Recent Debates in International Relations
PLSC 40605

Spring 2017

**Time:** Thursdays, 9am – 11:50pm

**Room:** Pick Hall 506

**Professor:** Austin Carson, Department of Political Science, acarson@uchicago.edu

**Office Hours:** Thursdays, 12:30pm – 2:30pm (Pick Hall 428) and by appointment. Sign up for a slot here: [http://acarson.uchicago.edu/page/office-hours](http://acarson.uchicago.edu/page/office-hours).

**Course description**
This course builds on the canonical works in International Relations (IR) theory covered in PLSC 40600 (Seminar on International Relations Theory), leading students through ten weeks of recent debates in IR research organized along substantive and methodological lines. There is an intentional absence of thematic unity among the topics. Some units look more closely at recent debates within the classic paradigms (e.g. “the practice turn in constructivist research”) while others are not easily categorized along these lines (e.g. “emotions in IR”). Some focus on work across empirical domains that shares a recently popular methodological innovation (e.g. “the experimental turn in IR”); other topics are located closer towards the fringe of mainstream IR. Specific topics will change with each offering and are chosen based on a combination of importance to the field, value as exemplars of creative and rigorous research, and my own personal interests. Participants will demonstrate fluency in these debates and develop opinions about their significance and staying power. A secondary goal is for students to expand their own research interests and draw lessons about how debates and fads evolve in IR to maximize the impact of their own work.

**Required Texts**
All readings will be available through UChicago library resources or posted to Chalk.

**Requirements**
Students are expected to attend every session and complete the assigned readings. The class grade will be based on the following. More details will be provided in class.

- Discussion participation (20%)
- Mock comprehensive exam exercise (15%)
- Final paper (65%)

**Discussion participation.** The usual graduate seminar expectation: come prepared to every session, thoughtfully contribute to discussion each week, and be mindful of over-participating. I try to take student discomfort with verbal contributions in a seminar setting seriously. Please meet with me during office hours early in the quarter to discuss strategies and alternatives if you are struggling with participation.
Mock comp exam exercise. Each student will write a short essay modeled on the typical Ph.D. comprehensive exam in International Relations at Chicago. The question will cover a larger and enduring question in International Relations; student answers are only expected to draw on readings on this syllabus. Students will be sent the essay prompt by email and have eight hours to complete their essay. The format is open book/note so students are encouraged to develop a system for managing their notes on assigned readings. The goal is to expose students to exam-style questions and approaching time-limited writing. The goal is not to replicate the stress of comprehensive exams! (Hence the assignment only being worth 20% of the grade.) This exercise will be administered two-thirds of the way through the quarter.

Final paper. Students must write a critical literature review. This should not be a plodding summary of key works in a research program. Instead, a critical literature review exercises creativity in 1) concisely summarizes existing research into thematic “buckets,” and 2) advances an argument for one or more directions this literature could go that would push beyond its current state. Note that #2 typically involves identifying in the existing literature a common theme(s), assumption(s), point(s) of view, etc.; this is often implicit or “present by its absence.” Then you must develop some kind of alternative theme, assumption, point of view, etc. There are two basic options to choose from. Option 1 analyzes one of the syllabus week’s literature. These papers must go beyond class discussion and draw on supplementary readings as well as assigned readings; additional articles/books are also welcome. Option 2 uses your own research interests as the starting point. Students must identify a discrete topic, build a preliminary reading list, and get my approval. Topics need not be at the center of traditional International Relations debates but need to be somewhat related to IR. Students choosing Option 2 should plan on at least one office hours meeting with me to hone the topic. Both options have a firm maximum of 20 pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pnt).

Professionalism
Our seminar is its own term-long community with an intellectual culture we co-create. My goal is for all of us to feel comfortable participating in developing and rigorously testing our ideas. To ensure this, all of us must follow basic norms of respectful intellectual exchange. Be professional in all communications (including emails). Comments in class should be respectful of other students. Avoid a confrontational tone; respectfully disagree by suggesting a different view rather than forcefully contradicting. Essential to this environment is abstaining from acts of sexual misconduct, which encompass a range of conduct from sexual assault to sexual harassment. These will be treated as violations of the standards of our community and are unacceptable. Other forms of misconduct based on race, religion, or sexual orientation are equally unacceptable. A new and useful university resource on gender-based misconduct is here.

Email policy
Note that in general I may not read or respond to student emails until the evening; on weekends, I often do not read/respond at all. Do not expect immediate replies.

Late policy
All deadlines are strict. Papers/assignments received late will be dropped one letter grade for each 24 hours past the deadline.
Incompletes policy
While rare, I will consider granting incompletes to students in two situations: 1) under extreme personal/family duress; or, 2) after being convinced that only with extra time can the student execute a particularly ambitious, creative, and promising final paper.

Academic integrity
I will strictly follow the University’s policy on academic integrity: “It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another’s statements or ideas as one's own work.” More details on the policy are here.

Disability accommodations
If you need any special accommodations, please provide me with a copy of an Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office) as soon as possible so that you may discuss with him/her how your accommodations may be implemented in this course.

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**Week 1 (3/30/17). Leaders: Praising Great (Wo)men?**

**Background**

**Required reading**
[https://profsaunders.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/nosubstitute3.pdf](https://profsaunders.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/nosubstitute3.pdf)

**Supplemental readings**
**Week 2 (4/6/17). Audience Costs: Rise...Fall...Comeback?**

**Background**

**Required reading**

**Supplemental readings**
Week 3 (4/13/17). Emotions in IR

Required reading

Supplemental readings
Forum on “Emotions and World Politics” in International Theory (2014), Vol. 6, No. 3.
Ross, Andrew A. G. “Coming in from the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions.” European Journal of International Relations 12, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 197–222.
Week 4 (4/20/17). Race and IR

Background

Required reading
Bell, Duncan. “Before the Democratic Peace: Racial Utopianism, Empire and the Abolition of War.” European Journal of International Relations 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 647–70.

Supplemental readings
Reviews and reactions to Vitalis’s White World Order, Black Power Politics


Karp, Matthew. This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy. Harvard University Press, 2016.


Week 5 (4/27/17). Norms: The Second Wave (Constructivism I)

Background reading

Required reading

Supplemental readings


Week 6 (5/4/17). Authoritarian Regimes and IR

Background

Required reading
Debs, Alexandre, and H.E. Goemans. “Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War.” American Political Science Review 104, no. 03 (August 2010): 430–45.

Supplemental readings

Mock comp exam
Essay prompt sent @ 9 am, Saturday 5/13
Response due same day by 5 pm
Send to acarson@uchicago.edu
**Week 7 (5/11/17). The Experimental Turn in IR**

**Required reading**

**Supplemental readings**
Week 8 (5/18/17). The “Practice Turn” (Constructivism II)

Required reading

Supplemental readings
Week 9 (5/25/17). Archives in IR

**Required reading**
Gaikwad, Nikhar. “East India Companies and Long-Term Economic Change in India.” Manuscript. Yale University, 2016. (available [here](#)).

**Supplemental readings**


Yarhi-Milo, Keren. Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations. Princeton University Press, 2014.
Week 10 (6/1/17). Secrecy and IR

**Required reading**
Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., Zachary C. Steinert-Threlkeld, and David G. Victor. “Predictability versus Flexibility: Secrecy in International Investment Arbitration.” World Politics 68, no. 3 (June 23, 2016): 413–53.

**Supplemental readings**

Final paper due Thursday June 9 by 5 pm
Send to acarson@uchicago.edu