Overview

Through multiple disciplinary perspectives, this course explores three broad processes - governance, identity, and war – that shape much of contemporary international studies. How does governance work at the global level and, in particular, what role do institutions play? Are international organizations (sometimes) a force for good, or (mostly) ineffectual ‘talk shops’? We see an ever-growing amount of international human-rights lawmaking, yet horrific abuses of such rights continue. Why?

Regarding identity, you and I have one. States have identities. Regions have identities. Identities establish boundaries and markers (‘this is who we are!’), and create senses of shared community. But how does identity matter in international studies? When does it lead to violence – genocide or ethnic conflict, say? When is it benign? Why has it become commonplace to talk of a European identity, while you, as Canadians, would likely be shocked to hear of your ‘North American identity’?

Finally, international wars – that is, a war between two states – seem to be a relic of the past. Yet, sadly, organized violence persists; however, it is now most often an instance of civil war. How do we explain the origins and duration of such wars? Why do civil wars vary so markedly in the degree and type of violence they employ? Why do some rebel groups engage in horrific acts of sexual violence while others do not? What – if anything - can the international community do to mitigate the worst effects of such conflicts?

We will explore these issues through a careful reading of major works by political scientists, economists, sociologists, and institutional theorists, among others. These will be supplemented with articles and chapters that provide critical context and background.

Objectives

Consistent with the School’s mission as an inter-disciplinary social-science research unit, the course will provide students with multiple tools – drawn from different disciplines – to make better sense of contemporary international studies. Students will finish with the following knowledge and skills.

- A basic understanding of governance, identity and conflict within the international system.
- An ability to understand and assess social science research analysing key features of contemporary governance and conflict.
- A critical sense of how inter-disciplinarity works in practice.

Teaching Schedule & Method
There will be 11 class sessions, each lasting 3 hours and 50 minutes. Classes will be a combination of lecture and seminar. The latter will involve discussion and debate on a particular assigned reading or questions.

Requirements

There are three requirements.

- **In-Class Mid-Term Exam** – To be held on 12 February. This will consist of both short answer and essay questions, and be approximately 120 minutes / 2 hours in duration.
- **Take-Home Final Exam** – Distributed during our last class, on Tuesday, 26 March, and due on Friday, 5 April by 1600. It will be an essay exam, covering the entire course, and with an expected length of 12-15 pages. It will be graded on both substance (knowledge of course material) and style (grammar, use of English).
- **Participation** - In seminar discussion/debates.

Final course grades will be calculated as follows: Mid-Term Exam – 30%; Take-Home Final Exam – 50%; Participation – 20%.

Reading

The following 4 books (all in paperback) should be purchased at the SFU Book Store at Harbour Centre.


All other required reading will be available via SFU’s Custom Courseware or on reserve at the library. Course reading averages 130 pages per class.

Grading

Grades in the A range are reserved for exceptional performance. And the latter means the writing and grammar will be superior (no typos, no awkward constructions, no page-long paragraphs) and students will show a mastery of the relevant course material. Grades in the C range will be awarded for average efforts, where the writing is sloppy and engagement with course material is minimal. Grades of D and F are reserved for poor performance – that is, spotty class attendance, little or no engagement with assigned readings, and weak writing.
Policy on Make-Ups and Late Submissions

- Mid-term Exam – No make-up exam will be offered. The only exception is in the case of a documented medical or family emergency.
- Take-Home Final Exam – It is due on the day and time indicated above; late exams will not be accepted. The only exception is in the case of a documented medical or family emergency.

Academic Integrity

All students taking courses in International Studies are expected to read and understand the university’s policies with regard to academic dishonesty (S10.01 - S10.03). Forms of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to the following.

- Submitting all or a portion of the same work for credit in more than one course.
- Representing another person’s work as your own for course assignments.
- Failure to acknowledge sources of facts, information, analyses, interpretations, and arguments that you incorporate in your work, whether from a source that is written, spoken, or on the internet, and whether or not it is published or unpublished. Appropriate documentation of your sources is necessary when you quote, paraphrase or incorporate information and ideas generated by others.

In addition, all students in IS classes are expected to read the SFU Library lesson on “Avoiding Plagiarism” and take the interactive “Plagiarism Tutorial.”

Plan of Lectures / Course Organization

Part I: Global Governance – Institutions Matter

January 8 - Lecture: Institutions and Global Governance – Perspectives from Economics and Sociology

Reading: Keohane (1984; chs.1, 5-6); Johnston (2001)

Seminar Discussion: ‘International institutions matter.’ Discuss.

January 15 - Lecture: The Power – or is that Pathologies? – of International Institutions

Reading: Barnett and Finnemore (2004; chs.1-2, 5-6)

Seminar Discussion: International institutions are increasingly important actors in world politics. But are they legitimate actors? How would we know and why should we care?

January 22 - Lecture: The Power (?) of International Human Rights I – Insights from International Law and Political Science

Reading: Simmons (2009; chs.1-4, 6)
Seminar Discussion: Simmons’ book has won many awards. Why? From a social-science perspective, is there something particularly notable about her findings, research design or methods?

**January 29: The Power (?) of International Human Rights II – Insights from Sociology**

Reading: Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999; ch.1); Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (2013; chs.1, 4, 8-9).

Seminar Discussion: ‘Human rights institutions and treaties are a dime a dozen, but when push comes to shove, they matter not at all. Think of North Korea (forced labour), Saudi Arabia (dissidents and the right to life), Guantanamo Bay (torture), and China (thousands of executions).’ Discuss.

**Part II: Identity and the International**

**February 5 - Lecture: Identity and Great Powers**

Reading: Hopf (2002; chs.1-3)

Seminar Discussion: ‘Identity makes the world go round.’ Discuss.

**February 12 - Mid-Term Exam**

**February 19 – No Class (Reading Week)**

**February 26 - Lecture: Identity and Regions – The (Special?) Case of Europe**

Reading: Fligstein (2009; chs.1, 2, 5); Acharya (2009; ch.1).

Seminar Discussion: Who are ‘the Europeans’? And where are ‘the Asians’?

**March 5 - Lecture: Constructing Regional Identities – From the Top-Down (Institutional Theory, Political Science), the Bottom-Up (Sociology, Anthropology), or ... ?!**

Reading: Risse (2010; chs.5, 7); Checkel and Katzenstein (2009; chs.1, 7)

Seminar Discussion: ‘It’s a no-brainer. We need to integrate insights from multiple disciplines to capture fully the dynamics of identity construction. Aah, sure ... but this is easier said than done.’ Discuss.

**Part III: War – From International to Civil**

**March 12 - Lecture: War in the World Today; Civil War – (Differing!) Insights from Political Economy, Political Science and Sociology**

Reading: Human Security Report 2009/2010 (2011; chs. 1, 2, 4); Blattman and Miguel (2010); Tarrow (2007); Wood (2008)
Seminar Discussion: Why do the degree and type of violence in civil war vary so dramatically?

**March 19 - Lecture: Civil War – Why Rebel?**

Reading: Weinstein (2007; Introduction, ch.1); Wood (2003; chs.1-2, 8)

Seminar Discussion: What motivates rebellion, and why do different disciplines answer this question in different ways?

**March 26 - Lecture: Civil War – International and Transnational Contexts**

Reading: Autesserre (2009); Gleditsch and Salehian (2006); Checkel (2013); Bakke (2013)

Seminar Discussion: ‘Civil wars are rarely pure domestic affairs.’ Discuss.

**April 2 – No Class**

**Reading - Bibliography**


