MACALESTER COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
Poli 120-02 (Fall 2010)  

Foundations of International Politics

Professor Andrew Latham  
Office: Carnegie 203E  
Telephone: x6549  
Location: CAR 208  
Time: TR 0940h-1110h  
Office Hrs: MWF 1300h-1400h

DESCRIPTION, SCOPE AND PURPOSE
This first-year course is designed to introduce students to the study of International Relations (IR) as an academic discipline. The primary goal of the course is to develop a substantive understanding of the history of “international relations” from the city-state system of ancient Greek system to the late-modern state-system of today. Emphasis will also be placed on developing a range of critical, analytical, research and writing skills required for the further study of international politics. The course is thus intended to prepare students for advanced work in the field, although it is also appropriate for those merely seeking to satisfy an interest in the study of global politics.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Reflecting both the College’s core values and the PS Department’s teaching vision, the learning objectives of this course are to develop or deepen the a number of key Knowledge Competencies, Skill Competencies, and Attitudes:

Knowledge Competencies
At the end of this course you should have a clear understanding of:

- the historical evolution of the international system from ancient Greek times until the contemporary era;
- the major theoretical approaches to the study of international relations and the “great debates” around these approaches;
- the evolution of the scholarly field of International Relations; and,
- a basic understanding of some of the classical texts in contemporary field of International Relations.

Skill Competencies
At the end of this course you should be better able to:

- independently develop a research question, convert that question into a research problem, and develop/support a thesis or argument that addresses that problem;
- locate needed information from a range of books, professional journals and online sources and synthesize this information into a coherent and persuasive argument;
• read an academic text in a close and focused manner;
• think rigorously, theoretically and critically about the nature of international relations;
• read a scholarly text in a deep and focused fashion;;
• write a major scholarly paper that is thesis governed, theoretically informed, historically sensitive, graceful and persuasive; and,
• develop and manage your own learning process in ways that will better equip you to take on the responsibilities of graduate and post-graduate professional life.

**Attitudes**
At the end of this course you should have a deeper awareness of, and sensitivity to:

• the historicity of international relations;
• the rewards and challenges of scholarly writing;
• the value of the life of the mind and the liberal arts enterprise

Simply put, this course is designed not only to deepen your understanding of international relations, but also to develop practical skills, attitudes and knowledge competencies that will be helpful to you in your undergraduate academic career in the liberal arts.

**HOW THIS COURSE WILL HELP YOU MEET THESE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
It is my belief that the competencies described above are best developed in the context of challenging, rigorous and intellectually demanding/engaging curricular experiences involving *active learning*. Active learning is simply that – learning that takes place when students are vigorously engaged in some activity that requires them to search for, process (analyze, synthesize, apply, evaluate and critique), and reflect upon the nature and source of information and knowledge. Active learning courses tend to differ from more traditional courses in two ways. First, such courses are *assignment-centered*. This means that they are not structured around texts and lectures (which are designed to provide ‘coverage’ of a body of literature), but around an intensive writing/research project (which is primarily intended to develop skills and competencies). This is not to suggest that coverage is not important in such courses: basic facts, concepts and theories are still learned. The difference is that in active learning courses, coverage is achieved through incidental and contextual learning – that is, through discovery in the course of completing the major writing assignment. Second, in active learning courses the information necessary to complete the assigned task is not provided to the students. Rather, the students themselves (with the support and coaching of the instructor) are responsible for locating, evaluating and synthesizing the information they require to complete the task.

Research suggests that active learning is superior to traditional passive learning (in which students merely acquire and absorb information in the form of ‘surface learning’) in several ways. First, it more effectively promotes comprehension of *core knowledge* (promotes knowledge competencies). Simply put, basic comprehension is improved dramatically when students need knowledge, when they are required to take an active role in seeking knowledge, when the knowledge they discover is applied in a meaningful
context and when they are required to explain that knowledge to their peers. Second, active learning is better at promoting the development of skill competencies. In this regard, the most important payoffs associated with this form of learning are the improved problem-solving and critical thinking skills that develop when students are required to actively engage in seeking, evaluating, synthesizing and applying knowledge to solve a problem or puzzle. Also important in this regard are the opportunities for students to develop a number of practical competencies (managing a self-directed learning process, leadership, initiative, team management skills, etc.) that are typically absent in more passive learning environments. Such skills are not only essential to effective citizenship in an increasingly complex and globalized world, but are also increasingly important in the world of work (whether in government, business or the not-for-profit sector). Third, active learning is better at cultivating a deeper awareness of the complexities and challenges of real-world problem-solving and the challenges faced by real-life diplomats and policy practitioners. And finally, active learning is intrinsically more motivating (engaging, fun, rewarding) than passive learning. As research shows that motivation and student involvement in the learning process – that is, students’ willing investment of physical and psychological energy in the academic experience – are perhaps the most important ingredients of deep learning and personal development, this suggests that active learning can be a powerful tool for promoting academic excellence.

Reflecting this philosophy, this course is organized around a single overarching ‘active learning’ exercise designed to provide the context, structure and motivation for studying militarized identity politics in comparative perspective. This exercise will take the form of a writing project in which students will be required to organize, research and draft a theoretically informed yet historically sensitive piece of scholarship describing and analyzing the character of the contemporary international system. I will provide more information regarding the nature of this assignment at the appropriate point in the course.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING
Grades for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Module/Assignment 1: 10 points
- Module/Assignment 2: 30 points
- Module/Assignment 3: 50 points
- Classroom Participation: 10 points

Please note that because I have scheduled class time for review, critique and discussion of drafts, late or incomplete drafts will result in points being deducted from the final grade.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND OTHER SOURCES
I have ordered several required texts for this course. They are now available in the bookstore:

- Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*;
- Andrea A. Lunsford, *Easy Writer* (4th ed);
In addition to the course texts, a number of academic journals may also prove useful as you being your Module 3 research. These include journals on *International Relations; International Security; International Studies Quarterly; International Organization; European Journal of International Relations; Foreign Policy; Foreign Affairs; Third World Quarterly, Review of International Political Economy; Global Governance; Human Rights*. Many are available either in paper or electronic versions, and can be found either in the Mac library or on the ClicNet system. You may also find a number of books and www sites that deal with the topic.

NB: One of your learning objectives in this course is to develop your research skills so that you can identify and locate the journals, books and online resources that are most relevant and helpful to you as you endeavour to complete your report tasks. We will be working as a group with the library/ITS to develop a basic level of college-level information fluency; I strongly advise you, however, to work closely with a librarian on the skills needed for you final assignment.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

MODULE 1: THEY SAY/I SAY – ENTERING THE ACADEMIC CONVERSATION

CULMINATING ASSIGNMENT: Complete all the exercises in They Say; I Say.

Tuesday, September 7

- Discuss syllabus.

Thursday, September 9

- Discuss They Say/I Say, Preface and Introduction.
- Discuss the handout at http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/college_writing.html
- Discuss handout at http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/high_school_v_college.htm

Tuesday, September 14

- Discuss They Say/I Say, Part 1

Thursday, September 16

- Discuss Latham, “Theorizing the Crusades”

Tuesday, September 21

- No Class Today – advising appointments.
- 9:10-9:40
- 9:40-10:10
- 10:10-10:40
- 10:40-11:10

Wednesday, September 22

- 12:00-12:30
- 12:30-1:00
- 1:00-1:30
- 1:30-2:00
Thursday, September 23

- No Class Today – advising appointments
- 9:10-9:40
- 9:40-10:10
- 10:10-10:40
- 10:40-11:10

Friday, September 24

- 12:00-12:30
- 12:30-1:00
- 1:00-1:30
- 1:30-2:00

Tuesday, September 28

- Discuss *They Say/I Say*, Part 2, 3

**MODULE 2: THEY SAY – THE MORAL PURPOSE OF THE STATE TO 1945**

CULMINATING ASSIGNMENT: 5-7pp review of *The Moral Purpose of the State*

Thursday, September 30   **Reading Academic Texts**

- Discuss first assignment; organize tutorials; prepare for next module.
- Discuss Appendix 1 AND
  - [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wrcntr/documents/CloseReading.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wrcntr/documents/CloseReading.html) AND
  - [http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/lamont_handouts/interrogatingtexts.html](http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/lamont_handouts/interrogatingtexts.html) AND
  - [http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/readingwriting.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/readingwriting.html)
- Discuss *Moral Purpose of the State*, ch. Introduction

Tuesday, October 5

- Discuss *Moral Purpose of the State*, chs. 1-2

Thursday, October 7

- Library/ITS session
Tuesday, October 12

- Discuss *Moral Purpose of the State*, ch. 3
- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/704/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/704/01/)

Thursday, October 14

- Discuss *Moral Purpose of the State*, ch. 4

Tuesday, October 19

- Discuss *Moral Purpose of the State*, ch. 5
- Develop norms for an excellent academic literature review. Review the following sites before class:
  - [http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/review.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/review.html)

Thursday, October 21

- Discuss *Moral Purpose of the State*, ch. 6

Tuesday, October 26

- Discuss *Moral Purpose of the State*, ch. 7

Mid-Term Break

Tuesday, November 2

- No class today – work on your reviews of *The Moral Purpose of the State*.

Thursday, November 4

- Submit your reviews to me electronically before class;
- Discuss reviews and assess book;
- Organize Module 3 (esp. define research question)
MODULE 3: ISLY – THE MORAL PURPOSE OF THE STATE TODAY

CULMINATING ASSIGNMENT: 12-15pp research paper on the nature of the contemporary international system.

Tuesday, November 9
Thursday, November 11
Tuesday, November 16
Thursday, November 18
Tuesday, November 23
Thanksgiving Break
Tuesday, November 30
Thursday, December 2
Tuesday, December 7
Thursday, December 9
APPENDIX 1

Analytical Thinking/Close Reading Guide

1. *Analysis* is recognized as a key higher-order *critical thinking* skill. It needs to be mastered by all students. Few students, however, are ever taught *how* to perform analysis. The following is a guide to analytical thinking.

2. Put simply, "analysis" means breaking an argument down into its component parts and subjecting those parts to evaluation according to certain standards. As a first step, for every argument you encounter you should specify:

   - the underlying *research question/problematic* (the purpose of the argument and the question to which it is a response);
   - the *main argument* (thesis);
   - key *concepts* used to develop the thesis;
   - actual or potential *supporting arguments*;
   - actual or potential *counter-arguments*;
   - implicit or explicit *assumptions*;
   - *proof* (epistemology, method, evidence and logic);
   - *point of view* (by mapping the various contending schools of thought and locating the argument on that map);
   - *implications* of the argument (if valid, what consequences follow for...).

3. Not every article or book is susceptible to interrogation in terms of each of these questions. Each *argument* you encounter, however, can and should be subjected to this form of critical thinking. This will produce the kind of "deep understanding" necessary to *evaluate* or assess an argument. It will also strengthen your own ability to reason incisively and persuasively.

4. In order to evaluate the persuasiveness of an argument, it is necessary to assess it against the following intellectual standards:

   - *Clarity*: is the argument understandable/clearly articulated?
   - *Relevance*: does it address the underlying question/problematic?
   - *Significance*: does it tell us something new and important?
   - *Accuracy*: is it free from factual errors/distortions?
   - *Depth*: does it go beyond the merely superficial or the conventional wisdom?
   - *Breadth*: does it address all relevant issues/factors?
   - *Logic*: is it free from logical errors and contradictions?
   - *Coherence*: do the elements all fit together to create a convincing argument?
   - *Theoretical/Conceptual Effectiveness*: does the conceptual framework provide useful insights?
   - *Evidence*: are the underlying assumptions valid? Is the argument supported by
relevant and convincing “proof”? Have the most persuasive counter-arguments been anticipated and addressed? Are the “cases” appropriate?