IS 451 – Seminar on Core Texts in International Studies: Governance, Identity and War (Spring Term 2013)

Simon Fraser University
School for International Studies
Mondays, 0930 - 1320

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Overview

This course brings together different disciplinary perspectives on international affairs through the study of influential texts that address core themes at the School, focusing – this term – on governance, identity, and war. 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 conflict and violence? 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? 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 contemporary works by political scientists, economists, sociologists, and institutional theorists, among others. These works will be supplemented with articles and chapters that provide critical context and background.

Objectives

The course will help students to: understand major concepts and approaches in international studies, and to do so from multiple disciplinary perspectives; sharpen critical reading and thinking abilities; and develop analytic writing skills.

Teaching Schedule & Method

There will be 12 class sessions, each lasting 3 hours and 50 minutes. The first class is Monday, 7 January 2013, and the last is Monday, 8 April 2013. Classes will be a combination of lecture and seminar. The latter will involve discussion and debate on a particular assigned reading or questions, where students take the lead. You must come ready to participate.

Requirements

There are three requirements.
In-Class Mid-Term Exam – Monday, 18 February. This will consist of both short answer and essay questions.

Take-Home Final Exam – Distributed on Monday, 8 April in class, and due one week later, Monday, 15 April by 1600. It will be an essay exam, covering the entire course, and with an expected length of 15-20 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 5 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 155 pages per week. It is not easy literature; rather, it is the kind of social-science reading one should expect in a 400-level course. Students are required to have done the reading for any given week prior to lecture.

Grading

Grades in the A range are reserved for truly 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. Bottom Line: Exceptional performance will be rewarded, while poor performance will be punished.

Prerequisites
IS 451 is restricted to International Studies (IS) majors or IS honours students.

**Academic Integrity**

All students taking courses in International Studies are expected to read and understand the university’s policies with regard to academic dishonesty. The School takes this issue very seriously, and expects that you understand the policies, which are available at the following URL.

http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student.html

Forms of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to the following.

- Submitting all of 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. This includes purchasing or representing other students’ papers, in whole or part; or hiring someone to write your paper for you.
- Failure to acknowledge sources of facts, information, analyses, interpretations, and arguments you incorporate in your work, whether the source is written, spoken communication or the internet, and whether it is published or unpublished. Appropriate documentation of your sources is necessary when you quote, paraphrase or incorporate information and ideas generated by others.

Below is a useful link for understanding and avoiding plagiarism.

http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/tutorials/plagiarism-tutorial

**Plan of Lectures / Course Organization**

**Part I: Global Governance – Institutions Matter**

_**January 7 - Lecture:** Introduction to course; 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 14 - Lecture:** The Power – or is that Pathologies? – of International Institutions_

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

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

Reading: Simmons (2009; chs.1-4, 6, 7)

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 28 - Lecture: The Power (?) of International Human Rights II – Insights from Sociology and Political Science**

Reading: Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999; chs.1, 2, 6-8); Hafner-Burton and Ron (2009)

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 Chechnya (the right to life), Guantanamo Bay (torture), and China (thousands upon thousands of executions).’ Discuss.

**Part II: Identity and the International**

**February 4 - Lecture: Identity and Great Powers**

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

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

**February 11 – No Class (Reading Week)**

**February 18 - Mid-Term Exam**

**February 25 - Lecture: Identity and Regions – The (Special?) Case of Europe**

Reading: Fligstein (2009; chs.1, 2, 5, 6, 8); Acharya (2009; chs. 1, 3).

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

**March 4 - 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, 3, 5, 7)

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

**Part III: War – From International to Civil**
March 11 - 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); Wood (2010)

Seminar Discussion: Why do the degree and type of violence in civil war vary so dramatically?

March 18 - Lecture: Civil War – Why Rebel?

Note – This class will likely be rescheduled to Thursday, 14 March. An exact date and time will be provided during the semester’s first two weeks.

Reading: Weinstein (2007; Introduction, ch.1); Wood (2003; chs.1-4, 7-8)

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

March 25 - Lecture: Civil War – International and Transnational Contexts

Reading: Autesserre (2009); Gleditsch and Salehyan (2006); Salehyan (2009; Introduction, ch.1); Checkel (2013); Bakke (2013)

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

April 1 – No Class (Easter Monday)

April 8 – Final Class: Wrap up, Q & A, Distribution of Final Exam

Reading - Bibliography


