Overview

Social theory is a trans-disciplinary but essentially philosophical inquiry into the ontology and epistemology of social life in general – into how we should think about thinking about society – rather than its concrete manifestations in actually existing societies. This is not a course in social theory per se, but in social theory of International Relations, which brings this problematic to bear on the particular subject matter of world politics and its study. The course is organized into two parts. Part I briefly takes up the question of IR as a social science and then the relationship between material conditions and ideas. Part II then examines in more depth three approaches to the agent-structure problem, or how the parts of the international system should be understood to relate to the whole: 1) micro-theories, which focus on the interaction of parts and explain in bottom-up fashion; 2) macro-theories, which start with structure and explain top-down; and 3) process theories, which seek to transcend the agent-structure binary altogether.

Readings

There are no books required for this course; all the required readings are articles or chapters available online through Carmen. However, students will be assumed to have read, and studied, three books already: Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Addison-Wesley, 1979); Robert Keohane, After Hegemony (Princeton University Press, 1984), and my Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge University Press, 1999). In case refreshment is called for, parts of these books are listed below as assumed background.

Expectations

There are three course requirements.

1) All students are expected to attend class and participate actively and in an informed fashion in class discussions. (20% of the final grade)
2) All students will write three 2-page memos on three weeks’ readings of their choice,
with memos due the night before that class session (20%).

3) All students will write EITHER:
   a) One 25 page research paper (60%).
   OR
   b) Two 10-12 page critical review essays (30% each).

Journal Abbreviations

APSR = American Political Science Review
EJIR = European Journal of International Relations
IO = International Organization
IS = International Security
ISQ = International Studies Quarterly
ISR = International Studies Review
IT = International Theory
JCMS = Journal of Common Market Studies
JIRD = Journal of International Relations and Development
RIPE = Review of International Political Economy
RIS = Review of International Studies

CALENDAR

Jan. 4: COURSE INTRODUCTION

Background:

Wendt, Social Theory, chapter 1.

Required:


Further Reading:

On State Personhood:


Krolikowski, Alanna (2008) – “State Personhood in Ontological Security Theories of


On Constructivism Generally:


PART I: PHILOSOPHICAL PRELIMINARIES

Jan 11: CAN PRAGMATISM END THE 3rd DEBATE?

Background:

Waltz, Theory, chapter 1.
Wendt, Social Theory, chapter 2.

Required:


Further Reading:


Locher, Birgit and Elisabeth Prugl (2001) – “Feminism and constructivism: worlds apart or sharing the middle ground?,” ISQ, 45, 111-29.


Bernstein, Steven, et al. (2000) – “God gave physics the easy problems: Adapting social science to an unpredictable world,” EJIR, 6, 43-76.


post-positivist era,” ISQ, 33, 235-54.


Jan 18: ONTOLOGY I: THE POWER OF MATERIAL CONDITIONS?

Background:

Waltz, Theory, chapter ###
Wendt, Social Theory, chapter 3.

Required:


Further Reading:


Jan 25: ONTOLOGY II: THE POWER OF IDEAS?

Required:


Further Reading:

Fierke, Karin (2002) – “Links across the abyss: language and logic in international
relations,” ISQ, 46, 331-54.
Nau, Henry (2002) – At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy,
Cornell University Press.
ISR, 4, 48-72.
Williams, Michael and Iver Neumann (2000) - “From alliance to security community:
NATO, Russia, and the power of identity,” Millennium, 29, 357-388.
Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper (2000) - “Beyond ‘identity’,” Theory and
Society, 29, 1-47.
Neumann, Iver (1999) - Uses of the Other: ‘The East’ in European Identity Formation,
University of Minnesota Press.
Domestic Change, Cambridge University Press.
identity, and democratic peace,” SS, 8, 94-144.
Desch, Michael (1998) – “Cultural clash: Assessing the importance of ideas in security
studies,” IS, 223, 141-170.
Adler, Emanuel and Michael Barnett, eds. (1998) - Security Communities, Cambridge
University Press.
Laffey, Mark and Jutta Wldes (1997) – “Beyond belief: ideas and symbolic technologies
in the study of international relations,” EJIR, 3, 193-237.
Katzenstein, Peter, ed. (1996) - The Culture of National Security, Columbia UP.
belief systems and state sovereignty in international cooperation," Politics and
Klotz, Audie (1995) - Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid,
Cornell University Press.
framework,” in Goldstein and Keohane, eds., Ideas and Foreign Policy, Cornell
University Press.
Cohn, Carol (1987) - "Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals", Signs,
12, 687-718.
PART II: THE AGENT-STRUCTURE PROBLEM

Feb 1: MICRO I: LOGICS OF ACTION AND THE “4th DEBATE.”

Required:


Further Reading:


Feb 8: MICRO II: INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Required:


Further Reading:

Widmaier, Wesley (2007) – “Constructing Foreign Policy Crises: Interpretive Leadership in the Cold War and War on Terrorism,” ISQ, 51, 779-94

Feb 15: MACRO I: RETHINKING STRUCTURE

Background:
Waltz, Theory, chapter 5.
Wendt, Social Theory, chapter 4.

Required:
Donnelly, Jack (2009) – ‘Rethinking Political Structures: From ‘Ordering Principles’ to ‘Vertical Differentiation’ and Beyond,” IT, 1, 49-86.
International Relations Theory,” *EJIR*, 16, 315-337.

**Further Reading:**


Linklater, Andrew (1998) - The Transformation of Political Community, University of South Carolina Press.


Feb 22: MACRO II: THE CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL.

Background:

Waltz, Theory, chapter 6.
Wendt, Social Theory, chapter 6.

Required:


Further Reading:
Political Studies, 56, 907-927.

Habermas, Juergen (2008) – “The Constitutionalization of International Law and the
Legitimation Problems of a Constitution for World Society,” Constellations,
15(4), 444-455.


Constellations, 15(2), 173-188.

Duvall, Raymond, and Jonathan Havercroft (2008) – “Taking sovereignty out of this
world: space weapons and empire of the future,” RIS, 34, 755-75.


of International Affairs, 20, 533-549.

International Society, Oxford University Press.

Comparative Law Quarterly, 55, 51-76.

Bickerton, Christopher, Philip Cunliffe, and Alexander Gourevitch, eds. (2006) – Politics
Without Sovereignty: A Critique of Contemporary International Relations,
Routledge.

Mitzen, Jennifer (2005) – “Reading Habermas in anarchy: Multilateral diplomacy and

Agnew, John (2005) – “Sovereignty regimes: Territoriality and state authority in
contemporary world politics,” Annals of the Association of American Geography,
95, 437-461.

Mendelsohn, Barak (2005) – “Sovereignty under attack: the international society meets
the Al Qaeda network,” RIS, 31, 45-68.

Kratochwil, Friedrich (2005) – “Religion and (inter-)national politics: On the heuristics of
identities, structures, and agents,” Alternatives, 30, 113-140.

Reus-Smit, Christian (2003) – “Politics and international legal obligation,” EJIR, 9, 591-
625.

Foote, Rosemary, John Gaddis and Andrew Hurrell, eds. (2003) – Order and Justice in
International Relations, Oxford University Press.

States,” JCMS, 40, 743-65.

condition,” EJIR, 8, 315-38.

Journal of Ethics, 6, 311-52.


RIS, 27, 519-38.

Mar 1: PROCESS I: MACRO…

Background:

Wendt, *Social Theory*, chapter 7.

Required:


Further Reading:

Bowden, Brett (2004) – “In the name of progress of peace: The ‘standard of civilization’ and the universalizing project,” Alternatives, 29, 43-68.


Mar 8: PROCESS II: …and MICRO?

Required:


Further Reading:


Odysseos, Louiza and Fabio Petito, eds. (2007) – The International Political Thought of


