Field Seminar in

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

17.418
Fall 2011
E53-438
Wednesdays, 10am-12pm

Department of Political Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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Description

This seminar provides an overview of the field of international relations. Each week, a different approach to explaining international relations will be examined. By surveying major concepts and theories in the field, the seminar will also assist graduate students in preparing for the comprehensive examination and further study in the department’s more specialized offerings in international relations.

The seminar will meet once a week. Master’s students and undergraduates may enroll only with the instructor’s permission.

Requirements

A successful seminar requires attendance at every meeting, completion of all readings and active, engaged participation. To stimulate discussion, students will be assigned as discussants.

In addition, this seminar has three writing assignments:

1. Three short essays, one per “third” of the course, no more than 750 words or three pages long. The essays should critically examine a hypothesis, theory, question, concept or controversy contained in one or more readings for each week. The essay may address only a subset of the readings, but under no circumstances should the essay simply summarize assigned texts. A copy of the essay must be e-mailed to Professors Fravel and Narang as an attachment (.doc or .pdf) by 5pm on the day preceding a meeting.

2. A take-home exercise due at the end of the term. The question for the take-home will be distributed on December 15 and will simulate the department’s general exam in International Relations.

3. Weekly research abstracts, no more than 300 words long. Based loosely on the topic or issues raised in discussion each week, these abstracts should state a hypothesis, outline its importance and describe how it might be tested. The abstract should be emailed to Professors Fravel and Narang as an attachment (.doc or .pdf) within 24 hours after each meeting with the subject heading “17.418 memo.” Each abstract should have a title.

Grades will be determined as follows: participation (30%), short essays (30%) and final exercise (40%). Research memos count toward class participation.

Readings for the course are on research in library and available on the following Stellar site:
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

7 September

Introduction and Organization

14 September

Overview of the Field

Schmidt, Brian C. “On The History and Historiography of International Relations” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, Beth A. Simmons eds., Handbook of International Relations (SAGE, 2002): 3-22
Waltz, Kenneth. Theory of International Politics, Ch. 1

21 September

**** NO CLASS ****

28 September

Material Approaches

Symposium on Realism as a Degenerative or Progressive Research Program, American Political Science Review, Vol. 91, No. 4 (December 1997): 899-935
5 October

Rationalist Approaches


12 October

Ideational and Identity-Based Approaches


19 October

Cognitive and Bureaucratic Approaches


26 October

Domestic Institutions and Preferences


2 November

War and Conflict


9 November

Peace and International Cooperation


16 November

War, Peace and Domestic Politics


23 November

**** NO CLASS ****

30 November

**Nuclear Proliferation and Deterrence**


Mark Bell and Nicholas LeSuer Miller, “Questioning the Effect of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict,” Unpublished Manuscript (2011)


7 December

Unipolarity


Special Issue, *World Politics*, January 2009, Selected Articles, TBD.

14 December

Rationalism Revisited