IDEAS IN IPE: THE CASE OF (ECONOMIC) NATIONALISM

Lecturer: Dr Thomas Fetzer

Course description

The study of ‘ideas’ and ‘culture’ has proliferated in recent years in the field of international political economy, and, alongside, fundamental questions have been raised: What are the epistemological properties of ideas? How can we explain their emergence and disappearance? What is the relationship between ideas and economic interests? How salient are ideas to explain economic policy outcomes?

The course aims to introduce students to these questions by combining a general survey of literatures concerned with the conceptual foundation of ideational analysis in IPE and beyond, and a more focused analysis of one specific example, i.e. (economic) nationalism.

In part I of the course, we will familiarize ourselves with a range of different literatures conceptually addressing the question of the role of ideas in IPE, predominantly drawing on IR theory and political science institutionalism. In part II, we will consider the salience of ideational analysis through the specific example of (economic) nationalism. Distinguishing between four different approaches to nationalism as political movement, ideology, discourse and everyday practice, we will explore historical and contemporary case studies from a variety of economic policy contexts.

Learning outcomes

Through engagement with these debates, students will gain a better understanding of the meanings and controversies associated with the study of ideas in IPE. By the end of the course students will be able to:

1) identify and critically assess different theoretical approaches to the study of ideas in IPE
2) identify and critically assess the most important theoretical approaches to the study of (economic) nationalism
3) develop a critical understanding of how economic nationalism is expressed in different realms of economic life

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and active participation (20 %)
2. Presentation (20 %)
3. Two short essays on course readings (one each from part I and II, together 30 %)
4. Final paper (30 %)
Course Outline

Seminar 1: Introduction

PART I: Ideas in IPE – general issues

In part I, the course will introduce a range of different literatures conceptually addressing the question of the role of ideas in IPE. We will draw mainly on two research contexts, i.e. international relations theory and the various schools of political science institutionalism. This will be supplemented by some additional perspectives provided by social movement theory, cultural political economy, as well as the recent scholarship on everyday IPE. Based on these explorations, the aim is to draw up conceptual maps with which to approach empirical cases of ideational analysis in IPE.

Seminar 2: IR-based approaches (I): Debates about ideas and institutions within realist and liberal IPE


Seminar 3: IR-based approaches (II): Debates about ideas in Marxist-inspired IPE


Seminar 4: IR-based approaches (III): Constructivism

Martijn Konings (2015), What is Constructivism for? (Review)

Seminar 5: Institutionalist approaches (I): Rationalist and historical institutionalism


Seminar 6: Institutionalist approaches (II): Discursive and constructivist institutionalism


Seminar 7: Institutionalist approaches (II): Discursive and constructivist institutionalism (cont.)


Seminar 8: Extensions (I): Greater focus on actors?


Seminar 9: Extensions (II): From ideas to culture?


Seminar 10: Extensions (III): Beyond elite politics?


PART II: The case of (economic) nationalism

In part II, we consider a specific case of ideational analysis in IPE: (economic) nationalism. We start with a review of traditional and more recent debates about the concept in IPE, followed by a more thorough conceptual engagement with different approaches to nationalism, distinguishing between four different paradigms. Subsequently, we engage with empirical case studies illustrating these four approaches in a variety of economic policy contexts.

Seminar 11: Traditional realist and liberal approaches to economic nationalism

Seminar 12: Constructivist approaches to economic nationalism


Seminar 13: A conceptual detour: What is nationalism?


Seminar 14: A conceptual detour: What is nationalism? (cont.)


Seminar 15: Economic agendas of nationalist movements (I): Separatism


Seminar 16: Economic agendas of nationalist movements (II): Populist ‘renewal’ movements


Seminar 17: Economic dimensions of nationalism as political ideology (I): ‘Nation-building’ and ‘rebuilding’ by economic means


Seminar 18: Economic dimensions of nationalism as political ideology (II): Mobilization of national economic solidarity

Seminar 19: Economic dimensions of nationalism as political discourse (I): Management of economic crises and transformations


Seminar 20: Economic dimensions of nationalism as political discourse (II): Economic development promotion


Seminar 21: Economic dimensions of ‘banal’ nationalism (I): Consumption


Seminar 22: Economic dimensions of ‘banal’ nationalism (II): Currencies


Seminar 23: Conclusions