COURSE OVERVIEW
The international relations core course is an intensive and critical examination of theory and theorizing in international relations. As such, this is not an encyclopedic survey of international relations nor is it a comprehensive preparatory course for the International Relations prelim. Instead, this course covers the landscape of IR theory by examining a selection of questions, puzzles, and perspectives, getting you to not only think about theory, but practice theorizing. We focus on the interaction between theory and the 'real world' by tracing several analytical devices that cut across the field and applying them to pressing empirical puzzles. Through this critical and intensive engagement with theory, and the practical experimentation with theorizing, this course hopes to trigger a process of discovery, not only of prevailing themes in disciplinary debates, but also of students' individual interests and intellectual identity.

EXPECTATIONS
The core course is a group exploration of IR theory, we will be hashing through abstract ideas and their application to specific issues together. This makes weekly preparation and active participation paramount for this course. The best and most rewarding core course seminar sessions are spent talking to each other, pushing each other on interpretations and implications of the readings, moving beyond answering questions about the content of the readings. This requires that you arrive prepared and ready to engage.

ASSIGNMENTS
(1) Three analytic memos (30%): Over the course of the term you must complete 3 analytic memos of 750-1000 words each. Memos can be submitted any week after Week 3 and at least one must be completed by Week 6. The only requirements are that the memos must (i) address at least 3 readings from at least two weeks and (ii) contain critical reflections on how the readings speak to one another (what they get wrong/right, what they could have done differently). These are not to be summaries. Instead, they should explore connections and conversations found across readings and the ideas that you have in the course of doing the readings.

(2) Five instance exercises (15%): Thinking theoretically about empirical material takes practice. Instance exercises help you to do that. An instance exercise simply asks you to read a media story (we will provide the story each week) about something happening in global politics and ask “of what is this an instance?” In other words, the instance exercise forces you to move beyond the
details of what is described in the media story to think about what kind of broader dynamics and forces are at play. Instance exercises can be a maximum of 250 words. They are to be submitted via the course discussion board by 10AM the day of class (instance exercises submitted after 10AM will not count towards the 5 required).

(3) Participation (20%): This course covers a lot of ground and requires a high level of commitment. The small size of this seminar allows for the creation of a productive environment that encourages active participation. Discussion is a crucial part of this process and consequently students should be prepared to offer a critical analysis of each week’s reading and actively partake in class discussion.

(4) Reverse engineered proposal (35%): This assignment is geared towards combining critical reasoning with professional development in terms of starting to think about proposal writing and conference presentations. You will choose a book in an area of your interest approved by one of us—find a ‘first book’ that originated from the author’s dissertation. After reading the book you will write a reverse engineered proposal. In other words, write the dissertation proposal that your chosen book emerged from. Dissertation proposals vary in format and requirements from supervisor to supervisor, but in general they answer five questions:

1. What is the puzzle?
2. Why is it important?
3. What does the literature say about the puzzle?
4. What’s your answer?
5. How will you know if you’re right or wrong?

Use these five questions to structure the proposal that produced your chosen book. Reverse engineered proposals can be a maximum of 2500 words. They are due December 9th by 5pm. Late proposals will not be accepted without prior approval.

RESOURCES

We recommend the following books for an introductory review of IR theory:


We cannot cover everything that’s been done in IR over the last 100 years (and we’re not going to try). This seminar is designed to give you a sense of the range of perspectives available within the IR theory world and a foundation for exploring on your own. That said there are a number of
‘classic’ books that you should be familiar with, and we encourage you to take them up as side reading in the course of your first year.


**SCHEDULE**

**September 8: Introduction and IR Theory Bootcamp**
- What is theory?
- What is IR theory?
- What is the IR theory ecosystem—how do we map the field?


**September 15: No Class**
Professors are at APSA this week. On September 22 & 29 class will be 4 hours and we will cover the material originally scheduled for this week over these two weeks.

September 22: Is the World Falling Apart—and Can IR Theory Help Us?
- Normative/positive theorizing?
- What is the role of IR theory?
- Is everything different or is it back to the future?


September 22 & September 29: Mapping Foundations—Ontology/Epistemology


**September 29: Mapping Foundations—Agents and Structures**


**October 6: Power**


**October 13: Interests**


**October 20: Ideas**


**October 27: Collective Action**


**November 3: Climate Change Politics**


**November 17: Security I**


November 24: Security II


December 1: Security III


