spring 2026

Prof. Zachary Selden

Classroom Anderson 101

zselden@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:40-1:00 Anderson 03

Course Description and Requirements

We will carefully consider seven books written by major scholars of international relations. All six scholars share the assumption that the varied interactions among states and nonstate actors in the global arena are vital elements of our world. But they differ greatly from each other in the conceptual perspectives that they employ to analyze world politics. The primary objective of the course is to develop an appreciation of the ways in which perspectives shape different understandings of "international relations."

The seven books vary from one another not only in theoretical perspective but also in analytical style. Some of the analyses consist primarily of abstract reasoning about global politics, while others are empirical in their orientation, ranging from textual analysis, through historical case studies, to statistical analysis. 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.

The seven required books are all available for purchase at the UF bookstore or through Amazon. The books are:

- Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*.
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.
- Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*.
- Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*.

- Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*.
- Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, Conflict and War*.
- Daniel Drezner, *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* (Apocalypse edition, 2022).

Grades will be based on (a) three take-home “thought pieces,” (b) class attendance and participation, and (c) three in-class quizzes.

Thought Pieces: Each one of these three take-home assignments will require you to write a 1000-1200 word essay, in which you will be challenged to demonstrate a firm grasp of 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, to give another example, I may provide you with an official foreign policy statement issued by the U.S. government and ask you how one (or more) of the theorists we read would react to it.

I do not have a specific rubric for each essay, but I grade along the following general criteria:

Does it completely answer the question? The essay prompts have several components, make sure you answer each part of the question.

- Does it make an argument and back it up? Don’t just assert a point- demonstrate it using logic and the texts we read. There is no need to use external sources, you have plenty to work with using the books for the course.
- Is it accurate? This seems obvious, but errors in attributing ideas to the authors we read make me question your understanding.
- Is it well-written? Don’t try to be fancy and dress up your prose in ways that make it hard to understand. Good writing is clear writing. Proofread to make sure there are no obvious spelling and grammatical issues.
- Does it cite appropriately? You do not need wall-to-wall citations, but use quotes from the texts to back up your points in ways that make your argument as strong as possible.

Class attendance and participation: I expect you to attend class sessions regularly and to complete all the readings in timely fashion, as specified by the schedule below. Ten percent of the total grade for the class will be based on class attendance and participation. If you are there but don’t participate much, I just average your grade across the assignments and give you that. If you are active, I give your final grade a boost. If you aren’t there, I take points off.

Quizzes: These will be very short multiple choice or short answer questions based on the recent reading material.

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

- Thought piece #1 20% (hand out Feb. 2 due Feb 6))
- Thought piece #2 25% (hand out Oct. 15 due Oct 24)
- Thought piece #3 30% (hand out Dec. 3 due Dec 9)
- Attendance/part. 10%
- Quizzes: 15%

For each assignment/exam, 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:

93.5+	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
59 -	F

See the UF Catalog's "[Grades and Grading Policies](#)" for information on how UF assigns grade points.

Note: A minimum grade of C is required to earn General Education credit.

Other policies: Individual extra-credit work is not allowed.

Deadline extensions may be granted under special circumstances, but you must request them prior to the deadline. Retroactive extensions will not be granted under any circumstances.

The class will not be recorded and you will not be able to access the lectures outside of normal class hours. There is no on-line option, this is an in person course.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#). (The direct link is <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>.)

Class/Reading Schedule

January 12 Course overview

1. REALIST PERSPECTIVES

January 14 Waltz, pp. 1–15

January 16 Waltz, 16–41

January 21 Waltz, 42–79

January 23 Waltz, 80–123

January 26	Waltz, 124–158
January 28	Waltz, 159–186
January 30	Waltz, 187–238
February 2	Wrap-up of Waltz (thought piece 1 handed out)
February 4	Mearsheimer, 1–67
February 6	Mearsheimer, 75–90, 96–137 (thought piece 1 due)
February 9	Mearsheimer, 138–162, 168–172, 181–202, 224–233
February 11	Mearsheimer, 234–261, 264–272, 288–304, 322–333
February 13	(QUIZ 1) Mearsheimer, 334–402
February 16	Wrap up

1. A LIBERAL-INSTITUTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

February 18	Keohane, 5–30
-------------	---------------

February 20 Keohane, 31–64

February 23 Keohane, 65–84

February 25 Keohane, 85–109

February 27 Keohane, 110–134

March 2 Keohane, 135–181

March 4 Keohane, 182–242

March 6 QUIZ 2 Keohane, 243–259 (thought piece 2 handed out)

1. A LIBERAL-WILSONIAN PERSPECTIVE

March 9 Russett, 3–42

March 11 Russett, 43–71

March 13 Russett, 72–98 (thought piece 2 due)

NO CLASS MARCH 23

March 25 Russett, 99–118

March 27 Russett, 119–138

1. A CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

March 30 Finnemore, 1–33

April 1 Finnemore, 34–68

April 3 Finnemore, 69–88

April 6 Finnemore, 89–127

April 8 Finnemore, 128–149

1. A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

April 10 QUIZ 3 Sjoberg, 1-22

April 13 Sjoberg, 23-53

April 15 Sjoberg, 54-84

April 17 Sjoberg, 85-120

VI: HOW BEING A STUDENT OF I.R. CAN SAVE YOU FROM ZOMBIES

April 20 Drezner, 31-71

April 22 Drezner, 81-110 (Thought piece 3 handed out)

April 28 Thought piece 3 due