COURSE SYLLABUS

Knowing, Narrating, (re)Writing International Relations

Instructor:

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MA 4 Credits (8 ECTS Credits), 2019-20

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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-imaginations 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%
Two short position papers 40% (20% each - details to be discussed in the first seminar)
Term paper: 50%

**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:**


**Week 3: Post-colonialism and global coloniality**

*Seminar 5. Eurocentrism and Non-Western Thought*


**Recommended reading:**


*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:**


Saugmann Andersen, Rune a and Frank Moller, Engaging the limits of visibility: Photography, security, and surveillance, Security Dialogue June 2013 vol. 44 no. 3 203-22


**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


**Week 8: Planetary Cosmologies**

*Seminar 15. Rethinking Epistemology*


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


**PART IV: CREATIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE**

**Week 9. Visual narratives**

*Seminar 17 & Seminar 18:*

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, selected videos

Background reading:


Week 10. Writing and (re)writing International Relations

Seminar 19: Creative Writing Practice (experimental workshop)
Schedule TBC

Seminar 20: Collaging World Politics (experimental workshop)
Schedule TBC

Background reading:


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


PART V: TRANSGRESSING DUALITIES

Week 11. Wisdom beyond the West

Seminar 21. Re-modelling World Politics


Seminar 22. Alternative Figures of the Intellectual


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

Week 12: Writing week (This can take place in any week – to be discussed in the first seminar)

Seminar 23: no class

Seminar 24: no class