MC 220 – International Relations I: World Politics and International Security
James Madison College
Michigan State University
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Hours: Monday 1:30-2:30, Wednesday, 4:30-5:30, by appointment, and open door

Class meetings: Monday and Wednesday, 3-4:20 pm
Class location: 331 Case Hall

Course Description
There is always something going on in the world. As a student of international relations, you are likely interested in many of these events. As a first course in IR, we will be guided by a series of big questions, including: What does “international relations” mean? What is security? What does it mean to be secure or insecure? From whose perspective (and why does that matter)? Have these meanings changed over time? What are the causes and resolutions of conflict? Can states work together to avoid or overcome tensions? Who are the actors in the world and how do they interact? How do these theoretical and conceptual debates help us understand the world around us? What are possible future trends in world politics? How do we study all of this, and why does it matter for policy?

This course is designed to introduce you to part of the field of international relations. While current events are important and interesting to study, and while I hope you will become significant consumers and evaluators of international relations, this is not what the course is explicitly about. Its primary purpose is to introduce you to the systematic study and evaluation of world politics and international security. Thus, some of the course material will be highly theoretical and requires you to think conceptually. However as a means to helping you understand the material and see its relevance for real-world international relations, we will be paying attention to current and past events with an eye towards explaining and understanding why things turned out as they did and then trying to consider how the future might play out.

IR is an exciting, varied, and dynamic field – only a portion of which we can cover here. This course samples the range of themes in international relations while providing you with a common language to put everything together. This course emphasizes the political and military side of international relations, while MC 221 examines international political economy. As you will see, however, the two courses are not always neatly separable, and we will examine how the IR field has adapted to a changing and globalizing world. Your hard work this semester will help you throughout your career as an IR major and future practitioner.

We begin by reading a book on the Rwandan genocide, with a focus on the (lack of) response from the international community. The book and the accompanying writing assignment will get you thinking about the actors, interests, issues, and values that exist in international relations. You will also be able to work on writing a paper on a big theme in a concise and clear
The first part of the course will discuss what international relations is all about and provide the roots of a vocabulary that we can use to analyze international relations.

Part 2 of the course examines some of the major theoretical traditions used to understand international relations. These sessions will provide the basic assumptions and implications of the various theories. We will then use these theories to evaluate different aspects of international relations throughout the semester. Your term paper assignment is designed for you to show how well these theoretical traditions help us understand a real-world event.

Part 3 of the course focuses on the traditional understanding of international security. Our goal here is to understand the causes of war and how states behave once conflict arises. Part 4 examines explanations for international cooperation. Even though conflict is an ever-present possibility of the international system, it is important to examine the ways to mitigate its outbreak. The last part of the course is comprised of a series of topics looking at specific new issues and problems in international relations, including emergent security threats, human rights, and the environment.

Please note that this syllabus and the writing assignments will be posted on D2L. Feel free to come see me at any point if you wish to talk more about the course or other concerns. I am generally around and available even outside of office hours – feel free to stop in if my door is open or set up an appointment. I will answer email questions, but I will also ask to talk with you in person for subjects that cannot be treated appropriately electronically. My expectation, as befits the standards of the JMC instructional model, is that we will talk one or more times individually or in groups outside of class hours to discuss your term paper and/or other aspects of the course.

**Required Readings** (please use the appropriate editions)

1. Michael Barnett. 2002. *Eyewitness to a Genocide*. Cornell University Press. (either hard or soft cover is fine)
5. A number of articles as marked on the syllabus. They are available on-line. The syllabus posted on D2L will have the direct links to them.
6. Daily reading of a periodical with good international coverage. *The New York Times* is typically the most complete (and easy for you to obtain in Case Hall – **FOR FREE**), while the *Washington Post* and the *Economist* also provide strong coverage. *Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, Survival*, and *International Security* are also recommended journals with more sustained coverage of many of the topics we are studying. They are also good resources for your term paper. Knowledge of current events is expected. I can also point you to a variety of blogs that I think might be helpful to you.
7. Any other readings as assigned – these would typically be short newspaper articles on a topic pertinent to the course.
Evaluation (every assignment must be successfully completed to pass the course)
1. **Short paper (2-3 pages)** on the Barnett book. Specific details will be given in class, but this assignment is intended to get you thinking about some of the critical issues currently playing out in international relations, especially the role of morality in international politics. This book is intended to be a fairly quick read, and your goal is to try to capture the images of the situation that Barnett is portraying. Make sure you identify the various issues, actors, and interests involved in this episode, and think about what this case can teach us about global politics in the current era. Due Friday, September 25 at 4pm in my Case Hall mailbox. Late papers will be marked down significantly for each day they are late. **10% of course grade**

2. **Research paper (10 pages)**. This paper will combine research on an international conflict with an analysis of how different IR theories can help us understand that event. I will provide more details early in the semester concerning topic selection and the structure of the paper. That handout will also present a timeline for when different aspects of the paper are due. The final draft of the paper will be due Wednesday, November 25. Late papers will be marked down for each day they are late. Please see me throughout the semester to discuss your progress on various stages of the project. **25% of course grade for total project**

3. **Midterm Exam.** An in-class exam after Part 3 of the course that includes all material up to that point. The exam will be on Wednesday, October 21. **25% of course grade**

4. **Final Exam.** An exam during the assigned time of finals period (Thursday, December 17). **30% of course grade**

5. **Participation.** I expect that there will be ample opportunities for discussion in class. While at certain times there will be more lecturing than at others, I will make time in each session for questions and discussion. Attendance is important and excessive absenteeism will hurt your grade. Additionally, your performance on exams will suffer if you don’t both attend class sessions and read the required material. I expect that while we might all disagree on certain issues throughout the semester that all discussions will be civil and everyone should respect each other. **10% of course grade**

For the exams, you are responsible for both the lecture/discussion material and the assigned readings (even those not discussed in class). There will be no make-ups without prior permission based on an extremely good and documented reason.

The Madison College instructional model assumes that there will be interactions among faculty and students outside of scheduled class time. Whether it is participating in the h-option, having meetings in office hours or beyond about your course work or chatting about world events, discussing material with your colleagues, watching a relevant movie, or attending related College or University events, you are encouraged to take advantage of the Madison experience.
**Honors Option:** For those interested, please see me by the end of the second week of classes to make arrangements. There will be extra meetings and assignments (reading and written), and a 3.5 must be maintained in order to receive Honors credit. Students not in the Honors College or the Madison honors program are invited and welcome to participate.

The theme of the honors option will be order, and the primary reading will be:


**Academic Honesty:** Of course, no form of academic misconduct (on papers and exams) will be tolerated. All violations will face the harshest penalties allowed under MSU policy (which, at the minimum, is a 0.0 for the course). The university’s policy can be found here: [https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html](https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html). In part, the JMC’s Student Handbook reads:

> The faculty recognize that it is the responsibility of the instructor to take appropriate action if an act of academic dishonesty is discovered. It is further understood that a student may appeal a judgment of academic dishonesty to the Student-Faculty Judiciary. The Faculty Assembled recommend that in cases involving proven academic dishonesty, the student should receive, as a minimum, a 0.0 in the course and that a record of the circumstances, sanctions, and any appeal be placed in the student's confidential file. (In accordance with University policy, the record may be made available to faculty if such information is deemed necessary in the discharging of their respective responsibilities). The individual faculty member or the Dean may recommend further action, including dismissal from the University, to the Student-Faculty Judiciary. If a second case of academic dishonesty should occur, the recommendation is that the faculty, through the Office of Academic Affairs, should seek the student's dismissal from the College and the University.

That said, virtually all violations can be avoided if you speak to me first. Not waiting until the last minute to finish assignments helps to avoid most problems.

**Students with Disabilities:** Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.
Schedule
Please read the material before the class meeting for which it is assigned. While I know that the reading load is heavy at times, it is very important to keep on track with it. I recommend doing the reading in the order listed. For some topics it may not matter, but for others some readings provide a foundation and others provide a critique or extension. In the first class and throughout the semester, we will discuss strategies to master the reading. Lectures and discussions will inevitably run over the listed dates, but we will catch up quickly. The different topics appear neatly defined, but we will soon see how they are all linked together. While you shouldn’t assume any, I will announce any changes in readings or assignment due dates in class and with enough time for you to make the appropriate adjustments to your schedules.

Part I: What is IR? Major Concepts of International Relations
Wednesday, September 2: Introduction to the course and subject
Reading: Start reading Barnett

Wednesday, September 9: The Development of the Sovereign State System: History and the Development of IR Theory
George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” in MS p. 17-22

Monday, September 14: The Development of the Sovereign State System: Core Concepts
(read this article now, and then review after the theories section)

Part II: Theoretical Approaches to IR
Wednesday, September 16: Classical Realism
Reading: Thucydides, “Melian Dialogue” in MS p. 11-12
Morgenthau, “A Realist Theory of International Politics and Political Power” in MS p. 32-36

Monday, September 21: Neorealism/Structural Realism
Reading: Mearsheimer, “Anarchy and the Struggle for Power” in MS p. 37-56
Wednesday, September 23: Liberalisms
Reading: Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics” in MS p. 57-72
Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games” in MS 174-194
Gartzke, “Capitalist Peace or Democratic Peace?” in MS p. 532-536

Friday, September 25 -- Assignment Due: Short Paper on Barnett book by 4pm in my mailbox

Monday, September 28: Constructivism
Reading: Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It” in MS p. 73-97
Finnemore, “Changing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention” in MS p. 496-520

Wednesday, September 30: Feminist Approaches/Gender and IR Theory

Monday, October 5: Postcolonial and Non-Western Approaches

Wednesday, October 7: Race and IR Theory

***Movie – Dr. Strangelove: Wednesday, October 7 – 7pm***
Part III: Traditional Approaches to Explaining and Understanding International Security

Monday, October 12: The Balance of Power
Ikenberry, Mastanduno, and Wohlforth, “Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences” in MS p. 106-126
Schweller and Pu, “After Unipolarity: China’s Vision of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline” in MS p. 127-152
Finnemore, “Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn’t All It’s Cracked Up to Be” in MS p. 153-172

Wednesday, October 14: The Logic of War
Reading: Clausewitz, “War as an Instrument of Policy” in MS p. 396-400
Schelling, “The Diplomacy of Violence” in MS p. 401-409
Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War” in MS p. 425-450

Monday, October 19: Perceptions, Psychology, and Force
Reading: Jervis, “Hypotheses on Misperception” in MS p. 264-278
Hall, “We Will Not Swallow This Bitter Fruit: Theorizing a Diplomacy of Anger” in MS 279-305

Wednesday, October 21: Midterm Exam

Part IV: Is Cooperation Possible?

Monday, October 26: International Organizations: Roles in Managing Conflicts
Reading: Keohane, “From After Hegemony” in MS p. 338-354
Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions” in MS p. 355-366

Wednesday, October 28: Transnational Actors and International Law
Keck and Sikkink, “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics” in MS p. 382-393
Hurd, “Is Humanitarian Intervention Legal? The Rule of Law in an Incoherent World” in MS p. 367-381
Part V: Contemporary Issues in International Relations: New Challenges to Understanding Security?

Monday, November 2: Nuclear Weapons
Reading: Posen, “A Nuclear-Armed Iran: A Difficult but Not Impossible Policy Problem” in MS p. 451-466

Wednesday, November 4: Terrorism
Reading: Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism” in MS p. 471-495

Monday, November 9: Civil War, Failed States, Intervention, and State-Building
Reading: Fortna, “From Does Peacekeeping Work?” in MS p. 308-316.
Krasner, “Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Failing and Collapsed States” in MS p. 224-244

Wednesday, November 11: Peoples, States, and War
Reading: Roy, “The Transformation of the Arab World” in MS p. 245-255
Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” in MS p. 256-262

Monday, November 16: The Notion of Human Security
Reading: Reveron and Mahoney-Norris, chapters 1, 2, and 8

Wednesday, November 18: Economic Security and the “Wars of Globalization”
Reading: Reveron and Mahoney-Norris, chapters 3 and 5
Monday, November 23: The Environment and International Conflict
Reading: Reveron and Mahoney-Norris, chapter 4
Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” in MS p. 707-717
Ostrom, “Institutions and the Environment” in MS p. 718-730
Keohane and Victor, “The Regime Complex for Climate Change” in MS p. 731-753

Wednesday, November 25: Human Health and Security
Reading: Reversion and Mahoney-Norris, chapter 6
Bollyky, “Developing Symptoms: Noncommunicable Diseases Go Global” in MS p. 754-760

Term Paper Due: Wednesday, November 25

Monday, November 30: Human Rights
Reading: Sen, “Human Rights and Capabilities” in MS p. 660-671
Donnelly, “Human Rights and Cultural Relativism” in MS p. 672-685

Wednesday, December 2: Can War Be Eliminated?
Reading: Coker, prologue and chapters 1-3

Monday, December 7: Can War Be Eliminated? (continued)
Reading: Coker, chapters 4-6

Wednesday, December 9: Conclusions and Review

Final Exam: Thursday, December 17, 3-5 pm