International Relations
Spring 2004
Preliminary Exam

Instructions: Students must answer three (3) of the following questions.

Advice to the student: Choose questions that enable you to demonstrate a broad knowledge of international relations. Examinations should demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the field. Relevant real world examples should be integrated and important recently published literature should be cited.

A good exam is characterized by coherent and forceful arguments based on existing work and evidence in the field. A weak exam is one where the argument is made in isolation from the literature and/or where no argument is made. Almost all the questions are designed to allow you to take a position on an issue. Do so, and do not simply produce an annotated bibliography. In other words, use the questions to show that you both know the material and can present an argument as a scholar.

We anticipate that each question can be answered in approximately 3000 words. Please double-space your answers, provide reasonable margins, and number the pages.

1. Scholars have been concerned with the "power paradox," the fact that sometimes "weak" states are able to get what they want from "strong" states. Develop two contradictory explanations of this phenomenon. Illustrate each from the literature and with historical examples. Which explanation seems the most useful to you? Explain.

2. In recent years, a new wave of scholarship has advocated "interpretivist" or "post-positivist" methods in international relations. Discussing a few key works in this area, elaborate the case for these methods. What is gained and what is lost in the use of such methods?

3. Much attention has been paid in recent years to actual or potential unipolarity in the international system. What likely consequences would unipolarity have for conflict and cooperation? How much does the answer depend on who the unipolar state is?

4. Make an argument for or against the proposition that the role of war in international politics has changed fundamentally since the end of WWII in ways that are not related to the development of nuclear weapons. Try to use a variety of different lines of evidence in your argument; don't focus solely on one or two authors.
5. What new information have we learned, from quantitative and qualitative scholarship as well as real world events over the past twenty years, about how to end war? Is there contradictory evidence from these sources? If so, how do you reconcile them?

6. What, if anything, does a focus on leaders’ beliefs and perceptions add to our understanding of foreign policy?

7. Discuss the potential conflicts between international legal principles and U.S. foreign policy objectives as illustrated by the recent war in Iraq.

8. Does globalization in the world economy threaten state sovereignty?

9. How do the classic theories of economic liberalism and economic nationalism (mercantilism) stand up to our understanding of current developments in the global economy, such as regional economic cooperation and multilateral trade?