

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO  
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Spring semester, 2003  
Ian Robert Douglas

Class hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, 9.30-10.45 am  
Office hours: Sundays, Mondays, 1.15-3 pm

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<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PS320/>

**“Diplomacy is the police in grand costume”**

Napoleon Bonaparte

**“I wouldn’t want to be a survivor”**

Jean Mermoz

This course serves as a broad introduction to the field of International Relations. How do states interact? What issues arise from the division of the world into territorial units, legally defined, or into social units like nations, defined by histories and ideologies? Is peace possible when the world is formed in this way? This course examines both a series of contemporary issues facing—and borne from—states, and the ways in which thinkers and scholars have accounted for how things are, why they are, and the direction of world change. First, we will examine the core concepts of international relations practice and theory—security, power, survival—and set these in the context of the clash of opinion at the heart of this sub-discipline of Political Science. From here we will highlight a number of new developments defining the contemporary agenda of world politics: the war on terror, human rights, the impact of information and media, the changing role of the military. We end by asking the broadest questions: are we witnessing the emergence of a new American Empire? How will world politics change in this new century?

## Objectives/outcomes

At the end of the course we hope to have:

- 1) Come to an understanding of the nature of the “international system”; its components, its “discourse”, its day-to-day functioning.
- 2) Examined and discussed a series of pressing contemporary issues in world politics: from the impact of capitalism and crisis of ecology, to terrorism—state sponsored and otherwise.
- 3) Reviewed—and come to an understanding of—the main schools of thought (realism, liberalism, Marxism), that attempt to make sense of the complexity of world politics, as well as shaping men’s understanding, their practice and ideals.
- 4) Come to an understanding of the ways in which one’s subject position (i.e., the point from which one stands), affects what can be seen, and what one believes must be done. Theory is not just theory. How we think about the world affects

how we act in it. Can a “post-colonial” International Relations be discerned, or is this an American social science in a Western-dominated world?

### Organization and assessment

Though the course is listed as a lecture course, I want to inject, as much as possible, focused **informed discussion**. So often what is most valuable—and the thing you’re more likely to take away from courses like this—is not what *I* say, but what I can help *you* to say. Participation, then, is deeply valued and necessary. It is also a significant part of the assessment for the course overall. One major part of this will be your participation in a video-teleconference, staged toward the end of semester. We will work toward being prepared for this day, and on the day itself will meet, via internet teleconferencing, a class from another part of the world (UMass, Amherst, USA). During a two-hour discussion we will synthesize all that we have encountered and learnt through the semester, responding to questions posed from both sides in a transnational dialogue.

The assessment of this course will be divided as follows:

Written assignment #1 (due March 03, 2003)	15%
Written assignment #2 (due April 14, 2003)	25%
Class participation (including class discussion, email list participation, the video-teleconference, and preparations for it)	25%
Final assignment (due May 27, 2003)	35%

The written assignments will take the form of two short essays, the first of which must be at least 1500 words in length, the second of which must be 2000 words in length. Your task in these assignments is to respond critically and thoughtfully to a specific question. A list of questions will be distributed for each essay assignment. The final assignment will be to write a response paper of no less than 2000 words on issues that arise from the planned teleconference dialogue between this class and a peer class at UMass, Amherst, USA. More information on this assignment will be given in class.

### Grading

- A = Excellent command of the literature, independent and directed thinking, innovation and style. The essay/assignment would be meticulously referenced, and well-structured. A strong contribution not simply to the particular class, but overall to the student’s own education and development. Very few have courage enough to push for this, but all are capable, without exception.
- B = A good solid effort. The kind of essay that tries hard, is well sourced, but doesn’t break through, or add much that is new or insightful (i.e., more a case of good repetition of an existing literature, rather than thinking/researching/striving for oneself).
- C = An honest effort, but sloppy in presentation and foresight. Some good ideas, but jumbled or confused. Remember that thought is like any sport, or any art. There is a point at which the mind becomes lean and fast, but it can only be attained through great effort. An essay that is worthy of the grade “C” is perhaps only a few hours from being worthy of a “B,” and only a certain level of intensity—or perhaps passion—away from an “A.” Test yourself out. Have courage.

D = A bare pass. Just enough effort shown to warrant passing the course but not enough to impress or inspire in any way. Typical of a D grade essay would be one that simply “went through the motions”, without much thought, care, or interest on the behalf of the student.

F = Fail. Spelling and grammar mistakes will often make it unreadable, or otherwise it will display a level of insight surpassed by most inquisitive children. You are reading for a degree at an institution of higher learning—please remember that. Remember too that irrelevant or “off-topic” responses do not constitute passing essays. Be relevant and fully address the question posed.

### **Class policies**

1. Cell phones are to be switched off. Anyone seen sending or receiving SMS messages will be dismissed from the class.
2. **No one is to enter the classroom once the classroom door is closed.** Classes will begin and end at the assigned times. If you are late you will be counted absent. You’re late if the door to the classroom is already closed.
3. Attendance is compulsory. You will be allowed a maximum of 6 missed classes without penalty. 7 missed classes—for whatever reason—will warrant an automatic “F” for the whole class, as per university regulations (being, in effect, over three weeks of absence).
4. No medical notes are necessary, so don’t bother bringing them.
5. Assessment deadlines: you may hand in your work up to 48 hrs past the deadline with no penalty. Anyone who hands in work more than 48 hrs past the deadline will be deducted two letter grades (from C to F, from B to D).
6. Essays are only to be submitted in **hard copy to the Department Secretaries.** Do not give any assignments to me, nor slip them under my door. Assignments that are not time stamped by the Departmental Secretaries will be deemed inadmissible.
7. When preparing research papers you must only respond to questions that I set. Question sheets will be distributed well in advance of essay deadlines. Essays that do not address a question set by me will not be accepted.
8. There are no make-ups on this course. Therefore make every effort to pass each assignment.
9. Plagiarism (or any form of cheating) is not simply an academic offense of dishonesty; it is a personal insult to me, and I will take it as such. All cases will be referred—without exception—to the Dean of Students. The student will fail the whole course immediately.
10. Grades are non-negotiable. Do not bother telling me what grade you need to get off probation.

## Readings

There will be no main textbook, but rather a “reader” of key chapters, news articles, and essays. Students are expected to be resourceful in finding materials outside of the assigned texts. Guidance on this will be given by me or my Research Assistant—Sara Hussein ([sarainegypt@hotmail.com](mailto:sarainegypt@hotmail.com) or 010.184.7015). Think of yourselves as detectives trying to solve a crime. Try to go beyond the surface. Give time and effort to understanding why the world is divided as it is—how it functions, how power relations become invested in institutions and in knowledge. Try not to see the world as a given. Make the world a puzzle!

The course reader will be brief. I’d prefer that you read less *but read what I assign*. Along with the course reader a “Study Aid” will be distributed (posted also on the course website: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PS320/>), to start you away in your library-based research.

Beyond this, the web is a good resource (though not often a “deep” resource), for information and analysis of or on the field of international relations. The following links are useful for starters:

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/feros-pg.htm#useful>  
<http://www.etown.edu/vl/>  
<http://www.towson.edu/~roberts/107/p107ir.htm>  
<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/psintl.html>  
<http://www-polisci.tamu.edu/dept/classes/danilovic/irguides.htm>  
<http://www.etown.edu/vl/peace.html>  
<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~rdeibert/irweb.html>  
<http://bubl.ac.uk/link/i/internationalrelations.htm>

One part of your participation grade will be to add to our course website. This can be in the way of adding links, pictures, or files. More guidance on this in class.

**Course outline**

First class meeting  
Main themes and problems

**Beginnings**

Week 1. Why is there no International theory?  
An American Social Science?

**Theories**

Week 2. Realism

Week 3. Liberalism

Week 4. Marxism

**Application**

Week 5. 9/11 & the War on Terror

Week 6. "Human Rights"

Week 7. Iraq: The politics of oil?

Week 8. International Law: useless?

Week 9. Humanitarian Intervention

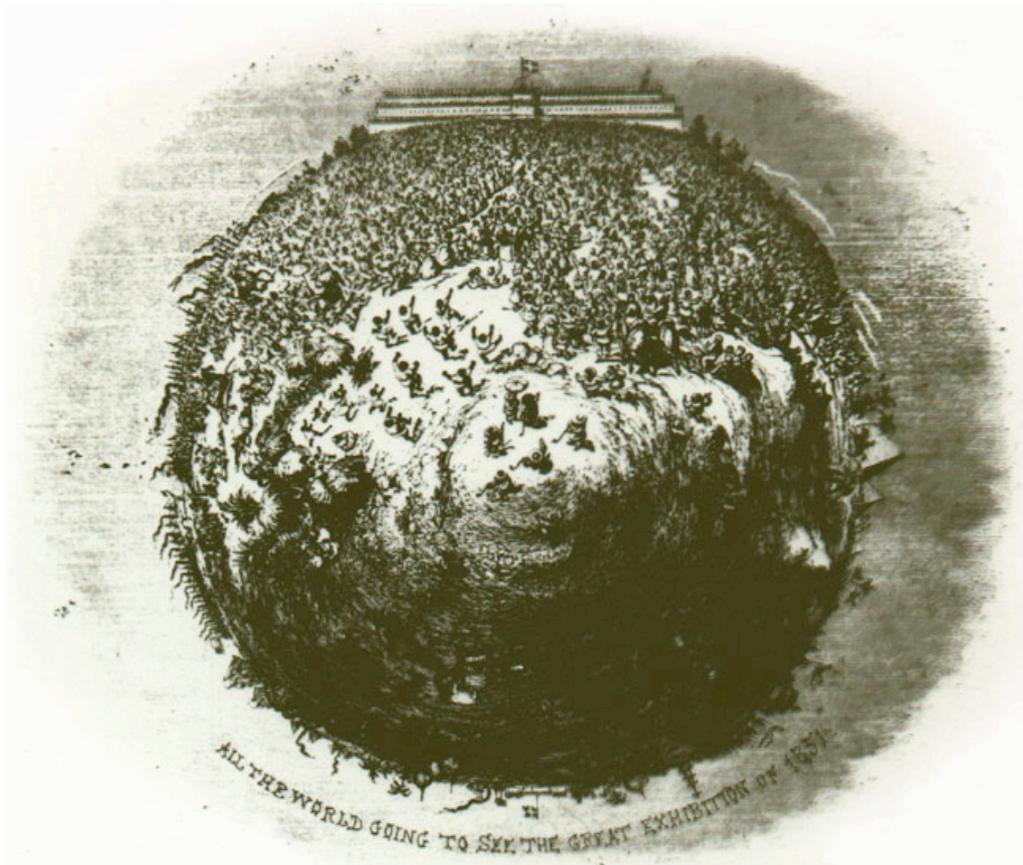
Week 10. Information warfare

Week 11. Capitalism and ecology

Week 12. American Empire?

**Conclusion**

Week 13. Teleconference



“ .. what blindness, what deafness, what density of ideology would have to weigh me down to prevent me from being interested in what is probably the most crucial subject to our existence, that is to say the society in which we live, the economic relations within which it functions, and the system of power which defines the regular forms and the regular permissions and prohibitions of our conduct. The essence of our life consists, after all, of the political functioning of the society in which we find ourselves.”

—michel foucault