

Contemporary International Relations (PO4700)

Lecturer: Dr Thomas Pegram

Course Description:

Although a 'common sense' view of world politics is often presented in non-academic contexts, there is little agreement among experts on what international relations is, and how we should think about the discipline. This module enables students to critically examine the conventional wisdom and as a result to gain a more critical understanding of international relations. Part I provides a survey of theoretical perspectives in international relations, moving beyond the classical division between realism and liberalism. It also integrates a focus on security to animate key theoretical claims and their application. In Part II, the course turns to the thematic domain of international human rights regimes to assess how international relations scholarship is adapting to, and making sense of, contemporary developments in this fast-moving arena.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students should be able to:

- Describe the key assumptions which distinguish contemporary theories of international relations from each other
- Analyse the purpose, coherence and contradictions of contemporary theories of international relations as they apply to the issues of security and international human rights regimes
- Evaluate the contribution of different theories to understanding and explaining the significance of international human rights and the role of the United Nations in world politics

Recommended Texts/Key Reading:

Brown, Chris and Kirsten Ainley, Understanding International Relations, 4th edition (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

Burchill, Scott and Andrew Linklater et al., Theories of International Relations, 4th edition (Palgrave MacMillan, 2009)

Booth, K. and N. J. Wheeler, The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Kolodziej, E. A., Security and International Relations (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Freeman, M., Human Rights: an Interdisciplinary Approach (Polity Press, 2011)

Danchin, P. G. and H. Fischer, United Nations Reform and the New Collective Security (Cambridge University Press, 2010)