Course Description and Objectives:

This course offers a graduate-level introduction to theories of international politics. The class explores a variety of debates and findings in the subfield of international relations. Coverage does not include every issue and approach, but it addresses the core problems and perspectives animating mainstream IR in the United States today. Students can expect to develop a sufficient understanding of the subfield to prepare for further study and specialization, while advancing their knowledge of the substantive issues under consideration.

The course is divided into two parts, though a sustained focus on theories, concepts, and central debates extends throughout the semester. After an introduction to the broader debates and basic epistemological questions, we begin with a critical examination of the leading theoretical paradigms in IR. The remainder of the course is devoted to contemporary applications in various areas of international security and political economy, weighted heavily toward the former. While no explicit policymaking component is offered, students are encouraged to draw connections between the course material and ongoing policy debates in world affairs.

Requirements and Grading:

You are expected to carefully read all assigned material. Beyond that, you are required to attend classes regularly and to participate actively in class discussions. More than three absences will gravely affect your grade. Participation counts for 20% of your grade. You also are required to write four short papers 1500-1700 words each. These short take-home assignments ask you to explain a historical or current IR event or problem with reference to the theories presented in class and in the course readings. Each paper counts for 20% of your grade. Finally, there is a ten page term paper. This will be a theoretically-informed policy memo. You can select an IR problem of your choice and, then, you will propose a solution to the problem using two contending theories to explain an empirical puzzle or problem in international politics. Throughout this exercise you should demonstrate familiarity with concepts,
debates and theories we have covered in this course. Your proposed solution must take into account historical factors, must assess the technical/factual and political nature of the problem, and must grapple with such barriers to your solution as adversaries' policies, and difficulties (and opportunities) suggested by the theories we covered here. This assignment counts for 20% of your grade. Detailed instructions will be distributed in class and the assignment is due on the last class meeting.

**Readings:**

There are a few books and many articles required for this course. The following books are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore. Aside from the books listed above, most of articles are accessible through the Bobst Library Electronic Journals or in a course packet available for purchase. Also, all readings are placed in the Bobst Library Reserve.


**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1: INTRODUCTION TO CLASS AND TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:**


Recommended:


Woodrow Wilson, "The World Must Be Made Safe for Democracy" (Address to Congress Asking for Declaration of War, April 2, 1917.

1. APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Week 2: THE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS PROBLEM IN IR THEORY


**Recommended:**


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**Week 3: CLASSICAL REALISM**


**Recommended:**


Week 4: NEOREALISM AND THE STRUCTURE OF INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM


Recommended:

Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” World Politics Volume 51, Number 1, October 1998: 144-172.

Week 5: LIBERALISM AND NEO-LIBERALISM: INTERDEPENDENCE, REGIMES, & INSTITUTIONS


Recommended:


Week 6: RATIONAL CHOICE AND STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE APPROACHES


Recommended:


**Week 7: CONSTRUCTIVISM, INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW**


**Recommended:**


II. ISSUES AND PROCESSES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Week 8: ANARCHY, ALLIANCES, AND BALANCE OF POWER


Recommended:

On balancing in the current international system read the entire issue of International Security Volume 30, Number 1, Summer 2005.
Glenn H. Snyder, Alliance Politics, Ithaca; Cornell, 1997
Glenn H. Snyder, Alliance Politics, Ithaca; Cornell, 1997

Week 9: CAUSES OF WAR AND PEACE


Recommended:

Steven Brams, Superpower Games. New Haven, CT: Yale Unviversity Press, 1985
Andrew Krepinevich, “From Cavalry to Computer.” The National Interest, Number 37, Fall 1994: 30-42.
R.D. Williams, “Is the West’s Reliance on Technology the Panacea for Future Conflict or its Achilles’ Heel?” Defense Studies Volume 1, Number 2, Summer 2001


William E. David, Environmental Scarcity as a Cause of Violent Conflict. Fort Leavenworth, KS.: Army Command and General Staff College, 1996.

Week 10: PERSPECTIVES ON DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS AND FOREIGN POLICY


Jack Snyder, Myths of Empire, Ithaca: Cornell, 1991. chapters 1, 2, 3, 8. Skim the rest.


Recommended:


**Week 11: NUCLEAR STRATEGY, DETERRENCE, AND PROLIFERATION**


**Recommended:**


**Week 12: TERRORISM AND ASYMMETRIC WARFARE**


Recommended:


**Week 13: INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY**


Recommended:

Week 14: NON-STATE ACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS


**Recommended:**


