

## **POLS 3370-900: Theories of International Relations**

Texas A&M University – San Antonio  
Fall 2025

Time: 9:30 – 10:45am, Thursdays  
Location: Madla 209

Instructor:  
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The discipline of international relations is a relatively young academic subject, only emerging as a distinct field within political science in the aftermath of World War I. To differentiate itself from the disciplines of international law and history, its intellectual predecessors, international relations has developed a number of theories addressing the nature of international politics and its constituent parts, which seek to explain, understand, judge and even predict international behavior. These theories are heavily indebted to previously established traditions in political philosophy and social theory and the ways in which they conceive of the nature of the state, history, social scientific explanation, and the relationship between politics and morality.

The course is designed to introduce students to the major theoretical and conceptual traditions of international relations as a way to make sense of the complex issues, developments and events constituting relationships amongst international state and non-state actors. The key objective of the course is to introduce students to the most significant orthodox and critical theoretical approaches within international relations. A critical assessment will be made of the principal propositions and arguments of the theories drawn from the diverse traditions of classical realism, neo-realism, neoliberalism, constructivism, poststructuralism, feminism and gender, neo-Marxism and postcolonialism.

### **Virtual Office Hours:**

Time: Tue/Thu 11 am - 12 pm or by appointment.

[Schedule Office Hours meeting](#)

I will be holding office hours via Microsoft Teams every Tuesday and Thursday from 11 am to 12 pm. You are highly encouraged to make use of my office hours throughout the semester to discuss any ideas you have – big or small – pertaining to this course or your general course of study. If you cannot make the designated time, please do not hesitate to email me to set up an appointment. Click the link above to schedule a meeting.

### **Class Resources:**

- [GroupMe](#): Everyone in the class is welcome to join the GroupMe chat for informal discussion, asking questions, and/or general ranting about the course. I will be in the chat to answer any questions that come up about course materials or assignments. Since this is an online course and we do not have the benefit of in-class discussion, this is a great place to ‘think out loud’ and get feedback. This has been a great resource and I highly encourage everyone to join.

## **Grading**

Your grade for this course will be based on the following: Critical Reflections (30%), weekly Writing Assignments (30%), a midterm paper (20%), and a term paper (20%). Submissions with vague and generic language that omit the specific issues/questions raised in the assignment prompt will get a maximum grade of 49%. To receive full credit for the course, your participation must be made and your work submitted by the stated deadlines. No late submissions will be accepted for the Midterm and Final Papers; late work will be accepted for all other assignments, with 5% being taken off for each day passed the assignment deadline. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.

Grade breakdown:

30% Critical Reflections

30% Writing Assignments

20% Midterm Paper

20% Term Paper

## **Course Requirements**

- **BlackBoard:** I will use BlackBoard for class announcements and course updates; students are expected to check BlackBoard and their A&M-SA email regularly. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they have regular BlackBoard and email access.
- **Attendance:** "Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities for all of the classes for which they are registered" ([A&M-SA attendance policy](#)). You will need paper and pen for each class meeting. No headphones are permitted to be worn during class.
- **Readings:** All assigned materials are required reading and integral to your success in this course. Details and nuance matter in political theory, and the details are found in the text.
- **Writing Assignments:** Posted on BlackBoard and due each Sunday no later than 11:59 pm. Writing Assignments should be well-organized around a clear thesis, coherent structure, and well-developed arguments. They require the use of textual evidence to support your assertions, including proper citations, and a minimum of 750 words to be considered for full credit. Take time to carefully consider your responses, address all issues raised in the assignment prompt, and proofread each submission. Writing Assignments will be graded in accordance with the rubric posted on BlackBoard.
- **Critical Reflections:** Critical Reflection assignments are posted at the beginning of the week and due on the date assigned in the syllabus (no later than 11:59 pm). Critical Reflections must follow the provided guidelines and be at least 500 words to be considered for full credit. Guidelines for Critical Reflection submissions can be found in the "Syllabus" folder in BlackBoard. Critical Reflections will be graded in accordance with the rubric posted on BlackBoard.
- **Midterm Paper:** Midterm paper assignment will be issued approximately two weeks before the due date. The assignment will be a reflection and critical engagement piece, responding to questions raised by texts we have read so far.
- **Term Paper:** Term paper assignment will be issued approximately two weeks before the due date. The assignment will be a reflection and critical engagement piece, responding to questions raised by texts we have read after the midterm.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- analyze and evaluate foundational texts in International Relations theory, identify central arguments and underlying assumptions, and assess their relevance to contemporary political and ethical issues (Critical Thinking).
- effectively communicate complex interpretations of IR theory in clear, well-organized writing that uses appropriate academic conventions and textual evidence from primary sources (Effective Communication).
- articulate how IR theories relate to their own beliefs, ethical frameworks, and decision-making processes as a member of a political community (Personal Responsibility).
- demonstrate an understanding of how global power structures, international institutions, and ideological frameworks shape issues of justice, equity, and responsibility across borders, and critically assess their implications for ethical global citizenship (Social Responsibility).

## **Course Materials**

Acquire your books **early** in the semester. If you prefer a physical copy, students with access to a credit/debit card can also obtain these books at on-line merchants (e.g. amazon.com, bn.com, half.com, powells.com, abe.com). I suggest buying used, if available, for a lower priced text.

## **Required Books:**

*Theories of International Relations* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition) (2022). Richard Devetak & Jacqui True (Eds.). Red Globe Press. ISBN-13: 978-1352012149

## **Course Schedule and Readings**

Each week, your assignments will be posted in the “Course Content” folder on the BlackBoard menu. Classes begin August 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Week 1 (August 25 – 31): What is Theory and How Do We Theorize?**

- Thoroughly read the syllabus and familiarize yourself with the course in BlackBoard.
- Thoroughly read the Critical Reflection Guidelines
- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 1: Introduction

### **Week 2 (September 1 – 7): Defining Realism in International Relations**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 2: Realism
- Critical Reflection #1: Due Sunday, September 7

### **Week 3 (September 8 – 14): Liberalism and a Theory of Perpetual Peace**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 3: Liberalism
  - Immanuel Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace” (handout)
  - Robert Keohane, “The Demand for International Regimes” (handout)
- Writing Assignment #1: Due Sunday, September 14

#### **Week 4 (September 15 – 21): Postcolonialism in IR**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 4: Postcolonialism
- Critical Reflection #2: Due Sunday, September 21

#### **Week 5 (September 22 – 28): Postcolonialism on the Violence of Knowledge**

- Reading assignment:
  - Sanjay Seth, “Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations” (handout)
  - Edward Said, “Permission to Narrate” (handout).
- Writing Assignment #2: Due Sunday, Sep 28

#### **Week 6 (September 29 – October 5): The English School of Liberal Realism**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 5: The English School
- Critical Reflection #3: Due Sunday, October 5

#### **Week 7 (October 6 – 12): Historical Materialism and Class Relations in IR**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 6: Marxism
  - Alan Woods, “Introduction” to Lenin’s “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”
  - [optional] V.I. Lenin, “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism” (handout)

#### **Week 8 (October 13 – 19): Rethinking Political Community**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 7: Critical Theory
- **MIDTERM PAPER DUE Sunday, October 19**

#### **Week 9 (October 20 – 26): Gender Bias in IR Concepts**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 8: Feminism(s)
- Writing Assignment #3: Due Sunday, October 26

#### **Week 10 (October 27 – November 2): Discursive Power in International Relations**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 9: Post-Structuralism
- Critical Reflection #4: Due Sunday, November 2

#### **Week 11 (November 3 – 9): Constructivism in International Relations**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 10: Constructivism
  - Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It” (handout).
- Writing Assignment #4: Due Sunday, November 9

#### **Week 12 (November 10 – 16): On the Uses of Institutionalisms**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 11: Institutionalism
- Critical Reflection #5: Due Sunday, November 16

**Week 13 (November 17 – 23): Theorizing the Anthropocene: The Environment and IR**

- Reading assignment:
  - *Theories of International Relations*, Chapter 12: Green Theory
- Writing Assignment #5: Due Sunday, November 23

**Week 14 (November 24 – 30): NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

- Reading assignment: None
- Writing Assignment: None
- Final Paper assignment prompt available

**Week 15 (December 1 – 7): Last Week of Class/ Review**

- Reading assignment: none.
- Work on Final Paper

**Week 16 (December 8 – 14): NO CLASS/Finals Week**

- Reading assignment: None
- Work on Final Paper

**FINAL PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 10<sup>th</sup> @ 11:59 pm.**