International Relations (INRE) 43800: International Political Economy

Winter 2015

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Tuesdays 9-11:50a
Room: 102 Cobb Hall

Instructor: Matthias Staisch
Office: 514 Foster Hall

Office hours: M and T, 12-2p, and by appointment
Phone: (773) 702-5565
Email: mstaisch@uchicago.edu
Web: http://home.uchicago.edu/~mstaisch/
Course description

This seminar is a graduate-level survey of international political economy (IPE). It addresses three prominent questions: (1) How do governments coordinate to regulate the cross-border flow of goods, services, and capital? In particular, what are the relative merits of relying on decentralized, or market-based institutions, as opposed to centralized, or state-based ones, for doing so? (2) What are the distributional implications of these coordinating devices? Specifically, what kind of cleavages constitute the distributional struggles that characterize today’s global economy? (3) Why are the systems of international exchange prone to periodic crisis, and how do governments seek to restore stability, and insure against future volatility?

This survey is complementary to and offered in conjunction with the Committee on International Relations’ core seminar in International Order and Security. The complementarity is not only substantive, but skill-oriented as well. The ultimate goal of both survey courses is to prepare students for theoretically informed and methodologically rigorous explorations of academic and policy questions they find interesting. By the end of this part of the core sequence, students will be able to (1) critically evaluate competing (empirical) measurements of the key concepts which constitute theoretical propositions in IPE; (2) craft a research design that adequately matches a theoretical claim in IPE with relevant empirical data; and (3) compare and contrast the theoretical propositions and policy prescriptions of the now-dominant neoclassical school with those of its neo-Keynesian and neo-Marxist challengers.

Prerequisites

This is not a course in international economics. That said, I assume a certain background knowledge of basic economic theory, such as the law of comparative advantage. If you need a refresher, I recommend that you consult the following sources:


Readings

All course readings are accessible via Chalk. In addition, each student will be asked to read one book on the “Great Recession.” See the “Student Responsibilities” section for details.

Determination of Grades

The final course grade will be determined by weighting your performance in the following areas:

1. Class Participation and Discussion Points (25%)

Late memos will be dropped one letter grade for each day past the due date.

Student Responsibilities

Attendance and Participation

This course is designed to facilitate direct student engagement with the material. It is essential that students attend every class fully prepared to discuss the readings with each other. In order to help launch discussion, everyone must submit 2 discussion points via email no later than 24 hours before each class. These discussion points must not be clarification questions, but ought to develop something you picked up across the week’s readings in a generative way. I will post these discussion points (anonymously) to Chalk before each seminar session to allow you to compare and contrast your own reactions to the material with those of your peers. Your participation grade will be determined by your in-seminar contributions, and the quality of the points submitted for discussion.

Reading

It is imperative that students complete all the assigned readings in the order they appear on the “Course Schedule” below. This being a reading-intensive seminar, I encourage students
to form study groups; not for the purpose of reducing the reading load each student has to bear, but in order to be able to process the material in advance of the weekly seminar, and to identify and answer any clarification questions they may have.

**Paper-Free Assignment Policy**

All written assignments and resulting feedback will be handled 100% electronically. To minimize compatibility and formatting problems, I request that all paper assignments be submitted in the form of a “.pdf” email attachment to a message sent to mstaisch@uchicago.edu, time-stamped before the relevant deadlines. I will return marked up assignments as an attachment to the email address they were submitted from for your own safekeeping.

**Memo 1: From Concept to Measurement**

The purpose behind this assignment and the next is to allow students to hone some of the skills that will be needed to conduct their own research. Think of these assignments as a dry run for, among other things, your M.A. thesis research. Every piece of academic writing grapples with one or more concepts. As empirical social scientists, IPE researchers must figure out how to translate abstract analytic concepts such as “property rights,” “development” and “trade” into something that the eye can see. Put differently, they must convert a unit of analysis into a unit of observation. In this assignment, students trace this process of measurement by critically appraising how a sample of existing research executes this conversion. More specifically, students write a (double-spaced) memo of 1,500-1,800 words (incl. footnotes) in which they:

- Identify a concept of some relevance to scholars of IPE;
- Select five existing peer-reviewed works in which this concept features prominently (students must clear their selection with the instructor; the assigned readings can serve as a starting point; no two articles may be by the same author(s));
- Catalogue the ways in which the authors in question *define* this concept;
- Catalogue how the authors in question *measure* this concept empirically;
- Judge the *validity* of the move from concept definition to measurement.

Students may select articles from the following list of journals:

1. International Organization
In preparation for this assignment, we will discuss, in class, the following chapter:


**Memo 2: From Relational Claim to Evidence via Research Design**

In the previous assignment, the focus was on a single concept, and its empirical measurement. Most (IPE) research projects, when finished, aim to relate at least two concepts to one another. They contain a claim about how and/or why two or more co-occurring phenomena, say “international trade” and “conflict” are related. Then, they follow a recipe for examining this relationship empirically. This we call research design. For this assignment, students begin by positing a simple question: “What is the relationship between some phenomenon X and another phenomenon Y?” They proceed to identify a handful of peer-reviewed articles, and critically evaluate the empirical research strategy of these works. More specifically, students write a (double-spaced) memo of 1,500-1,800 words (incl. footnotes) in which they:
• Identify a single relationship between two phenomena of some relevance to scholars of IPE;
• Select five peer-reviewed journal articles which examine this relationship empirically (students must clear their selection with the instructor; the assigned readings can serve as a starting point; no two articles may be by the same author(s));
• Provide a detailed accounting of the relational claim as specified in each article, and of the research design the author(s) use(s) to examine it;
• Critically appraise whether or not the research design is appropriately chosen and executed;
• Offer at least one alternative recipe for examining the relationship in question.

Students may select articles from the above list of journals.

Memo 3: Book Report on the “Great Recession”

In a survey seminar such as this one, it is impossible to have the weekly reading assignments reflect the depth of ideological and analytical disagreement among scholars of IPE. As a next-best option, we will map the intellectual landscape beyond the dominant neo-classical model which informs most of the readings in this course, using a representative sample of the immense scholarly output precipitated by the so-called “Great Recession” as our corpus. Each student will be randomly assigned one book from the list below on the first day of the seminar. The student is to write a (double-spaced) memo of 1,500-1,800 words (incl. footnotes), using a template I will hand out in class. I will collect these reviews, and post them to Chalk for everyone to peruse in advance of the last sessions. The goal is for students to be able to compare and contrast how neo-classical, neo-Keynesian, and neo-Marxist scholars and commentators theorize the gravest global economic crisis of the current era.

In preparation for this assignment, we will discuss, in class, the following reading:


Students are responsible for locating a copy of their book.


**Electronic Etiquette and Communication with your Instructor**

I request that students not use their laptops, cell phones, or PDAs during class for any reason. This means that you will need to come to class with the relevant materials and notes in hardcopy.

I encourage every student to contact me with any problems, concerns, or questions about the course as soon as they arise. You can sign up for my office hours via Starfish on Chalk. If you are unable to meet during designated times, simply send me an e-mail, and propose a few time slots during which you are available. I ask that you give me at least 48 hours to accommodate you.

**Policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity**

The University of Chicago's Academic Integrity statement reads: "It is contrary to justice, to academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another’s statements or ideas of work as one’s own. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University’s disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously. Proper acknowledgment of another’s ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes ‘use’ should be addressed to the instructor."

If you have questions, ask me before submitting work, and/or consult Charles Lipson’s *Doing Honest Work in College* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Violation of the standards of academic honesty and integrity will automatically prompt me to (1) post a failing grade for this course, and (2) advocate for expulsion from the program.
Course schedule

1. January 6 - Introduction: (Global) States, (Global) Markets, and (Global) Societies

Housekeeping: Discuss the syllabus. Assign books for Memo 3.


Part I: Coordination

2. January 13 - Reciprocity and Reputation


3. January 20 - Status

*Housekeeping:* Discuss Memo 1. Read Goertz.


4. January 27 - Delegation


***Due on February 2, 5p: Memo 1***

5. February 3 - Integration


Part II: Distribution

6. February 10 - Domestic Cleavages

*Housekeeping*: Discuss Memo 2.


7. **February 17 - Democracies versus Authoritarian Regimes**


***Due on February 23, 5p: Memo 2***

8. **February 24 - Cores versus Peripheries**

*Housekeeping*: Discuss Memo 3. Read Van Evera.


***no class on March 3***

**Part III: Crisis**

***Due on March 8, 5p: Memo 3***

9. March 10 - The “Great Recession”: Debating the Causes


10. March 17 - (Policy) Responses to the “Great Recession”


