Field Seminar in
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
17.418

Fall 2013  
E53-438  
Tuesdays, 1-3pm

Department of Political Science  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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Description

This seminar provides an overview of the field of international relations. Each week, a different approach to explaining international relations will be examined. By surveying major concepts and theories in the field, the seminar will also assist graduate students in preparing for the comprehensive examination and further study in the department’s more specialized offerings in international relations.

The seminar will meet once a week. Master’s students and undergraduates may enroll only with the instructor’s permission.

Requirements

A successful seminar requires attendance at every meeting, completion of all readings and active, engaged participation. To stimulate discussion, students will be assigned as discussants.

In addition, this seminar has three writing assignments:

1. Three short essays, no more than 750 words or three pages long. The essays should critically examine a hypothesis, theory, question, concept or controversy contained in one or more readings for each week. The essay may address only a subset of the readings, but under no circumstances should the essay simply summarize assigned texts. A copy of the essay must be e-mailed to Professors Fravel and Narang as an attachment (.doc or .pdf) by 5pm on the day preceding each meeting.

2. A take-home exercise due at the end of the term. The question for the take-home will be distributed on December 11 and will simulate the department’s general exam in International Relations.

3. Weekly research abstracts, no more than 300 words long. Based loosely on the topic or issues raised in discussion each week, these abstracts should state a hypothesis, outline its importance and describe how it might be tested. The abstract should be emailed to Professor Fravel as an attachment (.doc or .pdf) within 24 hours after each meeting with the subject heading “17.418 memo.” Each abstract should have a title.

Grades will be determined as follows: participation (30%), short essays (30%) and final exercise (40%). Research memos count toward class participation.
Readings for the course are on reserve in library and available on the following Stellar site:

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

**10 September**

**Introduction and Organization**

**17 September**

**Overview of the Field**

Waltz, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*, Ch. 1

**24 September**

**Material Approaches**


1 October

Rationalist Approaches


8 October

Ideational and Identity-Based Approaches


15 October

*** NO CLASS [Columbus Day Break] ***

22 October

Cognitive and Bureaucratic Approaches


29 October

Domestic Institutions and Preferences


5 November

**War and Conflict**


12 November

**Peace and International Cooperation**

19 November

**War, Peace and Domestic Politics**


26 November

**** NO CLASS ****

3 December

**Nuclear Proliferation and Deterrence**


**10 December**

**Unipolarity**


Special Issue, *World Politics*, January 2009, Selected Articles, TBD
