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. 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 (realist, neo-liberal institutionalist, neo-Marxist, etc.) understand the relationship between hegemony and interstate conflict and/or cooperation.

2. Does the incorporation of human rights in the UN Charter reflect a concern for the human dignity of persons and/or a manifest victory for a western perceived liberal crusade? Or, did states include human rights in the UN Charter due to realists’ concerns for the security of states? Can human rights contribute to security? Discuss these questions against the background of the historical evolution of human rights and international politics, as well as developments in the theories of IR.

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. 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? Specifically, how have older theoretical approaches, such as realism and neorealism, defined and explained sovereignty as opposed to newer approaches such as constructivism? How do the events of the past decade challenge the notion of sovereignty and its position within IR theory?

5. What, if anything, does the study of leaders' beliefs and perceptions contribute to our understanding of foreign policy?

6. In 1986, Steven Smith asked if Foreign Policy Analysis as a “...distinct (if eclectic) approach to the study of foreign policy, has anything to offer other than footnotes to grand theories of international relations or historical case studies...?” In 2007, David Houghton wrote that “...there is a deeper reason for FPA’s persistent ‘minority status’ within IR: it has not fully engaged with the rest of the discipline and does not appear to fit anywhere within the framework of the contemporary debates going on in IR.” Address these critiques of FPA with reference to both past and current scholarship in Foreign Policy Analysis.

7. In his 1981 book, War and Change in World Politics, Robert Gilpin wrote the following:

"In recent years theorists of international relations have tended to stress the moderating and stabilizing influences of contemporary developments on the behavior of states, especially the increasing economic interdependence among nations and the destructiveness of modern weapons. These important developments have encouraged many individuals to believe that peaceful evolution has replaced military conflict as the principal means of adjusting relations among nation-states in the contemporary world. ..."

In the present study we take a very different stance, a stance based on the assumption that the fundamental nature of international relations has not changed over the millennia. International relations continue to be a recurring struggle for wealth and power among independent actors in a state of anarchy. The classic history of Thucydides is as meaningful a guide to the behavior of states today as when it was written in the fifth century B.C."

This was written thirty years ago. Was Gilpin correct then and is he correct now?

8. Some scholars have argued that issues such as widespread environmental degradation, human rights violations, global health concerns, and economic well-being should be understood as aspects of "security" with consequences as far-reaching as those entailed by the traditional understanding of this term. To what extent have these scholars developed new analytical tools to understand security in this way? How effective have these efforts been?

9. “To aid or not to aid, that is the question.” What are the theoretical arguments for and against the provision of aid to the developing world?