

Lecture 1 – Introduction to PO4018

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Hi class and welcome to PO4018 – International Relations. I'm your lecturer, Scott Fitzsimmons. The first part of this introductory lecture is going to outline the major elements of the module. So, I'll go over the module outline, the module objectives, and other administrative stuff. Then, I'll finish off with a quick overview of the major assignments for the module.

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Professor Introduction

Alright, I guess I'll start off with a bit of info about me:

First off, I grew up in Ottawa, Canada.

I went to Carleton University for a Bachelors of Public Affairs and Policy Management degree, wherein I specialized in security policy, and followed that up with a Masters of Arts in International Affairs at the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs, which is also at Carleton U.

I completed my PhD in 2010 in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary, where I specialized in International Relations, Strategic Studies, and Comparative Politics. So, if you want to refer to me as "Dr. Fitzsimmons," you certainly can, but my preference is for you to just call me Scott.

My main areas of expertise include mercenary forces and Private Military Companies, theories of how militaries fight and win wars, and theories of foreign policy decision-making. I have taught and conducted research on these and lots of other topics at the Universities of Calgary, Victoria, British Columbia, and Limerick over the past nineteen years.

I'm also a former civil servant with the Government of Canada. I started my career working as a policy analyst in the Policy Division in the Policy, Planning, and Priorities Directorate, in the Health Policy and Communications Branch of Health Canada. Now, since we didn't have a specific mandate, like, say, the Nursing Division, we pretty much did whatever the Minister of Health was prioritizing at the time.

For most of the time that I was there, my Minister prioritized security and counter-terrorism, so I spent a lot of my time working on Emergency Preparedness policy, which was pretty interesting in the lead up to the War in Iraq when the Government of Canada was trying to decide whether it would join the US-led military coalition.

A little more recently, I worked in the Portfolio Affairs Division in the Strategic Policy Branch of Health Canada, which has been called the "most corrupt agency in Canada."

While there, I mainly helped manage relations between the six departments and agencies that make up the Health Portfolio – which was sometimes a tough job because many of them don't like each other very much.

I also developed several "high-level" policy documents, like strategic plans and the Health Portfolio Strategic Policy Framework. Now, these are documents that are considered ridiculously important and vital to the future of the Health Portfolio, but which no one actually uses or even looks at after they have been written. But, I swear to you that they were damn good. I also, unfortunately, spent nearly eight months helping Health Canada fire a group of volunteers, for reasons that were never made totally clear to me.

And finally, I was asked several years ago by the head of one of Canada's intelligence agencies to become a spy. But, because I really like sleeping in, I opted to become an academic instead.

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Overview of the Module

Now, in terms of the basic design of this module, it's a fast paced survey of international relations. We're going to cover one or two major topics per week and the module is going to have both lecture sessions and tutorial groups, which means I'll be doing a lot of lecturing in class to give you info about the topics but I'm expecting all of you to come to your tutorial groups prepared to talk about your tutorial readings.

This is a basic requirement of the module, and it will be hard to do really well if you don't feel like talking.

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Overview of Lecture Topics

Now, with respect to our actual lecture topics, we'll cover quite a few major topics during the module.

Week 2 – Realism

Alright, now, our first theoretical topic is the most popular and contentious theory of international relations, which is realism. Realism is a theory that's obsessed with power and the balance of power. It focuses on how states try to protect and advance their national interests and try to avoid getting harmed or even destroyed by other states.

Now, the reason why we're going to discuss realism first is simply because almost all other theories of international relations use realism and especially its newer variant, neo-realism, as a jumping off point for their assumptions and arguments. In other words, we're going to spend some time really getting to know realism as

thoroughly as we can right at the beginning of the module because it'll make it a lot easier for us to understand how all the other theories that we're going to talk about in the module relate to it and help you recognize the unique contributions and perspectives they bring to the study of international relations.

Specifically, during this class, I'm going to go over the major assumptions that realists tend to make about the world, and the origins of realism, which go back thousands of years to Ancient Greece. We're also going to talk about some of the major variants of realism because, like many IR theories, realism is actually more of a school of thought or group of theories rather than just one single theory.

Finally, we're going to talk about some ways we can apply realism to real-world policy issues.

Weeks 3 and 4 – Nuclear Weapons

Now, during Weeks 3 and 4, we'll have a couple of classes on nuclear weapons. During these classes, we'll start off by chatting about why some states decide to acquire nuclear weapons.

In addition, we'll discuss conflicting perspectives on whether nuclear weapons encourage states to remain peaceful and refrain from starting wars. This will then serve as a basis for discussing whether nuclear proliferation is a good idea and whether it should be encouraged or discouraged.

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Week 5 – Liberalism

Our second theoretical topic is the second most popular theory of international relations, which is liberalism. Now, unlike realism, which mainly focuses on competition and fighting between states, liberalism mainly focuses on the way that states cooperate with each other.

In some ways, liberalism is one of the more complex theories because several competing variants of the theory have been developed over the past few decades, some of which disagree with each other. But, because of this, liberalism is also one of the most interesting and broadly applicable IR theories.

Week 6 – Feminism

Next up, we're going to spend a class talking about feminist theories of international relations. Unfortunately, there are all sorts of strange and incorrect assumptions floating around out there about feminism. However, I assure you that feminist IR scholars have a heck of a lot of interesting things to say about how the world may work and about how more traditional theories, like realism, ignore a lot of factors and actors in the world that are worth talking about.

We're also going to spend a fair amount of time during this class talking about an ongoing debate that is taking place in many countries around the world about whether women should be allowed to serve in combat during wartime, which is a topic that all of the feminist theories that we'll discuss in this module touch on.

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Weeks 7 and 8 – International Trade and Development and Midterm Exam

Following this, we will have three lectures on international trade and development. We'll kick things off by talking about a few different kinds of trade policies that countries can choose to adopt, including autarky, where a country doesn't trade at all with other countries, protectionism, where a country tries to limit trade with other countries with things like tariffs and quotas, and cooperative trade, where a country tries to trade as much as possible with other countries, with relatively few restrictions or limitations.

Then we'll shift gears and chat about the possible causes of development and underdevelopment, which is largely a debate between people who think that underdevelopment in places like Africa is mostly being caused by the policies of Western governments and people who think that the policies chosen by the governments of the less developed countries are the main cause of the economic problems there.

Following this, we'll talk about debates over the usefulness of structural adjustment policies and foreign aid.

And, during Week 8, we will also have our in-class midterm exam. This will be made up of short answer questions and will cover the material that we've covered up to Week 7.

Week 9 – Marxism

Next up, we're going to talk about one of the oldest IR theories and one that is, rightly or wrongly, becoming less popular over time, especially since the end of the Cold War in 1991. I'm, of course, referring to Marxist IR theory, which focuses on the structure of the international political and economic system and tries to make the case that the way the global political and economic system currently works harms many countries in the non-Western parts of the world, such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Now, like realism and liberalism, Marxist IR theories come in many shapes and sizes, and so we're going to look at a few different Marxist theories, including the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, World Systems Theory, Dependency Theory, and Gramscianism.

Week 10 – Constructivism, and the Role of Public Opinion and the News Media in International Affairs

After that, we're going to discuss the **constructivist** approach to international relations, which focuses on things like norms, ideas, and rules. The main argument of this approach is that we can **change** how the world **works** by changing how we **think** about it and **perceive** it.

Then, in the second part of that class, we'll talk about the role of public opinion and the news media in shaping foreign policy decisions. This means we're going to look at the role of these forces in **shaping perceptions** of foreign policy issues, the various ways they might **influence** how and when governments make foreign policy decisions, and also how, on the other hand, governments can **use** these forces as tools to help them address foreign policy issues.

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Week 11 – Geopolitics

Next up, in Week 11, we are going to have a lecture devoted to the concept of **geopolitics**, which focuses on how, and in what ways, geographical features at the local, state, regional, and global level interact with politics and power.

Scholars who use this concept to help them study international politics tend to agree that geography frequently influences political decision-making and also that political power influences geographical space.

In other words, this lecture is going to explain the relationship between **geography** and **international relations**.

Week 12 – Humanitarian Intervention and the International Politics of Climate Change

And, during our **final** week of the semester, we're going to talk about a number of issues surrounding **humanitarian interventions**, such as whether states have a **duty** to launch humanitarian

interventions to prevent or stop genocides in other states and whether humanitarian intervention should be viewed as a *virtuous*, *ethical* and *moral* activity.

After this, we will chat about the international politics of the global environment, such as identifying some of the critically important environmental problems that governments are suppose to be dealing with and also some of the reasons why governments have frequently *NOT* done a very good job of addressing these issues.

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Module Administration

Alright, now, before moving on, I just wanted to outline my basic philosophy for designing my lectures, which is, in a nutshell, to avoid, whenever possible, giving you exactly the same take on the subject matter that you'll get in your main textbook and other readings.

As a result, the lectures usually won't be a direct, point-by-point rehash of the text. There will be some overlap, but also some major divergences. What this means is that you'll basically be getting more value for your tuition money because you'll get two takes on these topics instead of just one.

I also wanted to highlight the fact that PO4018 is made up of two largely separate but equally important components. Anything related to the textbook, which is *The Globalization of World Politics* and to the lectures and designing the midterm and research essay, are completely my responsibility, so please come to me, rather than your tutor, if you have any questions about how your assignments were marked or anything related to the textbook or the lectures.

On the other hand, your tutors have responsibility for running the tutorial groups.

Oh, and just a reminder, the tutorial groups start in Week 3, which is in two weeks.

Also, another important reminder for you is that all of the readings for this module are going to be posted on our module's Brightspace site. I think it's a waste of time to have you running around the library finding and photocopying chapters from a textbook on reserve or searching through journal databases for your tutorial readings. I'm simply going to do all of that leg work for you.

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Objectives of the Module

Ok, now, I have two major learning objectives for anyone taking this module. The first is **knowledge**, which means I want to expose you to a range of international relations issues and theories in order to enhance your knowledge of this really exciting field.

My other objective is **communication**, meaning that I want you to further develop your abilities and willingness to talk about and debate these issues and theories both verbally and in your writing.

The first objective might seem pretty obvious while the second is probably less obvious. Nevertheless, I want all of you to talk during your tutorial groups. You are all smart people and you all have opinions, so I want you to voice them and defend them.

There will be discussion questions provided in each tutorial group session to help kick off the discussion but I hope you talk about many different aspects of these topics. Many of the topics we're going to talk about during this module make headlines every single day. They're **supposed** to be interesting, so I hope it won't be too hard to get you to talk and write about them.

Questions

So, does anyone have any questions about what I've talked about so far?

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Major Assignments and Module Requirements

Alright, now for the part of the lecture that you're probably most interested in today – the workload of the module. Well, the workload has three major components.

Lecture/Tutorial Attendance and Participation

First off, we'll have class participation. I want you to come to every lecture and tutorial ready to talk about the topics of the week. This isn't something to take lightly because it's worth 15% of your total grade. Each tutorial meeting is, of course, going to be devoted to class discussion, so if you don't talk, we're just going to have a lot of awkward silences and the class won't be nearly as interesting or fun for any of us.

Now, while I just said that this is not something to take lightly, it's also not something to be worried about. If you come to class and participate actively during the tutorial groups, these are effectively just free marks. The topics we're going to cover in the class are suppose to be contentious and there isn't a right answer for any of them, so don't worry about trying to figure out the right or best answer.

Ultimately, just tell your tutor and your classmates what you think and what you believe about these topics and you'll do just fine.

Midterm Exam

And, on October 28th, we will also have our in-class midterm exam that will be worth 20 percent of your total grade. This will be made up of short answer questions and will cover the material that we've covered up to Week 7.

Research Essay

And finally, you'll also write a major research essay for the module, which will be due on November 27 and be worth 70 percent of your total grade. This essay will be between 1,500 and 2,000 words and it should provide an answer to one of the questions that I will provide you with by the end of October.

Questions?

Alright, so, are there any questions?

Conclusion

Tell them you will see them next week for the lecture on Realism.