

GOVT 132-002: Introduction to International Relations

Spring 2017
George Mason University

Wednesday: 7:20-10pm
Innovation Hall 204

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Introduction

Government 132 is an introduction to the study of international relations. The class has three broad goals. The first is to provide a solid foundation into the core theories and concepts of the discipline, emphasizing the three central ~~religions~~ paradigms of IR: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. The course will span many levels of analysis—from the international system to individual decision making—and cover a broad spectrum of topics from terrorism to environmentalism.

The second goal is to leverage theory to better understand history and current events. Over the course of the semester we will critically debate how well—or poorly!—our theories can explain global dynamics. IR is an exciting topic, and there is always something interesting happening in the world. A portion of each class, particularly as the semester progresses, will be devoted to active discussion and debate about what is happening around the world.

The final goal is to enjoy the course! This is no time, literally and figuratively, to be too cool for school. Bring your willingness to participate, engage, and revel in a bit of political humor along the way.

Readings

There is a single required text for the class, Pevehouse & Goldstein's *International Relations, 11th Edition*. Copies can be acquired at the Mason bookstore or online. In addition, a copy is available through the library lending desk.

Of course, political science as a discipline does not reside in a textbook. To this end, we will spend time reading from academic journals, government analyses, and mainstream news. Additional required readings and articles for select weeks, as noted on the syllabus, are posted to Blackboard.

Policies

Be Respectful

Active participation is a major part of the course. While debate is encouraged where appropriate, in the spirit of productive discussion it is vital to remain thoughtful and respectful.

No Electronics

No electronics of any kind—laptops, cell phones, recorders, surveillance drones, etc.—will be allowed during class. Please silence your phone before class starts.

Students With Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability, please contact me and the Office of Disability Resources. Accommodations will be arranged in accordance with their policies.

Blackboard

Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the course's Blackboard page. Your journal assignment and grades are both hosted through the site. In addition, I will post lecture slides after each week, additional readings as noted on the syllabus, and general content on an ongoing basis.

Academic Honesty

Integrity is integral GMU's academic and social culture. Cheating and other forms of academic will not be tolerated, and suspected violations will be referred to the Honor Committee. Please refer to Blackboard for additional information about the Honor Code. But, seriously folks, you're all adults. Just don't cheat.

Extra Credit

There will be several changes for extra credit throughout the semester. All opportunities will be available to everyone. Details will be provided in class and on Blackboard. In fairness to fellow students, absolutely no extra credit work will be assigned on an individual basis.

Summary of Grading

Course grades are based on five components:

Attendance & participation	10%
Quizzes & activities	10%
Current event journal	20%
Midterm	25%
Cumulative Final Exam	35%

Note: Blackboard will contain the grades for each assignment, not your final course grade weighted by each category.

Attendance & Participation

Discussion and debate—about both theory and practice—is a major part of the course. Just showing up is not enough; *everyone* is expected to participate. Expect to be called on at random.

Quizzes

There may (or may not) be an in-class quiz any given week. Quizzes will only cover, at most, two weeks of content. Material from the current and previous week's reading and lecture is fair game. It is possible—hint hint—that portions of the quizzes may show up in some form on the midterm and final exams.

Current Event Journal

The study of international relations can inform our understanding of current events. Starting on the return from break, you will be expected to read and analyze one news story a week. Please limit yourself to coverage from mainstream news site—CNN, Fox, the Economist, BBC, etc.—or specialized organizations like Word Affairs. By the end of the semester, you should complete 7 analyses spanning a range of topics. Once you have selected an issue of interest, go to BB and create a journal entry. Entries should include the following:

- A link to the original article.
- A brief summary of the central issue.
- Most importantly, you need to *analyze* the coverage from the perspective of a political scientist. Opinion is fine; thoughtful analysis is better. A-level work requires you to critically apply theory to explain the underlying dynamics.
- Each entry should be no more than a single-double spaced page.

Midterm & Final Exam

The midterm and final exams incorporate both written and multiple choice components. You are responsible for bringing a blue book, pencil, and Scantron to the day of the exam.

The date for the midterm exam *may* be changed as the semester progresses. A revised date can only be pushed back to a later class, never forward.

The final exam is cumulative. *At least* one-third of the final exam's multiple-choice questions will come directly from the midterm and/or the in-class quizzes.

Make Up Exams

In-class quizzes and activities cannot be made up. In the interest of fairness, three rules govern absences for the midterm or final exams. Without exception:

- Missed exams without a valid justification count as a 0.
- If an exam is missed, a make-up exam will be offered only with documented evidence of an emergency. Appropriate documentation must be provided in a timely manner.

Calendar & Readings

Part 1: Theoretical Groundwork

	Topic	Reading
Jan 25	Intro	P&G 1-35
Feb 1	Roadmap to IR	Levy 1997; Gilbert Ted Talk "Why We Make Bad Decisions"
Feb 8	Realism	P&G 37-69
Feb 15	Liberalism	P&G 71-81; Rosato 2003
Feb 22	Constructivism	P&G 81-105; Dessler 1999
Mar 1	Foreign Policy	P&G 106-126; Farkas 1996; Take Bremmer's "quiz"
Mar 8	Midterm Exam	-
Mar 13	Spring Break!	-

Part 2: Applying Theory to Practice

Mar 22	International Conflict	P&G 128-161
Mar 29	MAD Theory	P&G 177-192; Parrington 1997
Apr 5	Terrorism	Pape 2003; Caplan 2006
Apr 12	International Organizations	P&G 197-238; Bearce & Bondanella 2007
Apr 19	International Trade	P&G 240-270
Apr 26	Environment & Population	P&G 330-360; Hardin 1968
May 3	North-South Gap	P&G 362-391
May 10	Final Exam	-