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## American Public University System

*The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind*

### **School of Security and Global Studies IRLS500**

### **International Relations Theory Credit Hours: 3**

**Length of Course: 8 Weeks  
Prerequisite: NSEC500**

#### **Table of Contents**

<a href="#">Instructor Information</a>	<a href="#">Evaluation Procedures</a>
<a href="#">Course Description</a>	<a href="#">Grading Scale</a>
<a href="#">Course Scope</a>	<a href="#">Course Outline</a>
<a href="#">Course Objectives</a>	<a href="#">Policies</a>
<a href="#">Course Delivery Method</a>	<a href="#">Online Library and Turnitin</a>
<a href="#">Course Resources</a>	<a href="#">Selected Bibliography (optional)</a>

#### **Instructor Information**

***Instructor:***

[Table of Contents](#)

## Course Description (Catalog)

This course examines the major approaches, theories, and debates in contemporary international relations theory. It examines the central assumptions of key theoretical approaches, addresses the main paradigmatic debates in the field (with a special emphasis on (neo) Realism and its various critics), and assesses the utility of various theoretical approaches in explaining key issues in the contemporary international system.

[Table of Contents](#)

## Course Scope

As part of the core requirement, this course introduces the student to critical elements of the discipline. Students will participate in weekly Discussion Forums that correlate to weekly readings. Students will write an analytical research paper and will write a comprehensive final assignment.

[Table of Contents](#)

## Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide you with a map to identify the main conceptual features of international relations. It is not a course about current events *per se*, though an effort will be made to integrate contemporary events and issues as a way of illustrating theoretical concepts. Your knowledge of the salient analytical models and debates that comprise the field will be facilitated through exposure to concepts such as power, interests, norms, anarchy, sovereignty, and "globalization." The course intends to serve four principal goals: 1) to develop critical and creative capacities for understanding issues in international relations; 2) to cover the most prevalent theoretical approaches currently used in the study of international relations; 3) to foster skills in formulating, organizing, integrating, and articulating one's ideas; 4) to encourage an informed interest in understanding world affairs.

Specifically, after successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

**CO-1:** Describe the basic theories that explain the interactions among the major actors in the international system, and that form the basis for the discipline of international relations

**CO-2:** Critique the Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, and Critical perspectives of international relations

**CO-3:** Examine the causes of conflict and cooperation in the international system using the three primary levels of analysis

**CO-4:** Assess whether the prevalent theoretical models in the discipline accurately describe and explain current political and economic trends in the international system

**CO-5:** Apply theoretical arguments to contemporary cases of conflict and cooperation in the international system.

These course objectives harmonize with the Degree Program Objectives, which require graduates to:

- Construct and criticize the theory and politics of conflict, war, diplomatic relations, and the evolving nature of the international system.
- Provide students with a research-active teaching environment to provide grounding in the study of international relations including its political, social, and economic aspects.
- Assess how state, non-state, and supra-national actors behave and interact through a dynamic appreciation of different levels of analysis.
- Critique the theories of international relations, the heritage and development of the discipline, its major debates, its inherent nature as an interdisciplinary study, and a critical appreciation of the essentially contested nature of politics in general, and international relations in particular.
- Evaluate the nature and distribution of power in the international systems, the problems of political order and the social economic, historical and cultural context within which international actors operate.
- Assess the current challenges to international order, cooperation, identity, social formations, and global issues, and possible strategies to address them.
- Evaluate the changing role of the state in the context of globalization and regional integration and the implications for international peace and security.
- Conceptualize the different kinds of actors on the international scene, their respective interests, and their influence across a range of issues.

[Table of Contents](#)

**Course Delivery Method**

This course, delivered via distance learning, will enable students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system will be available to each student. Online assignments are due by Sunday at 11:55 pm ET and include all written assignments, examinations, and research papers submitted for grading. Weekly Forum questions (accomplished in groups in a Forum) require an initial response by Thursday at 11:55 pm ET, with all other required responses due by Sunday at 11:55 pm ET. The assigned faculty will support the students throughout this eight-week course.

[Table of Contents](#)

## Course Resources

### Required Course Textbooks

The **required** text for this course is:

There is no required text for this course.

### Required Readings

Links to the required readings are provided in the weekly announcements and in the lesson notes for each week.

**Additional Resources and Web Sites are found in the classroom.**

[Table of Contents](#)

## **Evaluation Procedures**

The course grade is based on the following assessments:

### **Discussion Forums – 15 percent**

Each week, a discussion question is provided and posts should reflect an assimilation of the readings. Students are required to provide a substantive initial post by Thursday at 11:55 pm ET and respond to two or more classmates by Sunday 11:55 pm ET. Forum posts are graded on timeliness, relevance, knowledge of the weekly readings, and the quality of original ideas and writing.

### **Research Proposal: Research Question 20 percent**

This is the first installment of a three-part assignment. In this preliminary assignment you will present a research proposal for this research paper. The proposal will consist of:

1. A brief description of the specific case-study
2. A clear and concise research question

### **Literature Review – 40 percent**

This is a literature review on the chosen topic. This assignment helps students complete the research paper.

### **Final Assignment – 25 percent**

This assignment is a take-home essay assignment to test knowledge and assimilation of the course learning objectives. The exclusive use of required texts and readings is mandatory. No outside sources are allowed. The assignment should be no more and no fewer than eight pages.

Assignments	Percentage
Research Question Forum Discussion Posts Literature Review Final Assignment	20 percent 15 percent 40 percent 25 percent
TOTAL	100 percent

[Table of Contents](#)

## 8 – Week Course Outline

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference the University's [grading scale](#).

<b><u>Week</u></b>	<b><u>Topic</u></b>	<b><u>Course Objective(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Readings</u></b>	<b><u>Assignments</u></b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Theories, Paradigms, and Levels of Analysis</b>	<b>CO-1:</b> Describe the primary theories that explain the interactions among the major actors in the international system, and that form the basis for the discipline of international relations	Walt (2005) Singer (1961)  Sagan (1996/1997)  Christensen and Raynor (2003)	Introductory Forum  Week One Forum Discussion

2	<b>Systemic theories: Neorealism, Neoliberalism, Constructivism</b>	<b>CO-1:</b> Describe the primary theories that explain the interactions among the major actors in the international system, and that form the basis for the discipline of international relations <b>CO-2:</b> Critique the Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, and Critical (Feminist, Post-structural and Marxist) perspectives of international relations	Frankel (1996) Keohane (2012) Jervis (1999) Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) Wendt (1992)	Week Two Forum Discussion  Research Question Assignment
3	<b>The Unit-Level: Neo-Classical Realism, Liberalism, and Culture/Identity</b>	<b>CO-1:</b> Describe the primary theories that explain the interactions among the major actors in the international system, and that form the basis for the	Rose (1998) Kier (1996) Doyle (1986) Putnam (1988)	Week Three Forum Discussion



		<p>discipline of international relations</p> <p><b>CO-2:</b> Critique the Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, and Critical (Feminist, Post-structural and Marxist) perspectives of international relations</p>		
<b>4</b>	<b>The Individual Level: Policymakers and their environment</b>	<p><b>CO-1:</b> Describe the primary theories that explain the interactions among the major actors in the international system, and that form the basis for the discipline of international relations</p>	<p>Byman and Pollack (2001)</p> <p>Jervis (1968)</p> <p>Smith (1985)</p>	<p>Week Four Forum Discussion</p>

5	<b>Alternative Approaches: Feminism, (neo) Marxism, and Critical Theory</b>	<b>CO-1:</b> Describe the primary theories that explain the interactions among the major actors in the international system, and that form the basis for the discipline of international relations <b>CO-2:</b> Critique the Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, and Critical (Feminist, Post-structural and Marxist) perspectives of international relations	Tickner (1997) Sjobjerg (2006) Hobson and Sharman (2005) Kratochwil (2006)	Week Five Forum Discussion
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6	<b>Explaining War and Violent Conflict</b>	<p><b>CO-3:</b> Examine the causes of conflict and cooperation in the international system using the three primary levels of analysis</p> <p><b>CO-5:</b> Apply theoretical arguments to contemporary cases of conflict and cooperation in the international system.</p>	<p>Caprioli and Boyer (2001)</p> <p>Levy (1998)</p> <p>Fearon (1995)</p> <p>Van Evera (1998)</p> <p>Gilpin (1988)</p>	<p>Week Six Forum Discussion</p> <p>Literature Review</p>
7	<b>International Political Economy: Between Conflict and Cooperation</b>	<p><b>CO-3:</b> Examine the causes of conflict and cooperation in the international system using the three primary levels of analysis</p> <p><b>CO-5:</b> Apply theoretical arguments to contemporary cases of conflict and cooperation in the international system.</p>	<p>Krasner (1976)</p> <p>Gowa and Mansfield (1993)</p> <p>Mansfield, Milner and Rosendorff (2002)</p> <p>Easterly and Levine (1997)</p>	<p>Week Seven Forum Discussion</p>
8	<b>The Future of IR (Theory):</b>	<p><b>CO-4:</b> Assess whether the prevalent</p>	<p>Mendelsohn (2009)</p>	<p>Week Eight Forum</p>

	<b>Globalization, Cooperation, and the Westphalian Order</b>	theoretical models in the discipline accurately describe and explain current political and economic trends in the international system <b>CO-5:</b> Apply theoretical arguments to contemporary cases of conflict and cooperation in the international system.	Cao (2012) Keohane and Victor (2011)	Discussion Final Assignment Due
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## **Policies**

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference all University policies. Quick links to frequently asked question about policies are listed below.

[Drop/Withdrawal Policy](#)

[Plagiarism Policy](#)

[Extension Process and Policy](#)

[Disability Accommodations](#)

### **Citation and Reference Style**

Attention Please: Students will follow the Turabian/Chicago Style as the sole citation and reference style used in written work submitted as part of coursework to the University.

See <http://www.apus.edu/Online-Library/tutorials/chicago.htm>. All written submissions should be submitted in Times New Roman 12pt font with 1" margins, typewritten in double-spaced format. Graduate-level work is expected to be free of grammar, usage, and style errors.

### **Late Assignments**

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, I understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment, please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution. Routine submission of late assignments is unacceptable and may result in points deducted from your final course grade.

### **Netiquette**

Online universities promote the advancement of knowledge through positive and constructive debate – both inside and outside the classroom. Forums on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting – basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the rewards and excitement of learning which does not include descent to personal attacks or student attempts to stifle the Forum of others.

- **Technology Limitations:** While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The Sakai classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.
- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and especially satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add "emoticons" to help alert your readers: ;-), : ), ☺

[Table of Contents](#)

## Online Library

The Online Library is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Online Library provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to [librarian@apus.edu](mailto:librarian@apus.edu).

- **Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors' publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.
- **Tutor.com:** AMU and APU Civilian & Coast Guard students are eligible for 10 free hours of tutoring provided by APUS. Tutor.com connects you with a professional tutor online 24/7 to provide help with assignments, studying, test prep, resume writing, and more. Tutor.com is tutoring the way it was meant to be. You get expert tutoring whenever you need help, and you work one-to-one with your tutor in your online classroom on your specific problem until it is done.

**Request a Library Guide for your course**  
 (<http://apus.libguides.com/index.php>)

The AMU/APU Library Guides provide access to collections of trusted sites on the Open Web and licensed resources on the Deep Web. The following are specially tailored for academic research at APUS:

- Program Portals contain topical and methodological resources to help launch general research in the degree program. To locate, search by department name, or navigate by school.
- Course Lib-Guides narrow the focus to relevant resources for the corresponding course. To locate, search by class code (e.g., SOCI111), or class name.

If a guide you need is not available yet, please email the APUS Library: [librarian@apus.edu](mailto:librarian@apus.edu).

### **Turnitin.com**

Faculty require assignments be submitted to Turnitin.com. Turnitin.com will analyze a paper and report instances of potential plagiarism for the student to edit before submitting it for a grade. The instructor will post information in the classroom on student procedures.