

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

Dr Marco Pinfari
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mpinfari@aucegypt.edu
Ext. 1908
Office hours: Thursdays 3.30-4.30pm on Zoom; at other times by appointment.

As two famous academics once noted, “it is sheer craziness to dare to understand world affairs”. There is simply too much complexity out there, and “world affairs are pervaded with endless details – far more than one can hope to comprehend in their entirety”.

They suggest two related solutions to this predicament. One is adopting “a sense of humility”, acknowledging that we will never be able to explain or understand fully the way the world works. Such sense of humility, however, should be accompanied by a self-conscious use of theory, because it only “through theorizing that we can hope to tease meaningful patterns out of the endless details and inordinate complexities that sustain world politics”.

The main goal of this course is to use international relations theory as a means for uncovering some “meaningful patterns” in international politics and reflect on their relevance and implications. A number of theoretical approaches will be introduced, discussed critically and “self-consciously,” and then applied to a variety of case studies. Traditional paradigms or “ontologies” of the international will be supplemented with more recent, “reflexivist” approaches, allowing us to think not just about how the world is structured, but also about how theories and knowledge come into being and what forces (political, economical, cultural, etc.) play a role in these processes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, you will:

- 1) be familiar with some important meta-theoretical and methodological issues in IR theory, such as the so-called “four debates” in the development of the discipline or the concept of “levels of analysis”;
- 2) know and be able to assess critically at least four “rationalist” IR traditions, and be able to compare and contrast their worldviews and predictions;
- 3) know and be able to assess critically at least four “reflexivist” IR traditions, and be able to compare and contrast their explanations for the origins of theories, knowledge and norms;
- 4) be able to apply IR theories to explain specific phenomena in world politics, and assess their strengths and limitations in this;
- 5) be able to articulate clearly and rigorously complex arguments on these themes, both orally and in writing.

ONLINE COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is structured in 14 weekly modules, whose exact focus and content is detailed in the final section of the syllabus. The standard structure of each module includes the following:

- a) An **asynchronous** component – i.e. material that is made available online on Blackboard and that can be accessed by the students at any time after posting. This includes:

- a. One short weekly lecture by the instructor, consisting of an audio file that presents the topic of the module with specific reference to the essential reading. The online lectures are typically made available on Mondays for the following Thursdays;
 - b. A set of weekly essential readings, typically consisting of one chapter from the manual and some selected readings from relevant authors (see below);
 - c. A series of short student presentations that apply some themes and analytical suggestions from each theoretical tradition to the analysis of the ongoing COVID pandemic.
- b) A **synchronous** component – i.e. learning and assessment opportunities that require the participation of the entire class within a set timeframe – consisting in a weekly seminar on Zoom. Each seminar will take place at the allotted time slot on **Thursdays** (covering the material that has been uploaded the previous week) and will focus on:
- i. Reviewing the theoretical approaches / debates related of the themes presented in that module;
 - ii. Discuss them with reference to specific examples and case studies.

You must register as soon as possible on the **Blackboard portal** of the course, in which you will find:

- A pdf copy of this syllabus
- Access to the weekly online lectures (typically uploaded on Mondays for the following Thursdays)
- Access to the readings
- Links to the Zoom meetings and other relevant information about accessing the seminars

Blackboard will also be used to deliver any urgent or non-urgent notice to the class. Even if these notices are normally also forwarded to your email address, it is possible that you do not receive some of these (for instance if they go to your “spam” folder) so **you must check the Blackboard portal at least weekly to keep yourself updated.**

ASSESSMENT

Components:

Short reaction papers	25% (2.5% x 10 submissions)
Presentation	10%
Two open exams	30% (15% each)
Research paper	35% (30% paper + 5% outline)

Short reaction papers: starting from week 2, students are expected to read the relevant material before each seminar. In so doing, each week they should select and answer TWO (of their choice) of the guidance questions (“questions to keep in mind”) presented in the manual at the beginning of the readings in the “reader” section. Each answer should be between 100 and 300 words, and should be uploaded on Turnitin by the beginning of the relevant seminar (i.e., typically, by 5pm on Thursdays). Each weekly submission, submitted on time according to the criteria above, will contribute 2.5% to the final grade for the course.

Presentation: each student will be required to select a topic for a presentation. The presentation tasks will typically consist in questions designed to apply relevant theoretical approaches to the analysis of the ongoing COVID pandemic.

The presentations will be due on the Monday after the relevant Zoom seminar, and should take the form of a recorded audio or video file to be shared with the class and the instructor. The duration of the presentation should be between 5 and 10 minutes.

Open exams: two take-home exams are planned as part of the course. They will consist in a series of open questions about the topics covered in each half of the course. The first exam will take place in the week starting on Sunday 21 March (exact date TBC); the second exam will take place in the exam week in May (exact date TBC).

Research paper: you will be required to submit a research paper on Sunday 2 May. The paper must focus on a specific issue in world politics and approach it with reference to at least three IR traditions (including at least ONE ontological and ONE reflexivist approach).

The paper must be between 2,500 and 3,000-words long.

You are invited to discuss your theme and ideas with the instructor in advance. You will also be required to deliver a very short presentation on your theme and research question in class in module 9 (Thursday 1 April). Throughout the writing process you can ask for help and advice from the instructor.

Also, you **MUST** submit by 5 April an **outline** of your paper which should briefly introduce: a) the theme/topic of the paper; b) its main research question; c) an indication of the IR traditions that will be used, and the reasons for this choice; d) a provisional bibliography. The outline must be between 500- and 1000-words long. These outlines will count towards the final mark (5%), and the instructor will provide some brief feedback.

The references must include at least 9 academic references (journal articles, chapters in edited books, academic books, etc.). Essential readings listed in the reading list below can be cited and used, but do not count towards the 9 references.

The penalty for the late submission of the paper is 5 per cent per day, including weekends. Late outlines will not be accepted (i.e. students will lose the all the marks assigned for the outline) unless the student provides a valid and written justification for the delay.

The first page of each paper must include the student's name and ID number, and the essay body must be 12-point font, double-spaced and include page numbers.

The essay must also include a bibliography and acknowledge sources appropriately. Any academic referencing style is acceptable provided that it is used consistently throughout the paper. Useful information on some widely used referencing styles can be found at:

<http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>

Grade scale:

<i>Letter grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Letter grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	93+	B-	80-82
A-	90-92	C+	77-79
B+	87-89	C	70-76
B	83-86	F	Below 70

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND BEHAVIOR IN CLASS

No attendance mark is assigned in this course, but attendance in the weekly Zoom seminar is required.

The following policies will be adhered to:

- Students are expected to attend the weekly Zoom seminars (including, if needed, rescheduled ones taking place in days other Thursdays) AND show knowledge of – and engagement with – the essential readings, that should be read before the relevant class. Students who attend the seminars but have not done the relevant readings or are busy in other activities (for instance by making repeated use of their mobile devices during the session) may be considered as absent.
- Students unable to attend the seminars for justifiable reasons should contact the instructor before the seminar time. These include:
 - o Serious and documented family or health emergencies

- Documented participation in university activities that require your physical presence.
- Problems with internet access – to be notified to the instructor within 30’ from the beginning of the relevant seminar. The instructor will accept such justifications up to 3 times overall across the course; if you have a recurrent problem with internet access, please discuss it with the instructor and/or contact the relevant IT services at AUC for assistance.
- Students who, without a valid justification, join the seminar more than 10’ late or leave more than 10’ early or leave the teaching room repeatedly during the session will be considered as absent.
- Absence in at least **FOUR** Zoom seminars will activate the procedures discussed in the AUC Catalog on attendance, giving the instructor the right to assign an F grade based on non-attendance alone. The late-drop policy outlined in the AUC Catalog also applies.

OTHER SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS RELATED TO ONLINE TEACHING

Zoom sessions / netiquette

- The sessions on Zoom are NOT recorded by the instructor. Students should also refrain from recording the sessions unless explicit assent is given by ALL the attendees.
- It is normally expected that all attendees will participate with their cameras on during the session. Microphones should instead normally be muted unless an attendee is actively participating in an exchange (e.g. asking a question etc.)
- The Zoom chat window should not be used unless strictly necessary (e.g. for sharing a specific resource or link during the seminar).

Student-faculty communication procedures

- Office hours will be conducted via Zoom. In the event that the student has another course scheduled during the scheduled office hours, another meeting time can be requested, but this needs to be set and agreed upon by both parties at least 1-2 working days in advance.
- During the Sunday-Thursday work week, student emails and queries will generally be answered within 24 hours. During weekends students can expect a typical response time of 48 hours. Email correspondence that is professional, considerate and well written will lead to more effective communication and clearer answers. Please take the time to formulate and proofread well thought-out emails. Clearly stated questions will be answered within 1-2 working days. Students should look for answers to their questions in the syllabus and on Blackboard before emailing using their AUC email accounts.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Teaching is based on a relation of mutual trust between the teacher and the students. As a teacher I take my academic responsibilities very seriously and I expect all my students to do the same. I expect all students to be familiar with the AUC code of practice on academic integrity which is available at:

<https://www.aucegypt.edu/academics/academic-integrity>

Please pay particular attention to the regulations on plagiarism, collaborative work and falsification of signatures.

The assignments will be checked through **Turnitin**. Students will be allowed to self-check for plagiarism early drafts of their work and only the final submission will be checked by the instructor. All breaches of the code of practice will be acted upon promptly and firmly, resulting at least in zero marks for the relevant piece of assessment and possibly in further action being taken by the instructor. If in doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to contact the instructor.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND INTELLECTUAL INTERACTION

In this course you will deal with a number of topics that are often controversial. You are free to offer the class any disagreement you may have with the readings or lecture. You will **NOT** be penalised for disagreeing with other students, the readings or the instructor, but your perspective must be based on documentable evidence from the course or other readings. Freedom of speech and ideas is a basic principle of academic life (and of universal human rights) and every student will have a chance to express her/his opinion as long as it is voiced in a respectful manner. However, varied points of view must be expressed in a manner that is sensitive to differences in abilities, ethnicity, religion, gender and lifestyle, and should not be expressed so as to be perceived as a personal attack. In short, respect for others' differences is one of the most important prerequisites for us working together in this course.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you believe you have a disability that impacts on your study, or have a documented disability that requires modified instructional procedures, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. The instructor is happy to hear from you even if you do not have a formal proof of your disability; however, you may be asked to provide a note from the AUC Disability Services (<https://www.aucegypt.edu/student/well-being/disability-services>) when your condition requires substantial adjustments (e.g. to the structure of the exams etc.).

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Introduction
2. Thinking about IR theory
3. Realism (I): origins and assumptions
4. Realism (II): theoretical diversity and implications
5. Liberalism (I): origins and assumptions
6. Liberalism (II): neo-liberal institutionalism and the “neo-neo-synthesis”
7. Economic structuralism
8. The English School
9. *Student paper presentations*
10. Social constructivism
11. Critical theory and post-modernism
12. Feminist IR theory
13. Normative IR theory
14. Conclusion

COURSE READINGS

The course and its individual modules have been structured around the content of the following manual:

Viotti, P. – Kauppi, M. (2012) *International Relations Theory* (Pearson, 5th International Edition) – “VK” in the list below

For each individual module, you will be **REQUIRED** to read, in preparation for the seminar session:

- A section of the manual, as specified below;
- A selection of readings from relevant authors, also provided in VK, as specified below.

At the end of each thematic section, the manual also includes a detailed bibliography for further readings. Students are encouraged to consult this list if they wish to delve more into any relevant topic, for instance when researching and writing the research paper. The instructor is also available to provide personalized guidance.

1 – Introduction

No readings

2 – Thinking about IR theory

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 1 “Thinking About IR Theory,” 1-18.

Reader

Rosenau, J. “Thinking Theory Thoroughly,” 19-26.

3 – Realism (I): origins and assumptions

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 2 “Realism: The State and Balance of Power”, pp. 39-54 [until section on “Power” included]

Reader

Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,” 83-87.

Machiavelli, N. “On Princes and the Security of Their States”, 88-89.

Hobbes, T. “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind”, 90-92.

4 – Realism (II): theoretical diversity and implications

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 2 “Realism: The State and Balance of Power”, pp. 54-82.

Reader

Waltz, K. “Explaining War: The Levels of Analysis”, 96-108.

Nye, J.S. “Hard and Soft Power in American Foreign Policy”, 109-116.

5 – Liberalism (I): origins and assumptions

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 3 “Liberalism: Interdependence and Global Governance”, 129-144 [until section on “Interdependence” included] + 154-156 [section on the “Democratic Peace”].

Reader

Brooks, S.G. “Producing Security”, 167-175.

6 – Liberalism (II): neo-liberal institutionalism and the “neo-neo-synthesis”

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 3 “Liberalism: Interdependence and Global Governance”, 144-166 [except for section on the “Democratic Peace”].

Reader

Keohane, R.O. “Beyond the Tragedy of the Commons”, 176-180.

7 – Economic structuralism

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 4 “Economic Structuralism: Global Capitalism and Postcolonialism”, 189-218.

Reader

Hobson, J.A. “The Economic Taproot of Imperialism”, 219-221.

Wallerstein, I. “The Modern World-System as a Capitalist World-Economy”, 227-232.

8 – The English School

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 5 “The English School: International Society and Grotian Rationalism”, 239-253.

Reader

Grotius, H. “The Laws of Nations on War, Peace and Freedom of the Seas”, 254-259.

Bull, H. “Does Order Exist in World Politics?”, 267-269.

9 – Student presentations of research questions and themes for the research paper

No readings

10 – Social constructivism

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 6 “Constructivist Understandings”, 277-301.

Reader

Wendt, A. “Constructing International Politics”, 302-308.

Finnemore, M. “Constructing Norms of International Intervention”, 309-315.

11 – Critical theory and post-modernism

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 7 “Positivism, Critical Theory, and Postmodern Understandings”, 322-338.

Reader

Booth, K. “Critical Explorations and the Highway of Critical Security Theory”, 339-347.

Campbell, D. “Writing Security”, 348-354.

12 – Feminist IR theory

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 8 “Feminist Understandings of IR Theory”, 360-370.

Reader

Young, I.M. “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State”, 371-379.

Tickner, J.A. “Why Women Can’t Rule the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama”, 380-385.

13 – Normative IR theory

Manual reading

VK, Chapter 9 “Normative IR Theory: Ethics and Morality”, 391-414.

Reader

Kant, I. “Morality, Politics, and Perpetual Peace”, 415-420.

Rawls, J. “The Law of Peoples”, 425-429.

Obama, M. “On War and Peace – The Nobel Peace Prize Speech”, 430-435.

14 – Conclusion

No readings

OTHER RESOURCES

The main scholarly journals in the field of international relations theory include the *Review of International Studies*, *Millennium*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Organization*, and the *European Journal of International Relations*.

Students are encouraged to become familiar with these journals especially to understand the characteristics of a “good” academic paper in this discipline, but should by all means extend their bibliographic search to other academic journals listed in the AUC e-journal search engine on the basis of their own personal interests. Feel free to contact the course instructor if you require personalized guidance.