Global Stage And Its Subjects: International Theory Meets Intellectual History

Fall 2016
MA
4 credits

Instructors: Alexander Astrov, Jens Bartelson, Iver Neumann, and Erik Ringmar

Course objectives
The course aims at providing students with an overview of theorising in the field of International Relations. Although the field itself took shape as an institutionalised academic pursuit only in the twentieth century and for a long time remained a predominantly Western engagement, in many ways it emerged as a response to questions posed by European expansion beyond Europe’s traditional boundaries. Throughout the century, these non-European origins of International Relations (IR) theorising were, by and large, ignored. However, as the twentieth century was nearing its end, especially after the end of the cold war, more and more IR theorists started arguing against this initial Eurocentric view of the field. Not only because political ordering on the ground called for appreciation of the diversity of the world, but also because the analytical tools with which IR theory approached this world required critical re-examination. On the one hand, this led to significant widening of the traditional field of study, bringing in issues, subjects, culture and regions initially thought to be outside of the discipline’s focus; on the other, the discipline’s horizons were also extended in temporal terms, inviting more detailed study of historically distant ideas and practices. This course cannot possibly provide detailed analysis of this long and increasingly complicated process. Yet, it will attempt to present some important nodal points in it, as well as some possible connections between these points that students may then choose to explore in their individual projects.

So, the course’s main objectives are:
- to provide students with an understanding of intellectual and practical functions of theorising in international relations;
- to dispel the idea of ‘theory’ as a boring but mandatory engagement with abstract literature or a junk-shop of ready-made frameworks to be applied to various cases;
- to present theorising as a dramatic engagement with context-specific questions;
- to indicate how advances in understanding, once these occur, may be seen as outcomes of dialogical engagements between theories.

Learning outcomes
By the end of the course students will:
- develop ability to place their own research-questions into the overall context of IR theorising;
- critically engage with ideas discussed by various theorists and schools of thought;
- get an overview or some of the state-of-the-art theorising in the filed. Course outline

Requirements:
- Active participation in the seminars - 10%
- Three position-papers for weeks 2-7 (the exact allocation of this assignment to be discussed in detail during the first session) - 45% (15% each)
- Take-home exam (essay) - 45%
Week 1

Session 1 - September 20
General discussion, distribution of assignments
Background reading:

Session 2 - September 22

Week 2

Session 3 - September 27

Session 4 - September 29

Week 3

Session 5 - October 4

Session 6 - October 6
BBC documentary: https://youtu.be/ZYo8FEYkFfS

Week 4

Session 7 - October 11

Session 8 - October 13

Week 5

Session 9 - October 20

Session 10 - October 21

Week 6

Session 11 - October 25

Session 12 - October 27

Week 7

Session 13 - November 3

Session 14 - November 4

Week 8
Session 15 - November 8

Session 16 - November 10

Week 9
Session 17 - November 15

Session 18 - November 17

Week 10
Session 19 - November 22

Session 20 - November 24

Week 11
Session 21 - November 29

Session 22 - December 1


**Week 12**

Session 23 - December 6


Session 24 - December 8

Closing discussion