Beyond IR: The Politics of the International, the Global and the Planetary

2017 - 2018

Module Code: 7PIRS001W
Spring semester
Time: 1.00 – 4.00pm Tuesdays
Room: Regent Street 152

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Full Module Title: Beyond International Relations: The Politics of the International, the Global and the Planetary

Short Module Title: Beyond International Relations

Module Code: 7PIRS001W

Module Level: 7

Academic credit weighting: 20

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Faculty: Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Department: Politics and International Relations

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Host course: MA International Relations

Status: Core

Subject Board: MA International Relations

Pre-requisites: None

Co-requisites: None

Assessment: 1 essay 5,000 words (100%)
Module Summary

This module reconsiders the ‘beyond’ of international relations. After the end of the cold war it seemed that international relations, as traditionally understood by the discipline in terms of power politics, Realpolitik, had come to an end. The assumptions of state-based politics, which had informed classical IR, in turn came into question. IR was understood as a discipline founded upon ‘seeing like a state’ (from the perspective of a very white, western elite) whereas there were many other and more pluralised ways of seeing and thinking about politics. More than twenty-five years into the opening up of the discipline of IR (to a global era), this module provides a chance to reflect upon the beyond of the international. In the 1990s it seemed that this beyond offered a positive opportunity to think from non-state-based positions, from the universal view of global interests and concerns: to construct a liberal/globalised community. In the 2000s it appeared that the beyond of the international and the power relations it focused upon, was not necessarily the globalising of liberal forms of rule or, if it was, this was no longer to be understood positively. In the deconstruction of the global, universal, imaginary in the 2000s, the call has not been for a return to the understandings of the past, but rather a further problematisation of the assumptions of the discipline.

In this module we analyse the new forms of thinking that have sought to grasp the world beyond the politics of the ‘international’: alternative ways of seeing and theorising the problems and assumptions of the political sphere. Of most importance, for this module, is that the beyond of IR is a set of discussions that do not see the world in terms of state-based theories of strategy and interests, therefore there is no inter-national theory. The starting assumption is not the state acting in the context of anarchy. Of course, we still have states and states are central to policy-making discourses and international practices, but dominant discussions and debates in IR focus more upon how we understand and see the world beyond the narrow assumptions which informed the discipline of international relations.

The module is in three sections. Firstly, it considers how the global or liberal turn was constructed in the 1990s (the deconstruction of the ‘methodological nationalism’ that necessarily informed classical IR). This first paradigm is a constructive or positive one - the development of constructivist, critical and cosmopolitan approaches, posed in direct opposition to state-based understandings. The second paradigm is a deconstructive or negative one; we analyse how the limits to global and liberal aspirations enabled these framings to be deconstructed and critiqued - especially in the historical, sociological, economic frameworks of new institutionalist, critical and decolonial understandings. Third, the module considers whether the present moment marks the closure of ‘the rise and fall of the global’, perhaps a shift away from the deconstruction and critique of the global and towards a new positive and constructive paradigm, sometimes associated with the planetary politics of the Anthropocene.
Module Aims

1. To introduce students to the theoretical frameworks and practices of the world beyond international relations, to the debates which it has triggered, and the way that approaches to the state and society have developed in the post-cold war era.
2. The module considers the implications of the shift from an elite world of inter-state relations to a more socially complex world and how this shift has been theorised and understood in different ways (both positively and negatively).
3. The module analyses how the centrality of the state (both analytically and as a key institutional actor) has changed for international theorising. In this context, it particularly focuses on what might be termed ‘neoliberal’ or new institutionalist approaches, which place social processes at the centre of international frameworks.
4. The module also introduces students to frameworks of complexity and posthumanism which go beyond new institutionalism and suggest that international problems can neither be grasped in global nor international terms.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module students will be able to:
1. Analyse a range of specialised theories that can be applied to the study of international relations; both in terms of understanding the shift to the global and the limits of this shift.
2. Critically evaluate how state-based approaches to IR have been displaced and the impacts that this has had upon ways of thinking about the discipline.
3. Analyse the relevance of sociological, historical and economic institutionalism to understanding the limits of the shift to a more global world.
4. Critically analyse the limits to traditional understandings of structure and agency in the international sphere and how these apply to Realpolitik and power relations.
5. Select and apply specialised international theories and approaches to specific research problems and recognise the basic costs and benefits of those selections.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

One 3 hour seminar per week involving small group work and student led-discussions. Students are expected to prepare in advance as this involves discussion/interpretation of key readings. The assessment for this module is one essay of 5,000 words. The essay questions are available on page 23 of this module guide. The deadline for the essay is 12.00pm Thursday 12 April 2018.
Key Readings

Audra Mitchell, ‘Is IR going extinct?’, *European Journal of International Relations* 23(1) 2017
Seminar Programme Dates

Introduction

W1 23 January - Seminar 1 - Introduction: The International, the Global and the Planetary and seminar allocation
W2 30 January – Seminar 2 – What was the ‘International’ paradigm of IR?

Part One: The Rise of Global Politics

W3 6 February – Seminar 3 – Globalisation vs Methodological Nationalism
W4 13 February – Seminar 4 – Social Constructivism and Cosmopolitics
W5 20 February - Seminar 5 - Critical Theory 1 - Human Security

W6 27 February – Student Engagement Week - No seminar

Part Two: The Critique of Global Politics

W7 6 March - Seminar 6 – Critical Theory 2 – Empire and Global War
W8 13 March - Seminar 7 – New Institutionalism and Neoliberalism
W9 20 March – Seminar 8 – Pluriversal Politics: Decoloniality and the Ontological Turn

Part Three: Conclusion: The Birth of Planet Politics

W10 27 March Seminar 9 – The Anthropocene and essay preparation
W11 3 April – no seminar
W12 10 April – Seminar 10 Conclusion: The Rise and Fall of the Global

Essay Submission – 12.00pm Thursday 12 April
Seminar Programme/ Readings

-----Introduction-----

Seminar 1 (23 January) Introduction: Beyond IR: The International, the Global and the Planetary and allocation of seminar presentations

The discipline of International Relations was shaped by discourses of Realism – based on a model of international anarchy in which states pursed the interests of realpolitik in the international sphere. This seminar introduces students to what happened after the weakening of this paradigm with the end of the cold war (please note that a grounding in IR theory is not essential for this module). We will introduce two major paradigms of thought, which focus on the rise and fall of the global after IR: these could be construed broadly as liberal/constructive and critical/deconstructive. These two paradigms, centred upon the global, have shaped discussions beyond the classical paradigm of international relations for the last 25 years, but may be coming to a close with the contemporary emergence of the politics of the planetary.

We will also allocate seminar topics, so please consider which you would like to introduce.

Questions:
What is the difference between International Relations and Global Politics?
How was the Global constructed against the classical paradigm?
How was the Global deconstructed?

Background reading
Perhaps for a background to ways of (re)thinking the shift to the global you could look at a piece I wrote about 10 years ago (10 years is a long time in IR so this is just background for your interest)
‘The Global Ideology: Rethinking the Politics of the “Global Turn” in IR’, International Relations, Vol. 23, No. 4 (2009), pp.530-547

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Seminar 2 (30 January) What was the ‘international’ paradigm of IR?

The session (with the assistance of visiting academic, Dr Ignasi Torrent) provides an introductory overview of the discipline of IR’s philosophical and theoretical origins and provides an insight into the evolution of IR up to the end the Cold War. As background for our discussions of the changes that occur from the early 1990s, the session explores how philosophical traditions, paradigms and theories differently approach international relations on the basis of objects of study, dynamics and instruments, or understandings of political space.

Questions
What did the anarchy/sovereignty problematic do for IR?
What were the assumptions behind this framing? Was it timeless?
How was this disrupted by the global in the 1990s?

Background reading
Although knowledge of the discipline of IR is not necessary for this module, the discussions ‘beyond’ IR are beyond state-based understandings, of states as rational autonomous actors operating in an empty and timeless sphere of anarchy. Background reading below (and other material, such as IR textbooks) will give you a useful set of insights into how IR was constructed through the anarchy/state problematic.

Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, chapter 1.


Collection of short readings in one pdf, Hans Morgenthau, Ann Tickner, Alexander Wendt and Milja Kurki on classical IR and its others (feminism, constructivism and Marxism)
https://www.lahc.edu/library/documents/vega/Political%20Science%20Readings%201.pdf

-----Part One: The Rise of Global Politics-----

Seminar 3 (6 February) Globalisation vs Methodological Nationalism

Globalisation and its meaning are important for this module, not so much in empirical terms as in what globalisation says about the methodological tools needed to grasp the ‘international’ sphere. It is very important to read the Rosenberg critique of globalisation theory (the International Politics article is provided on Blackboard, but the book would be better). This is because the key point we wish to discuss is how state-based understandings of the international collapsed so rapidly after the end of the cold war. Please also ensure that you read the Ulrich Beck article in Constellations and the Chernilo, to consider what the critique of ‘methodological nationalism’ means. It could be understood that globalization achieved what critical IR approaches did not (during the cold war), that is to successfully challenge the dominant state-based paradigm both in empirical terms but also (more importantly) in methodological and analytical terms. How did globalization achieve this sea change – for empirical reasons, for analytical reasons?

Questions:
What is globalisation?
What is the problem with ‘methodological nationalism’?
Why is the global the ‘second (age of) modernity’?

Essential reading

Additional reading


Robert Cooper, *The post-modern state and the world order* (Demos, 2002).


Seminar 4 (13 February) Social Constructivism and Cosmopolitics

The shift towards a global world without a shift to a global form of sovereignty, and the maintenance of the inter-state system, necessitated a different understanding of the mechanisms of the international arena. Constructivism provided a sociological understanding of interaction, which challenged the rationalist approach of previous IR thinking. This was based upon an endogenous understanding of the intersubjective construction of identities and interests as opposed to rationalist IR approaches, which argued that states came to the international sphere already equipped with identities and interests, derived exogenously from international interaction. A new, post-foundational, agency of international dynamics emerged through interaction, states were no longer the central constitutive subjects of the international realm but were the products of this realm. The inversion of the relations between the international and the sovereign state are reflected well in the works of Jackson and Krasner (in additional readings below, we will discuss these in Seminar 7) as well as in the rise of global civil society, especially international NGO ‘norm-entrepreneurs’.

Questions
Why were rationalist approaches central to the discipline of IR?
What is an endogenous understanding and how does this inverse traditional approaches to IR?
What happens to politics and power in constructivist approaches?
Why is the end of the international associated with the rise of constructivism?

Essential reading

Additional reading
http://www.theguardian.com/world/1997/may/12/indonesia.ethicalforeignpolicy
Kathryn Sikkink, The Justice Cascade: Human Rights Prosecutions and Change in World Politics, Chapter 1: Introduction
https://bc.sas.upenn.edu/system/files/Sikkink_04.08.10.pdf

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**Seminar 5 (20 February) Critical Theory 1 - Human Security**

Critical theorists welcomed the shift to the global in the 1990s, seeing this an opportunity for a radical decentring of state-based approaches to security. Of particular interest, in terms of this module, is how the agency of human security and the barriers to human security are constructed. These frameworks, which argue that the particular interests of states are a barrier to a universalist liberal approach to global rights and justice, will be contrasted (in seminar 6) with the Foucauldian critics (critical theory 2) who argue that the problems lie precisely in the pursuit of global liberal ends. This week we will also consider the work of Johan Galtung – especially his views of ‘structural violence’ and ‘positive peace’ as precursors of critical security approaches. For a background, to those unfamiliar with the discipline of International Relations, the Cox and Linklater readings (in the additional reading section) are classic statements.

**Questions**
What is the problem with state-based approaches to security?
What is the barrier to global emancipation?
What is the agent of global emancipation?
What are the politics of human rights and human security?

**Essential reading**

**Additional reading**


Final Report of the Commission on Human Security
especially Chapter 1: Human Security Now

especially Chapter 2, ‘New Dimensions of Human Security’


Part Two: The Critique of Global Politics

Seminar 6 (6 March) Critical Theory 2 – Empire and Global War

The (broadly) Foucauldian critique takes on board the globalising of the international liberal order and opens up new approaches to critique in the international sphere: those of liberal ‘governmentality’ and of liberal ‘biopolitics’. The biopolitical critique is pursued particularly in terms of security regimes, with good examples being the work of Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Mick Dillon, Julian Reid and Mark Duffield. The governmentality approach, focuses more on global liberal approaches to statebuilding and intervention, less determined by economic interests but by epistemic and ideational frameworks legitimising the internationalisation of the liberal order, Jahn’s work is particularly useful in this respect, in describing the telos of intervention as a ‘liberal ideology’.

Questions
Why did Foucauldian approaches increasingly become popular in IR in the 2000s?
What is the Foucauldian critique of the emancipatory aspirations of critical theory?
What is the difference between a governmentality critique and a biopolitical critique?
Are Foucauldians more political/critical than the critical theorists considered in seminar 4?

Essential reading

Additional reading

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Seminar 7 (13 March) New Institutionalism and Neoliberalism

Neoliberal frameworks of understanding, informed by new institutionalist approaches, conceptualise the problems of democracy and markets as endogenous social and historical products. In this ‘bottom-up’ understanding, international policy interventions shifted from exporting ‘one-size-fits-all’ liberal universalist approaches of the global, to a much richer and more sociologically informed view of the contextual, cultural, social and historical preconditions for progress and to the social processes through which ‘path-dependencies’ and problematic forms of governance were reproduced. Particularly those of New Institutionalist Economics, of which World Bank adviser and Nobel Prize winner, Douglass North provides the key example. These new institutionalist approaches sought to explain how differences between states could increase despite a globalised context, which allegedly removed barriers between states and created an equal and universal playing field. New institutionalist approaches bring the state back into international theorising but not as the rational actor of traditional IR theory but vital institutional frameworks, shaped by sociological and historical interactions. It is these frameworks, which are analysed as the socially constructed explanations for global differentiation. The emergence and the consequences of this approach will be examined in this seminar. For new institutionalist approaches, the world becomes increasingly differentiated and policy interventions, intended to universalise in a global world can unintentionally increase differentiations.

Questions
How do new institutionalist approaches explain the relationship between universalising or globalising forces and increased differentials in the world?
What is the solution to the barriers to development in these approaches?
Can international aid or external assistance enable progressive change?
How does new institutionalism challenge rationalist assumptions?

Essential reading

Additional reading
B Guy Peters, Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New Institutionalism' (Continuum, 2005).

* Douglass North, ‘Institutions, Organizations and Market Competition’ paper.
* Mushtaq H. Khan, ‘State Failure in Developing Countries and Strategies of Institutional Reform’, paper.


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Seminar 8 (20 March) Pluriversal Politics: Decoloniality and the Ontological Turn

Decolonial scholars and advocates of pluriversal politics argue that the discipline of IR does violence through its assumption that there is one world ‘reality’ and merely different ways of seeing this one world. It is argued that this approach to the ‘global’ supports Western hegemonic assumptions of superiority, through the demeaning and exclusion of other ways of knowing and of doing politics internationally. This position questions the ontological assumption of one world-ism and therefore aligns itself with what is often called ‘the ontological turn’ in IR. The universal construction of the global is thereby understood as a colonizing move, the critical response being that of ‘provincializing’ or ‘pluriversalizing’ – reducing this perspective to one among many possible ways of engaging with the world.

Questions
How was the universal gaze historically constructed?
What’s wrong with a one world world?
What’s the difference between pluralist and pluriversalist?

Essential reading
http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0305829817702446
https://www.unc.edu/~aescobar/wan/wanquijano.pdf
http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/92-BECK_GB.pdf

Additional reading
http://www2.hhhm.umn.edu/uthinkcache/gpa/globalnotes/Blaney%20and%20Tickner%20Introductions%20to%20Worldingvolumes.pdf
Sankaran Krishna ‘Decolonizing International Relations’ E-IR, 8 October 2012 http://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/08/decolonizing-international-relations/
Part Three: The Birth of Planet Politics

Seminar 9 (27 March) The Anthropocene

The shift to ‘after the global’ was already perhaps pre-empted in the last seminar on the rise of pluriversal thinking and the discussion around ‘the ontological turn’. Here, thinking that remains stuck in the universal knowledge assumptions of both the construction and deconstruction of ‘the global’ is inevitably problematic. However, while the challenge posed to the global is clear, discussion about the Anthropocene remains very open at present. As Delf Rothe examines, two popular approaches in IR discourses are OOO (object-oriented) approaches which question the importance of the level of appearances and draw out future-oriented potentials and that of ANT (actor networks) which stress the contingency of the present or actual through the importance of networks of relations. Madeleine Fagan and Audra Mitchell in their European Journal of International Relations pieces from 2016 and 2017 pose fundamental questions to the discipline in terms of its securitising and knowledge assumptions.

Questions
How does the Anthropocene go beyond the deconstruction/critique of the global?
How does the Anthropocene challenge the disciplinary assumptions of IR?
How can concerns about security be understood in the Anthropocene?

Essential reading

Additional reading

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**Seminar 10 (10 April) Conclusion: The Rise and Fall of the Global**

In the concluding session we will address any final concerns with regard to the essay assignment and also revisit the (slightly adapted) questions that we asked in the introductory seminar.

**Questions**

What is the difference between International Relations and Global Politics?
How was the Global constructed against the classical paradigm?
How was the Global deconstructed?
Essay Assessment (please pay attention to the assessment criteria below – especially the first point)

5,000 word Essay Deadline 12.00pm Thursday 12 April 2018

Choose one of the following six essay titles:

1. What are the key differences between the ‘international’, the ‘global’ and the ‘planetary’? Why are these important?

2. Has IR theory succeeded in overcoming ‘methodological nationalism’? If so, how?

3. How is power understood differently in new institutionalist approaches?

4. How have critical approaches operated in relation to the global?

5. How do pluriversal approaches problematise the ‘one world world’?

6. Does the Anthropocene imply the end of IR as a discipline?
Assessment Rationale

The assessment regime is designed to encourage research expertise in the area of post-Cold War international relations. It aims to develop advanced understanding of the concepts, frameworks and approaches of international relations frameworks particularly with regard to the shift to and retreat from liberal universalist understandings.

The research essay allows students to develop an extended analysis of key concepts, theories and/or policies, to engage in an in-depth evaluation of competing interpretations and theoretical approaches, and to explore their application in international relations. The essay challenges students to critically engage with their chosen topic and demonstrate their critical and analytical ability.

Assessment Criteria

In marking essays, I will consider the following:

1. extent to which the essay question has been addressed in the context of the module as a whole, using relevant material from the module reading list. These need to be combined with material acquired through independent research;
2. structure, coherence and justification of the argument put forward;
3. clarity and accuracy with which ideas are expressed;
4. degree to which different concepts and theoretical approaches are sufficiently described, discussed and integrated;
5. range of research and collation of information and material;
6. selection and correct attribution of sources in support of an argument.

More specifically:

Structure and Quality of Argument
Is the thesis of the essay stated in the introduction?
Is the overall structure of the argument clear and coherent?
Are the points made in a logical sequence?
Is the argument sufficiently analytical?
Is there a conclusion?
Does the conclusion address the essay question directly?
Is the conclusion adequately supported by the preceding argument?

Contents
Is the writer’s argument adequately backed up rather than just asserted?
Are the sources used subjected to analysis and critical reflection?
Has the student researched the topic sufficiently?
Are there any important omissions?
Has the student thought about what s/he has read or simply reproduced material from sources?
Is there evidence of critical thinking or an original synthesis?
Has the student gone beyond the essential reading?
Use of Evidence
Are the points made supported by evidence from cited sources?
Are the sources drawn on sufficient and appropriate?
If empirical evidence is used, is it described clearly and in appropriate detail?
Does the evidence presented support the conclusions reached?
Is the interpretation of the evidence presented appropriately qualified (i.e. have overgeneralisations and sweeping statements been avoided)?

Writing Style and Presentation of the Essay
Is the essay referenced correctly?
Are quotations identified and fully referenced?
Are the ideas presented fully credited?
Is the essay fluent and readable?
Is the grammar and spelling adequate?
Has the student made an effort to use their own words?

Assessment Grading Scheme

Essay assessment is a complex process that cannot be reduced to a simple formula. However, it is possible to articulate some of the features that your lecturers will expect to find in each of the marking categories.

First class essays (70-100%) will: address the question or title; develop a well-informed argument; demonstrate familiarity with the module content and relevant literature; present an analysis and evaluation of the ideas and theories discussed; reveal internal integration and coherence; use references and examples to support the claims and arguments made; provide detailed references and sources in the bibliography or reference section; be written in good and grammatically correct English. Differences within the range are usually attributable to differences in the quality of analysis and evaluation and internal integration and coherence.

Upper second class essays (60-69%) will: address the title; develop a clear argument; demonstrate familiarity with relevant literature; use references and examples. The difference between essays in this class and a first class piece of work is often the quality of the analysis and evaluation presented and the degree to which it is integrated around its central theme.

Lower second class work (50-59%) may show weaknesses with regard to a number of the features mentioned above. Generally, the analysis and evaluation may be poor, so that the work fails to convey an unified consideration of the topic under discussion. Often, for example, ideas and theories will be presented but not related to each other, so that the reader is left to draw his/her own conclusions. This may also mean that the material presented is not used to address the question but is simply included as vaguely relevant. Finally the sequential structure of essays in this category could usually be improved.

Failed essays (40-49%) are, at best, manifestly failing with regard to a number of the features mentioned above. In particular, their demonstration of familiarity with the literature is usually poor and their structure difficult to discern.
Essays which are of extremely poor quality will receive marks that are under 40%. We use the full spectrum of marks.

**Further Information Regarding Coursework**

In addition to the information contained in this Handbook, which is specific to the assessment for this module, you need to be aware of DPIR’s general guidance and policies for coursework submission. The most up-to-date information is contained in the current version of the DPIR Course Handbook, and includes guidance on:

- Submitting your work
- Late submission
- Plagiarism and referencing
- Mitigating circumstances
- Word limits

The current version of the DPIR Course Handbook can be found on the Politics and International Relations Blackboard site.

*Other important sources of information. For information about Academic Progression; Condoned Credits; and Referral Opportunities: see the Handbook of Academic Regulations (section 17).*