INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PRELIMINARY EXAM
Spring 2013

General Instructions and Advice:

Students must answer three (3) of the following questions. Choose questions that enable you to demonstrate a broad knowledge of international relations. Examination answers should demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the field. Relevant real world examples should be integrated into the answer and important recently published literature should be cited. It would be to your advantage to avoid excessive overlap across your answers.

A good exam is characterized by coherent and forceful arguments based on existing work and evidence in the field, with justifications for perspectives and concepts chosen. 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.

Questions:

1. Does US hegemony present a danger to the world? Why or why not? In answering this question, discuss how various theoretical approaches to IR understand the relationship between hegemony and interstate conflict and/or cooperation.

2. Discuss the evolution of IO theories. What have been the major issues and turning points? What are the underlying forces or dynamics that explain this evolution? Have we seen progress?

3. In recent years the United States has refused to ratify a number of international treaties including the Kyoto Convention, the International Criminal Court, the Land Mines Convention, and the Rights of the Child. Which theoretical perspectives best account for the US refusal to ratify these treaties? What impact does the US’ refusal have on the status and development of international law? Be explicit regarding the theoretical basis for your argument.

4. What is the conventional wisdom on the role of public opinion in foreign policy in the United States, other democracies, and non-democracies? How has this conventional wisdom been challenged?

5. Sovereignty has been a core concept within the study of international relations since the inception of the discipline. Yet recently, increasing economic and political globalization, occurrences of humanitarian intervention and multilateral peacekeeping, and growing concern over the governance of global public goods such as the environment have brought into question the viability and desirability of sovereignty as a defining element in the conduct of world politics.
How has sovereignty traditionally been defined? Where does this concept originate and how has it shaped the way international relations as a discipline has historically been studied? How do the events of the past decade challenge the notion of sovereignty and its position within IR theory?

6. Identify the major debates within the English School as they exist in the field of International Ethics. In your answer, confront the discussions which have occurred over the forms of international system and international (and world) society, how societies originate, form or come about, and the discussion regarding ‘order’ versus ‘justice’. To which empirical issues or practices have these debates been applied to by English School scholars? Finally, how would you characterize the current status of those debates?

7. 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?

8. To what extent has the conventional wisdom in development theory and practice moved beyond the Washington Consensus? What specific theories, agenda, or practices in international development today can you point to in order to either support or disprove claims of a "post-Washington consensus"?

9. Over the past couple decades, scholars such as John Mueller and Martin van Crevald have been arguing that war, as an international institution, has been radically transformed or, in Mueller's terminology, is "obsolete." This obviously runs against the "Everything you need to know about international relations is in Thucydides" school of thought. Address this issue with a specific focus on war as an international phenomenon and changes in the role of war in the post-WWII period.