

Political Science 103 Introduction to International Relations

Ward Thomas

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Fenwick 302

Office x3445; Home (508) 835-9744 (before 10 p.m., please)

e-mail: wthomas@holycross.edu

Office Hours: Monday 2-4 pm, Wednesday 10am-noon, and by appointment

This course, as the name suggests, is a broad introduction to the major issues, themes, and debates in the study of international relations and global politics. Among the topics we will be addressing are: the structure of the international system and the role of various actors and events in shaping it, different interpretations of and approaches to the problem of war, the dynamics of imperialism and postcolonialism, the role of international organizations and international law, the possibilities of and constraints upon ethical action in the international sphere, and the implications of several recent and contemporary trends for the future course of international politics. One goal of the course is to enable students to identify interconnections between various recurrent modes of thought in international politics, and to place current debates in historical and intellectual context.

Grading for the course will be determined on the following basis:

- cumulative final exam: 30%
- midterm exam (Oct. 19): 20%
- first paper (due Sept. 21): 20%
- second paper (due Dec. 5): 20%
- class participation: 10%

(Class participation means *participation*; regular attendance is a minimum requirement. It is therefore important not only that you attend class, but that you do the readings and come prepared to contribute constructively to discussion. Your participation grade may also include your performance on occasional quizzes on developing events – see below.)

The first paper is due at the beginning of class on **Thursday, September 21**; the second paper is due at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, December 5**. The topics and specifications for the papers will be discussed in more detail at a later date. **All papers are to be double-spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman font and 1.25 inch margins. Late papers will be penalized five (5) points per day, including weekend days.** Any extenuating circumstances that threaten to cause problems meeting a deadline should be brought to my attention as far in advance as possible, and, if appropriate, should be confirmed by a letter from your class dean. Computer problems are not a valid excuse for missing a deadline - back up your documents frequently. Also, students are required to keep a hard copy of each paper they submit.


For all written assignments, the quality of the writing *does* matter. Papers should be logically structured, tightly reasoned, clearly written, and carefully proofread. Remember (in this class, other classes, and in general) that poor writing is not merely a stylistic problem, but a barrier to getting your ideas across. A poorly written paper is a poor paper, however brilliant conceptually.


Before beginning any written assignments, you must read the document “Common Errors in Student Papers,” which I have posted on ERes. These are errors that no Holy Cross student should make. ***Any paper that contains three or more instances of errors on the list will be returned for correction, and a five-point penalty will be applied.*** The corrected paper must be identical to the paper originally submitted except for the corrected errors. Finally, as an ethical matter, students are not permitted to turn in papers that they have written for other courses.


The following books are required and are available for purchase at the bookstore:

- 1) Richard K. Betts, ed., Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace, Updated Second Edition (New York: Longman, 2005)
- 2) Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History, 6th edition (New York: Longman, 2007)

In addition, students will be required to read a good daily newspaper – The New York Times is recommended. We will be discussing current affairs that relate to international affairs on a fairly regular basis, and these discussions will enter into your grade for class participation. In addition, there may be occasional **quizzes** on developing world events that will count toward your grade for class participation.

 = readings contained in the Betts volume.

 = readings available in the reserve room at Dinand Library.

 = readings available online on Electronic Reserves (ERes).

Instructions for accessing readings on ERes: First, go to the Library site on the Holy Cross web page. Then click on “Electronic Reserves (ERes).” Then click on “Electronic Reserves and Course Materials,” then, using either the Political Science listings or my name, find the page for this course. You will be asked to enter a password. The password for this course is **bigpapi**. Once you have accessed the course page, you should be able to access any document by simply clicking on its title. If there are any problems with accessing documents through ERes, please let me know by email as soon as possible.

1. Introduction


careful review of course syllabus


complete Personal Bio index card

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, ch. 1 (pp. 1-20 only)

2. The international system: actors, structure, and theories

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, ch. 2

 K.J. Holsti, “Power, Capability, and Influence in International Politics”

 Hedley Bull, “Society and Anarchy in International Relations”

 Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory”

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between *power* and *influence* in international relations?
2. Explain the major differences among the three “doctrines,” or conceptions of international anarchy, described by Hedley Bull. What does Bull mean when he says that states “constitute a society without a government”?
3. According to Waltz, would war cease if people were nicer? Why or why not?

3. War and the international order (I) - the Balance of Power

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, ch. 3

☞ Richard Elrod, “The Concert of Europe”

☞ Lionel Beehner, “Keeping It Realist”

Discussion Questions:

1. According to Nye, what were Woodrow Wilson’s two major criticisms of the balance of power? Do you agree or disagree with this critique?
2. Of the three schools of thought described by Hedley Bull (and discussed in class in week 2), which one best describes Richard Elrod’s interpretation of the Concert of Europe? Why?
3. What characteristics of contemporary international politics would make the operation of a balance of power system more difficult than it was in the nineteenth century?

4. War and the international order (II) - Collective Security

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, ch. 4

☞ Donald C. Watt, “1939 Revisited: On Theories of the Origins of Wars”

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the major differences between a balance of power system and a collective security system?
2. In your view, can a collective security system function effectively enough to prevent war? Why or why not?
3. What does Watt mean when he refers to “the Sarajevo thesis,” and how, according to him, did it contribute to the appeasement of Nazi Germany? Do you agree with his argument?

5. War and the international order (III) - Containment and Deterrence

☞ George F. Kennan (as “X”), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, ch. 5

☞ John Lewis Gaddis, “The Long Peace: Stability in the International System”

☞ McGeorge Bundy, “The Unimpressive Record of Atomic Diplomacy”

🎬 film screening: *Dr. Strangelove* (date, time, and location TBA)

Discussion Questions:

1. George Kennan’s “X” article, written in 1947, describes the nature of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, and prescribes a course of action for the U.S. to follow. What is his assessment, and what are his recommendations? From what you know, in what ways do you think his assessment of the situation proved to be accurate? In what ways do you think it proved to be inaccurate?
2. The nuclear era has led to several strange paradoxes. How would you explain the logic behind each of these:
 - a. aiming your weapons at *weapons* can be seen as bad, while aiming them at *people* can be seen as good;
 - b. accurate weapons can be seen as bad, even if *you* have them;
 - c. preparing to defend yourself against attack can be seen as dangerous.

3. How important a role do you think nuclear weapons have played in preventing major war in the international system since 1945? How important a role have they played in U.S. foreign policy in general? In what types of situations are they most relevant, and in which are they less relevant?

6. Imperialism and decolonization

- ☞ John Isbister, Promises Not Kept, ch. 4
- ☞ Robert Jackson, “The Weight of Ideas in Decolonization: Normative Change in International Relations”

Discussion Questions:

1. According to Isbister, how do the effects of imperialism continue to be felt in the Third World today?
2. What is Jackson’s explanation of the wave of decolonization that occurred in the decades following World War II? With which of the three schools of thought we have discussed would his explanation best fit?

~~~~~ MIDTERM EXAM -- Thursday, October 19 ~~~~~

## 7. International law and international morality

- ☞ Christopher Joyner, “The Reality and Relevance of International Law in the Twenty-First Century”
- Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, pp. 20-28
- ☞ Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue”
- ☞ Barton Bernstein, “The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered”
- ☞ Paul Fussell and Michael Walzer, “Thank God for the Atom Bomb” and “An Exchange of Views”

### *Discussion Questions:*

1. Is international law really “law”? What does Joyner say about this? Do you agree?
2. With which position in The Melian Dialogue do you tend to agree, the Athenians’ or the Melians’? Why?
3. With regard to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, do you agree more with Fussell or with Walzer? Why?

## 8. International organizations and nongovernmental organizations

- Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, pp. 175-185
- ☞ Shashi Tharoor, “Why America Still Needs the United Nations”
- ☞ Michael Barnett, “The United Nations and Global Security: The Norm is Mightier Than the Sword”
- ☞ Jessica Mathews, “Power Shift”

### *Discussion Questions:*

1. Are international organizations simply means by which states pursue their policy goals, or do they play a more independent or autonomous role? If so, what is the nature of that role?

2. Are international organizations and nongovernmental organizations going to be challengers to sovereign states as major actors in international politics? Why or why not? Is this a good or a bad thing?

### 9. The global economy and global inequality

📖 John Isbister, Promises Not Kept, ch. 3

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, pp. 204-210

🎧 G. John Ikenberry, “The Myth of Post-Cold War Chaos”

🎧 Thomas L. Friedman and Ignacio Ramonet, “Dueling Globalizations”

🎧 John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, “The Globalization Backlash”

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. Of the explanations of Third World underdevelopment that Isbister considers in chapter 3 of Promises Not Kept, which does the author seem to find most persuasive? Which do *you* find most persuasive? Why?
2. Is globalization a good or a bad thing for developing countries and people within them? Why?
3. Why does Ikenberry say that the idea that the international system has been marked by chaos since the end of the Cold War is a “myth”?

### 10. Forces for order?: Interdependence, supranationalism, and the “democratic peace”

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, pp. 210-230

📖 Richard Rosecrance, “Force or Trade: the Costs and Benefits of Two Paths to Global Influence”

📖 Geoffrey Blainey, “Paradise is a Bazaar”

📖 Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics”

📖 Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”

📖 John J. Mearsheimer, “Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War”

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. In what way does Richard Rosecrance argue that global trade has changed international politics? What factors have contributed to the rise of “the trading world” and the demise of “the military-political world”? Do you agree with his argument? Why or why not?
2. In “Paradise is a Bazaar,” Geoffrey Blainey takes issue with what is often called “interdependence” theory. What is the central idea behind this theory? What are Blainey’s major arguments against it? Do you find his critique persuasive?
3. What does Fukuyama mean when he says that history is at an “end”? Do you agree?
4. Why is Mearsheimer pessimistic about the long-term prospects for European integration? Do you think he’s correct?

### 11. Flies in the ointment?: ethnic conflict and the “clash of civilizations”

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, pp. 157-164, 186-189

📖 Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”

👤 Fouad Ajami, “The Summoning”

👤 Frederick Tipson, “Culture Clash-ification”

👤 Thomas L. Friedman, “Today’s News Quiz”

👤 John R. Bowen, “The Myth of Global Ethnic Conflict”

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. What are the major grounds of disagreement between Huntington on one hand, and Tipson and Ajami on the other? Whose position seems more persuasive?
2. From what you know, how well do you think Huntington’s notion of a “clash of civilizations” explains the events of September 11 and since? Why?
3. According to Bowen, what is wrong with the way we customarily think about ethnic conflict?

### 12. Sovereignty under pressure?

👤 J.W. Anderson, “A Brief History of the Kyoto Protocol”

👤 J.W. Anderson, “Overview of the Kyoto Protocol”

👤 Kopp, Morgenstern, and Toman, “Unresolved Issues”

Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, pp. 233-250

📖 Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, “Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict”

👤 Timothy Samuel Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, “Why God is Winning”

👤 John Rapley, “The New Middle Ages”

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. In what ways do environmental problems challenge traditional ways of thinking about international relations?
2. What problem is the 1997 Kyoto Protocol intended to address? Why are some observers, especially in the U.S., critical of the approach it takes?
3. Why does Rapley say we are entering a period that could be called “the new middle ages”? If he is right, how does this challenge conventional ways of looking at international relations?

### 13. Prospects for the future

👤 Richard Rosecrance, “The Rise of the Virtual State”

📖 John Mueller, “The Obsolescence of Major War”

📖 Benjamin R. Barber, “Jihad vs. McWorld”

👤 James M. Goldgeier and Michael M. McFaul, “A Tale of Two Worlds: Core and Periphery in the Post-Cold War Era”

#### *Discussion Questions:*

1. In what way does Rosecrance’s analysis in “The Rise of the Virtual State” update and expound on his analysis in the “Force or Trade” reading from unit 10? What are the implications for interdependence theory?

2. Is military force becoming less important in international relations? If you think it *is*, does this change relate to the trends Mueller points to, or are other factors more important?
3. What are the “two worlds” Goldgeier & McFaul refer to? Does their argument temper your assessment of the trends addressed in unit 10? If so, how?