



Diablo Valley College – Pleasant Hill Campus – Fall 2024
POLSC 250 – 5330 / International Relations ONLINE / 3 Units

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Instructor: John Kropf – **Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 5:00 to 6:00 pm (Zoom).

Schedule: Wednesdays, **SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE**, 6:00 to 7:00 pm, Aug. 28 – Dec. 11, 2024

Course Description: Welcome, one and all, to the fascinating subject of international relations! I have always felt that “IR” is the most interesting and exciting field in the social sciences. It is truly multidisciplinary, meaning that we utilize many disciplines to help us understand why the world works the way it does. This means you should feel free to use history, political science, economics, law, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, and even the natural sciences in the course of your investigations. While this course is meant as an introduction to IR, it will nevertheless contain some very challenging theories and concepts. Do not shrink from that challenge! If you devote some serious effort to this course, you will find it to be super rewarding, lots of fun, as well as having many connections to your everyday life.

Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL-122 or equivalent

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to...

1. Explain international relations theory and apply relevant theoretical concepts to events.
2. Discuss the principle historical factors, including the development of foreign policy, leading to the present international situation.
3. Discuss contemporary issues in international relations and their relationships to principal historical factors with and understanding of:
 - a. the identification of actors.
 - b. the differing past-future linkages of the actors.
 - c. the counterbalancing interests of the actors.
4. Describe the most prominent structures of the international community and explain their interaction with states.
5. Recognize and discuss various elements of power in international relations.
6. Think and argue *critically* about issues in international relations.

Course Texts: For this course, there is 1 recommended text: Genest, *Conflict and Cooperation: Evolving Theories of International Relations*, 2nd Edition. Other readings will be found on the class website.

Course Methodology: Classes will consist primarily of class lectures and discussions, which will amplify and clarify text materials. Students will be expected to read assigned materials prior to the lecture and discussion. Failure to keep up with the readings will probably lead to significant confusion on your end, so do your best to stay current on the readings, and please do not save all your reading for the week prior to the writing of a research paper.

Course Evaluation: Student progress will be evaluated through a research paper, journal questions, and discussion board responses related to your readings and documentary videos. You should expect weekly journal responses related to readings and a research paper due toward the end of the course. Late work is accepted on a case-by-case basis but will, of course, lower letter grade. ALL WRITTEN WORK IS UPLOADED TO CANVAS. Attendance is highly recommended and will be taken formally at each session. Discussion forms an important component of this course, so class participation is strongly encouraged. Student participation in class is an indicator of student interest and shows that the student is keeping up with the assigned readings. Your final grade will break out as follows:

Study Questions Journals – 20%

First Draft Research Paper – 25%

Video Discussion Board Responses – 20%

Final Draft Research Paper – 25%

Class Participation – 10%

Important Dates:

September 8, 2024 – Last day to drop class *without* a “W” appearing on your transcript.

November 15, 2024 – Last day to drop class *with* a “W” appearing on your transcript.

December 12, 2024 – Last day to request Pass / No pass.

*One final note: Dropping this class is YOUR responsibility. *DVC policy mandates that I cannot drop you from this class after November 15th through the final grading period.*

Political Science 250 / International Relations Outline

This schedule is tentative and can be adjusted to accommodate student / instructor interest
GE = Genest chapters; WEB = Readings from class website

Part One – Introduction and Historical Overview

August 28: Introduction to and Discussion of the Course. An outline of how the course will be conducted and a short discussion of the topics to be covered. Descriptive / explanatory theory vs. prescriptive theory; the “level of analysis” problem in IR; concepts, generalizations, theories, and laws; the use of case studies.

Video: *Ukraine on Fire*.

Reading for 9/4: GE – Chapter 1.

September 4: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: The Historical Context of Contemporary International Relations. An outline of how the course will be conducted and a short discussion of the topics to be covered. Descriptive / explanatory theory vs. prescriptive theory; the “level of analysis” problem in IR; concepts, generalizations, theories, and laws; the use of case studies. A brief look at the “Pre-Westphalian World;” the emergence of the Westphalian system and development of sovereignty; Europe in the 19th century; absolutism and nationalism; balance of power theory; the origins of the Cold War and the post-Cold War era; unipolarity, bipolarity, multipolarity; finishing with the terrorist attacks of 9-11, the war on terrorism, Iraq and Afghanistan and beyond.

Video: *Winter on Fire*.

Reading for 9/11: GE – Chapter 2.

Part Two – Theoretical Perspectives in International Relations

September 11: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: System Level Theories – Realism. A look at the terms and concepts that surround the oldest theory for understanding and explaining international politics. Classical realism, neorealism, and a critique of realist theory will be included.

Video: *Blood and Oil*.

Reading for 9/18: GE – Chapter 3.

September 18: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: System Level Theories – Liberalism. The next system level theory we will examine seeks to “promote global order through expanded political and economic ties.” The discussion will include institutional and economic transnationalism, and a critique of transnationalist theory.

Video: *The Power of the Poor*.

Reading for 9/25: GE – Chapter 4.

September 25: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: System Level Theories – Class System Theory. In our next system level theory, we will examine and discuss class system theory or globalism. Derived from earlier Marxist theories, it suggests that classes, and the divisions between them, define and determine the course of international politics. Early Marxism, imperialism, dependency theory and a critique of class system theory will be included.

Video: *Iraq for Sale*.

Reading for 10/2: GE – Chapter 5.

October 2: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *System Level Theories – Postmodernism and Feminist Theory.*

This week we will wrap up our system level of analysis with a look at one of the newer approaches to IR theory, postmodernism. In particular, we will focus on the emergence of feminist theory as the newest perspective. Does gender play a role in conflict between nations? What do feminists and other post-moderns have to say about the war on terrorism?

Video: *Dr. Cynthia Enloe: Masculinities in International Affairs.*

Reading for 10/9: GE – Chapters 6 and 7.

October 9: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *State Level Theories – Political Culture and Decision-Making Process Theories.* Moving on to state level theories of international relations, we will examine how the type of government, political culture, or civilization can be a major determinant in the behavior and foreign policy of a state. We will also look at how foreign policy decisions are made and the impact that foreign policy bureaucracies have on the government's decision-making process.

Video: *The Power of Nightmares.*

Reading for 10/16: GE – Chapters 8 and 9.

October 16: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *Individual Level Theories – Human Nature and Cognitive Theory.*

The last level of analysis will involve studying the effect that individuals play in the conduct of international relations. We will be looking at two tonight, so this should be a busy night. Tonight's lecture and discussion will focus on how the classic "nature vs. nurture" debate affects IR theory. We will also discuss how this debate connects to your mid-term research paper.

Video: *Soldiers of Conscience.*

Reading for 10/23: GE – Chapter 10; WEB – Owl Purdue APA website.

October 23: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *Individual Level Theories – Peace Studies Theory and the Research Paper Writing Seminar.* The next discussion involving theory will focus on the newest theory of IR—the peace studies perspective. For the peace studies approach, we'll examine the principles of positive and negative peace and discuss whether an IR theory based on social justice and human rights can be legitimately incorporated into the field of IR. A discussion of the readings and a critique of these three individual level theories will follow. We will also focus on all of the elements associated with writing a perfect American Psychological Association (APA) research paper. We'll begin with a discussion of normal grading rubrics for research papers (i.e. what instructors are looking for in a great paper). From there we will examine the proper research paper format, along with the perils and pitfalls of data analysis. We will cover general APA guidelines, the 4 major paper sections (title page, abstract page, main body, and references page), and proper citation methods (in-text and references page sources).

Video: *Voices in Wartime.*

Reading for 10/30: WEB – Readings from the "US Foreign Policy" links

Part Three – Issues and Problems in International Relations

October 30: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *United States Foreign Policy.* This next lecture and discussion will be devoted to discussing how the United States, as the sole military and economic superpower, conducts itself through its foreign policies in the international arena. We will also take a critical look at President Trump's foreign policy strategies including Russia, China, and the Middle East.

Video: *In Whose Interest?*

Reading for 11/6: WEB – Readings from the Globalization "Conventional Perspectives" links.

November 6: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *International Political Economy and Globalization – The North.*

This week we'll examine how economics plays an increasingly important role in the conduct of international relations. We will first look at how the institutions and processes in the developed world such as the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, MNC's, and how these northern NGO's impact IR.

Video: *Globalization at the Crossroads.*

Reading for 11/13: WEB – Readings from the Globalization "Critical Perspectives" links.

November 13: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *International Political Economy and Globalization – The South.* In the second half of the class, we'll discuss how the process of globalization is affecting nations in the poorer south. We'll look at three approaches (liberal, structuralist, mercantilist) to development and examine the problem of debt. A discussion of developing world responses to economic disadvantage will also be discussed and debated.

Video: *The End of Poverty?*

Reading for 11/20: WEB – Readings from the “Security Theory and Peak Oil” links.

*******RESEARCH PAPER DUE TONIGHT: NOVEMBER 20, 2024 AT 11:59 PM*******

November 20: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *Security Theory and Peak Oil Theory.* We will look first at how national security theory evolved from the ashes of World War II. Terms and concepts that guided American foreign policy planners will be examined and then debated. Two central questions: How was the Cold War with the Soviet Union related to our security? Is a new Cold War emerging? In the second part of our examination of the subfield of “security studies” we will look at the latest theories of security such as regional, transstate, international, and global security. Have economic/environmental/social issues taken the place of more traditional military concerns? Is access to resources (oil) a security interest and how does it relate to 9/11/01?

Video: *Oil, Smoke, and Mirrors.*

Reading for 11/27: WEB – Readings from the “Religion and Nationalism” links.

November 27: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *Religion and Nationalism.* This lecture and discussion will look at the ways in which nationalism and religion drive world politics. Concepts such as the state and nation-state and how these two devolve into nationalism will be examined, along with a focus on how religion shapes international relations. We will devote considerable attention to Islam's effect on contemporary U.S.-Arab world relations.

Video: *The Doctrine of Discovery.*

Reading for 12/4: WEB – Readings from the “Global Environment” links.

December 4: LECTURE / DISCUSSION: *International Relations and the Global Environment.* Tonight's reading and discussion are focused on the ecological challenges that face the international community in the 21st century. Topics to be addressed include sustainable development, population issues, resource issues and cooperation, and the problem of pollution. Central to our discussion will be the question of whether international environmental concerns can be addressed within the context of global capitalism.

Video: *Planet of the Humans.*

*******FINAL DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE TONIGHT: DECEMBER 11, 2024*******

December 11: FINAL DISCUSSION: Mandatory Zoom Meeting for Final Night. Topic: *The Future of I.R.? Hopes, Fears, Prospects, Predictions.*

Good luck to all and have a great winter break!