Political Science 442: International Organization

Northwestern University
Spring 2016
Friday 2-4:50 PM
Scott Hall 201 (Ripton Room)

Prof. Stephen Nelson
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Course Overview
Political Science 442 is a seminar devoted to understanding the organization of world politics. It is not strictly about international organizations (IOs), though a number of readings focus on behavior of IOs and their roles in shaping world politics. Rather, the seminar focuses on how different analytical traditions explain elements of the social organization of world politics. The readings explore organizational forms, stability and change, efficacy and dysfunction, among other themes in the study of world politics.

The seminar is targeted to PhD students in political science, though graduate students from other fields and ambitious and well-prepared undergraduates are welcome. Forewarned is forearmed: the reading load is heavy, and I expect that each member of the course will be prepared to discuss each of the readings.

If there are readings/topics that you would like to cover that are not on this version of the syllabus, please bring them to my attention. I also reserve the right to make changes (with the caveat that you will have plenty of warning if I choose to shuffle readings around). The syllabus is an outline, not a contract, and it is subject to change.

Course Requirements and Grading
Active and thoughtful engagement with the material is essential to success in this course. There are four ways in which I try to measure your engagement with and mastery of the course material:

(1) Participation in the course discussion will account for 25% of your final grade. The reading load is substantial and the course will be driven by discussions rather than lectures. For these reasons I strongly urge that you come regularly, on time, and well prepared – you must keep up with the readings and be ready to contribute to the conversation.

(2) All students are required to serve as the authors’ defendant in one course meeting. During the week in which you have been assigned the role of authors’ defendant, you will be stepping into the shoes of an author of one of the readings assigned for the seminar; you will be responsible for presenting the main arguments and
evidence in the reading and will be expected to be prepared to respond to tough questions about the reading that are raised by me or the other members of the group. Your performance as authors’ defendant will account for 10% of your grade.

(3) Each student will write two critical memos that outlines the main argument(s) in one or a set of readings and provides an incisive critique of the material. The critical memos should be submitted via email to me no later than 8 PM the evening before the meeting in which the reading(s) appear. The memos should be in the range of 3-5 pages. The critical memos account for 25% of the final course grade.

(4) For the remaining 40% of your course grade you have two options: (a) you may choose to submit a 15-20 page research proposal that outlines a puzzle that falls within the purview of the class, situates the puzzle in the relevant literature, develops a theoretical argument and observable implications, and sketches how you plan to conduct the research necessary to shed light on the puzzle (what kind of research design will allow you to answer the motivating question?); (b) alternatively, you may write essays based on two field exam-style questions. Like the field exam, you will get the questions and have a short time period in which to compose your responses. Unlike the field exam you will have access to your readings and notes and will not be expected to go much beyond the course readings in constructing your answers.

The due date for the final paper is Wednesday, June 8. I should have the paper in my hand by 5:00 PM on that day. Papers that are submitted after the deadline will be penalized by a half grade (from a B+ to a B, for example) for each 12-hour period that passes after the announced deadline. Barring unusual and challenging personal circumstances, I expect that all students in the course will complete the requirements on time.

If you choose the exam option, we will work out a day and time during finals week in which you will be receive the questions. You will then have 36 hours to complete and submit your essays.

Recommended Readings
There is a lengthy list of “additional, recommended” readings following the assigned readings for each week’s seminar meeting. The purpose of the recommendations for additional reading on each topic covered in the seminar is to help you (assuming that you are a PhD student in political science) assemble a reading list as you prepare for the qualifying exam in the IR subfield.
Course Schedule and Reading List

Week 1 (April 1): anarchy as an ordering principle of world politics?

Required readings

Additional, recommended readings
Week 2 (April 8): the concept of power in the study of international organization

Required readings

Additional, recommended readings
David A. Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, eds. Handbook of International Relations (Sage, 2013).
Week 3 (April 15): rules and roles in international orders

**Required readings**


**Additional, recommended readings**


Week 4 (April 22): leadership, international institutions, and cooperation


Additional, recommended readings


Week 5 (April 29): institutional origins and design features

*Note – the April 29 meeting will be held in the Burdick room in Scott Hall*

**Required readings**

**Additional, recommended readings**
Week 6 (May 6): IOs as organizations

Required readings

Additional, recommended readings
Week 7 (May 13): institutional proliferation and regime complexity

Required readings

Additional, recommended readings
Week 8 (May 20): Global governance through rankings, ratings, and standards

**Required readings**


**Additional, recommended readings**


Week 9 (May 27): problems of legitimacy, accountability, and responsibility in global governance

Required readings

Additional, recommended readings