COURSE SYLLABUS

Knowing, Narrating, (re)Writing International Relations

Instructor:
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Fall 2018
MA 4 Credits (8 ECTS Credits), 2018-19

Course description:

What are the stakes of ‘knowing’ world politics and being a knowing subject in (of, and perhaps, despite) the world we study? What is the role of theory beyond making things intelligible? How does it shape and condition what we look at and how we look at it? Engaging more closely with our practices of perception and meaning making: how are we situated and where are we positioned in the discipline as observers, persons and communities? How can we ask theory to ‘heal’ (hooks) or at least to transform, challenge and help us rework what may be seen as oppressive and obsolete?

This course aims to open up knowledge practices and the life worlds they belong to and simultaneously give rise to – modes of telling, ways of sense-making, negotiation and translation – within IR scholarship and world politics as lived experience. It does so from sites and positions that are usually not immediately addressed or recognized in mainstream debates. Departing from and foregrounding voices from the (imaginary) margins of IR – such as post-colonialism and non-Western IR, narrative approaches, post-humanist feminism, the study of emotions, visual politics, indigenous wisdom, the sociology of IR as a discipline and creative research methods – the course zooms in on what happens when we take seriously the context, perspective and implications of knowledge claims made by different traditions, new interventions and methodologies in a holistic and practice-oriented manner. It sets out to explore what counter-imagination may exist to conventional disciplinary understandings regarding statehood, violence, social change and subjectivity as well as what new political horizons and alternative modes of scholarly engagement might unfold from them.

Aims

The main objectives of the course are:

- To encourage a holistic understanding of knowledge practices, politics and the stakes of theorizing within and beyond the discipline of International Relations
- To develop an effective, interdisciplinary and practice-oriented critical toolbox and analytical skills for the study of contemporary world politics
- To engage with some of the new ‘turns’ in International Relations as well as their promises and limitations
- To facilitate the development of new research skills, including discourse analysis, cultural analysis and narrative writing
To develop a nuanced and competent conceptual understanding of various practices and sites of contemporary government, such as gender, coloniality and security

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module students will:

- Be able to navigate various strands of theorizing in International Relations scholarship and gain confidence in building their own conceptual framework
- Be able to confidently work with interdisciplinary approaches in studying contemporary phenomena
- Understand some of the most important ways in which power operates in knowledge practices and cultural production
- Critically assess the relative merits of various theories in and beyond IR
- Develop rounded empirical knowledge of various key issues in world politics, such as gendered and racialized practices of statehood as well as practices of contestation and resistance
- Have explored alternative research methods and epistemologies in thinking selfhood, community and lived experience in world politics

Course Requirements

Active participation in seminars: 10%
Mid-term exam in Week 9: 25%
Two short position papers for Week 10 and 11: 20% (10% each - details to be discussed in the first seminar)
Term paper: 45%

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I. SITUATEDNESS

Week 1: The making of the knowing subject

Seminar 1. Theory, practice and the intellectual


Seminar 2. Selfhood and Orders of Knowledge


**Recommended reading:**


**PART II: SUBVERTING HIERARCHIES**

**Week 2: Post-structuralism: Selfhood and Otherness**

**Seminar 3: Constructing Identity and Difference**


**Recommended reading:**


**Seminar 4. The Power of Discourse**


Recommended reading:


Foucault, Michel, The Subject and Power, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1982), pp. 777-795


Week 3: Post-colonialism and global coloniality

Seminar 5. Eurocentrism and Non-Western Thought


Shilliam, Robbie (2012), International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity, London: Routledge. Chapter 1: Non-Western thought and international relations (pp 1-11) and Chapter 2: The perilious but unavoidable terrain of the non-West (pp 12-26)


Recommended reading:


Said, Edward, Orientalism (1978), Introduction + any further chapter


Seminar 6. Global Coloniality and Decolonial Thinking


Recommended reading:


Week 4: Gendered Relations

Seminar 7. Women in IR


Seminar 8. Gendered Scripts and Queer Curiosity


Recommended reading:


Halberstam, Judith (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press,


PART III: RESTORATIONS

**Week 5: Visual politics**

*Seminar 9. IR’s Aesthetic Turn*


Recommended reading:


*Seminar 10. Cultural Politics*


**Recommended reading:**


Week 6: Narrative politics

Seminar 11. Stories and Emotions


Recommended reading:


**Seminar 12. Modes of Telling**


**Week 7: Affirmative Ontologies**

**Seminar 13. Joyful Relations**

Penttinen, Elina, *Joy and International Relations: A New Methodology*, (Routledge, 2013.) Chapters TBC


**Seminar 14. Alternative Diplomacies**


'A Zen Master’s Advice On Coping With Trump', *Huffington Post*, 02/16/2017. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/zen-and-the-art-of-activism_us_58a118b6e4b094a129ec59af](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/zen-and-the-art-of-activism_us_58a118b6e4b094a129ec59af)

**Week 8: Planetary Cosmologies**

**Seminar 15. Rethinking Epistemology**


*Seminar 16. Reclaiming Knowledge, Self, Magic and the Elements*


*Week 9: Mid-term exam*

*Seminar 17: no class*

*Seminar 18: mid-term exam*

*PART IV: CREATIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE*

*Week 10. Visual narratives*

*Seminar 19 & Seminar 20:*

Films to be shown:

Bluett, Michael (2014) *Wartorn Britain* ('27)

Zwier, Pim (2015) *They call us the enemy* ('7)

Weber, Cynthia, 'I am an American', [OpenDemocracy](http://www.opendemocracy.net), selected videos

Kalyan, Rohan, *Letter to the City Yet to Come* ('11), Available from: [https://vimeo.com/123004044](https://vimeo.com/123004044)

*Background reading:*
Week 11. Writing and (re)writing International Relations

Seminar 21: Creative Writing Practice (experimental workshop)
Schedule TBC

Seminar 22: Collaging World Politics (experimental workshop)
Schedule TBC

Background reading:


Saara Sarma’s Website: http://www.huippumisukka.fi - please do look at the dissertation collages


Kangas, A, Perheentupa, I. and Särmä, Saara (2017) ‘Queering the international through collages: steps toward an epistemology and pedagogy,’ Available at:


PART V: TRANSGRESSING DUALITIES

**Week 12. Wisdom beyond the West**

*Seminar 23. Re-modelling World Politics*


*Seminar 24. Alternative Figures of the Intellectual*

Ling, L.H.M. (2014) *The Dao of World Politics: towards a post-Westphalian, wordlist international relations*, London: Routledge, Chapters 8-10, pp. 119-172

Shilliam, Robbie, ‘Living Knowledge Traditions and the Priestly Caste of the Western Academy,’ TBC