

MPhil in Politics and International Studies 2021-2022

Michaelmas Term 2021

Britain and the Geopolitics of the Baltic, c. 1450- present - Prof Brendan Simms

The Baltic – defined here as the littoral of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, and Sweden – has been an area of considerable importance to England, Scotland and then the United Kingdom. During the middle Ages, the Hanseatic League was one of England's main trading partners. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Baltic was a vital trading partner and source of fish, timber, furs and many other products. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Royal Navy drew most of its naval stores from the Baltic, watched jealously over the balance of power in that region and intervened against Russia. In the twentieth century Britain encouraged the independence of the Baltic states in 1918-19 and fought both the Bolsheviks and the Nazis there. Later, the Baltic states, which regained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1990/1 and then secured membership of the European Union and NATO, were supported by the British government. Today British forces today provide the backbone of NATO deterrence against Vladimir Putin in Estonia. This course is designed to provide an understanding of this history and its implications for today. The course will be taught in two-hour seminars centred on problems and spaces and will involve exegesis of primary documents as well discussion of the secondary literature. There will be opportunities to interact with policy-makers through simulations and additional seminars.

Comparative Political Economy - Dr James Wood

This module introduces students to the key concepts, theories and issues in the comparative study of capitalism through the interplay between politics and economics in advanced industrial democracies. The module provides students with concrete knowledge of such variations in key areas of economic policy making and their different economic, political and social outcomes.

Cultures of War - Ian Shields

This course focuses on the role that war has had in shaping nations, identity and the world order. It will review the role of media in conflict reporting and consider contemporary forms of conflict such as terrorism, and how they impact international politics. The theories of warfare and the rules governing its conduct will be critically examined and both contemporary and historic case studies will be reviewed.

Decolonising Politics and International Relations - Stephanie Diepeveen

Over the past few years, there has been growing attention to western dominance in the study of IR and politics, and how this manifests in our institutions, theories and methods. This course critically explores different approaches to decolonising political studies. It begins by considering the agendas and context that gave rise to different movements to decolonise political studies within the UK and globally. It investigates specific approaches that scholars have taken to confronting and addressing power in the discipline (e.g. postcolonialism, particularism and pluralism), as well as different regional schools from Latin America, China/East Asia, South Asia and Africa. This module will aim to develop a critical eye to the challenges and possibilities of different approaches to and visions of knowledge production in Political Studies and IR.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) on War and Peace - Sam Zeitlin

A reading of Francis Bacon's political tracts, Parliamentary speeches, philosophic writings, colonial proposals and white papers on foreign policy, empire, war, and peace, across Bacon's philosophic and political career, at a pivotal moment for English (and, then, British) overseas expansion.

Historical International Relations - Dr Tristen Naylor

This course provides an advanced-level overview of historical enquiry in International Relations. Surveying a broad array of approaches within the discipline, the course aims to (i) interrogate how history has been used and abused in IR scholarship, (ii) understand how historicist approaches can advance knowledge about key IR concepts including order, power, and sovereignty; (iii) demonstrate how historical enquiry challenges prevailing ontologies; (iv) evaluate methods of historical analysis. The course will also examine how historical IR can yield improved accounts of the development of the international system and be used for speculative thinking about possible future trajectories for international and global politics.

International Relations and International Law: Theories and Histories - Dr Giovanni Mantilla

This module focuses on the study of international law by scholars of International Relations. It debates the dominant ways of IR thinking about international legal rules (and in some cases, related institutions) through the combined reading prominent IR work on the origins, development, and effects of various bodies of international law alongside the recent (often revisionist) histories of those same bodies of rules. We will explore questions such as: To what extent has IR grappled with the political history of various strands international law? How do the findings emerging from new histories complicate or confirm IR's assumptions or findings? What are the different ways in which history and historical methods can be applied to produce IR research on international law? In terms of specific areas of law, potential foci might include: the law on the use of force, the law of human rights, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, international investment or trade law, the law of international organizations, or the law of statehood, self-determination, and state recognition.

Political Economy of the Global South: Paradigms, Crises, Alternatives – Dr Mehmet Erol

Since its emergence, the history of global capitalism is marked by its uneven character in terms of development. Some states, mainly in the 'Global North', were quickly industrialised and developed, while others, mainly in the 'Global South', struggled and remained less developed and/or are still developing. Hence, the problem of 'catching-up' with developed countries came to the fore as early as the 19th century. This module focuses on this question and aims to make sense of the roots, alternative paradigms, and empirical issues of development in the Global South, from the 20th century to the contemporary global political economy.

Religion and Politics - Dr Tomas Larsson

This course will explore the relationship between religion and politics, introducing students to a diversity of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, and to a wide range of religious contexts. The central aim of the course is to provide students with analytical tools for understanding the role of religion, broadly conceived, in processes of political change. The following topics will be covered: the evolutionary origins of religion and politics; religion and political imaginaries; religious identities and politics; "religion" and politics; political economy of religion; politics of religious action; political power and the religious field.

Rhetorical Leadership – Dr Dennis Grube

What our political leaders say matters. Political rhetoric is sometimes derided in popular discourse as nothing more than ‘empty words’, but those words give shape to our perceptions of political reality. Words are powerful things. This course will examine the role played by political rhetoric in democratic countries, and in particular the ways in which leaders use rhetoric to give shape to policy debates, to draw distinctions with political opponents, and to unify the nation during a crisis. The ability to communicate persuasively at multiple levels emerges as one of the central traits expected of modern leaders.

States and State Formation - Dr Roberto Foa

The purpose of this course is to examine the origins, causes, and consequences of state formation. How and why did fiefdoms unite into relatively large and stable political units during the early modern era? Why were some states able to develop bureaucratic institutions, while others remained patrimonial? How do patterns of state formation affect contemporary variation in economic development, rule of law, and political accountability? And under what circumstances can political institutions be said to 'decay' - and how does this concept relate to countries in the world today?

Communication Technology and Politics - Dr Sharath Srinivasan

From the printing press to social media, information and communication technologies have played an important role in political change. This option takes a historicised approach to the relationship between communication technology and politics to understand authority, power and political contestation in a digital age.

Transnational Authority in World Politics - Dr Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni

Global governance is no longer the preserve of states and international organizations (IOs). Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society actors (CSO) have expanded their influence and inputs into the making and implementation of global policy and through the delivery of essential public goods that governments and IOs are unable or unwilling to provide. Through advocacy, protest and policy advice, as contractors for service delivery, standard-setters, and monitors or enforcers of domestic and international laws, NGOs have become increasingly influential actors in global politics. Their voice and action increases pluralism, but also raises questions of effectiveness, accountability and legitimacy. The first 4 weeks of the course will examine theories and practices of transnational activism and reflect on different types of influence-seeking; from agenda-setting and ‘inside’ lobbying to mass protest, strategic litigation, and direct action. Weeks 5 and 6 will focus on the impact of transnational activism in two domains of global politics; human rights and the environment. The final week looks at current opportunities and challenges posed by new social media and information technologies and by the rise of right-wing populism.

Borders, Migration, and Displacement - Dr Rebecca Buxton

Debates about immigration are central to contemporary politics. It is therefore important to understand what exactly borders are, how they are controlled by states, and how people have learnt live within and across them. This course introduces students to current discussions on migration and mobility, drawing on political theory, anthropology, and migration and refugee studies. Students will be introduced to practices of contemporary border management and normative questions about their legitimacy. We will therefore cover questions such as: do states have the right to exclude outsiders? Should states have the right to banish people from their territory? Who should receive refugee protection? And is it possible to imagine a world without borders?

Global Capitalism and the Anthropocene - Dr Jeremy Green

The effects of human-induced climate change are widespread and intensifying. Carbon-intensive economic development is the major cause of climatic transformation. This course critically examines the relationship between capitalism and environmental transformation from a historical and global perspective.

From the Printing Press to Facebook and Twitter: Communication Technologies, Mass Media, and Politics - Dr Alena Drieschova

The course studies the nexus between communication technologies, mechanisms of truth production, and political regimes. The first session focuses on different theories of what counts as truth considering current debates about the post-truth era. The second session looks at different theories of communication and how they relate to politics. In subsequent sessions, we will look at the evolution of communication technologies from the printing press to mass media such as newspapers, radio, and TV, and to the emergence of the internet and social media. How are these communication technologies related to what counts as truth in a given epoch? And how does all of this shape the kind of politics that develops? How are the invention of the printing press and paper related to the Reformation and the destruction of the Church's monopoly on "truth production"? Could have mass media influenced the emergence of democracy in Europe? And how do mass media relate to communism and fascism? What are the connections between social media and populism, social movements, revolutions, and authoritarianism in the contemporary era?

Law and Politics in Authoritarian and Developing Countries - Prof William Hurst

How does law operate outside of industrialized liberal democracies? What assumptions do most scholars bring to the table when analyzing legal systems beyond the field's traditional rich Western democratic core that should be addressed or jettisoned? In particular, is a Rule of Law framework most appropriate for making sense of law and politics in most of the world? If not, what might be a better replacement? This paper begins by addressing the competing perspectives of what we might call a "classical" rule of law and the political exigency of sovereignty. We will then move to examine perspectives for analyzing legal politics and institutions comparatively, before delving into a variety of topics and debates rooted in scholarship on actual legal systems around the world. By the end of the term, all students should have a thorough grounding in the literature on comparative legal politics as it relates to authoritarian and developing countries, though there are, of course, numerous books and literally thousands of articles one could (and should) read beyond what we are able to cover here. Still, the intended specialist will have a solid basis to begin exploring the field in more depth, while others will leave with enough to at least be familiar with some of the most important themes and issues.

The Politics of Natural Resources: This module introduces students to the key concepts, theories, and issues in the politics of natural resources. Resource-rich states have experienced various political problems, including authoritarianism, civil wars, and international aggression, attributing them to the very presence of resource wealth. These issues are collectively called the "resource curse" and have received much scholarly attention since the turn of the century.

This course reviews the development of this literature and seeks to go beyond it, discussing how we can connect it to the broader scholarship on the politics of (natural) resources. It does so by extending the scope of the theory on three grounds: timeframe, issues, and resources. When did the political impact of natural resources begin? What other issues do they lead to? Is it just about oil? If not, what distinguishes resources with political impacts from those without?

The aim of this module is to give students the tools to understand how the geological, geographical, historical, and social settings of a country can affect its politics. It also aims to help them develop the ability to critically analyze contemporary political issues and sometimes think outside the box in explaining their causes.

Lent Term 2022

Behavioural Public Policy for Sustainability – Dr Lucia Reich

Policy tools and approaches to help reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) span a wide range, from hard to soft policies. The seven classes for this course focus on Behavioural Public Policy as a comparably recent policy approach. We will investigate how evidence-based behavioural insights and tools (“nudges”) and BPP specific policy processes can (and already do) supplement the existing policy toolbox for sustainable development. We will have high-level guest speakers from the science-policy interface available for in-class debate.

Crisis, Decline and Change in International Politics - Dr Ayse Zarakol

Many observers think that we are at a critical juncture in international politics but disagree as to the causes. Some argue that the main driver of change is a power transition between the US and China, others argue that the Liberal International Order is no longer sustainable, yet others point to larger changes, e.g. climatological, economic or demographic trends. In this class, students will read works (both classics and state-of-the-art) that deal with the grand themes of order, disorder and decline in International Relations (and cognate disciplines). This option is especially suitable for students who are interested in big picture approaches to world politics and history and/or for students who may continue onto a PhD program in IR.

Elections, Polls and Policy in South Asia – Dr Patrick Clibbens

This course will explore the politics of South Asia since Independence through a focus on elections. It approaches this issue through vibrant and ongoing debates in the fields of contemporary history, anthropology, political science and political theory. We will discuss the establishment of electoral democracy in South Asia and the changing nature of South Asian elections and electoral campaigning. The course will explore the debates about the meaning of the vote, and about the relationship between public policy, electioneering and electoral success in South Asia’s diverse democracies.

India was one of the first countries of the global South to undertake opinion polls and polls are ubiquitous in Indian media today. This course will also investigate concepts of ‘the public’ in South Asia and the institutional production of ‘public opinion’, with the aim of understanding how these ideas have shaped South Asia’s complex political landscape. Alongside the secondary readings listed below, we will discuss a selection of short primary texts together in each class.

European Geopolitics 1555-1763 - Prof Brendan Simms

The course will show how some of the themes which dominate international politics today have their roots in the old European balance of power as it evolved into the global system we know today: the German question, British exceptionalism, colonialism, maritime versus continental hegemony, the Muslim threat, conditional sovereignty, the Rise of Russia, slavery, and humanitarian intervention. Each seminar will involve the discussion of primary sources as well as secondary literature.

India or Pakistan?: Muslims Ideas of the Nation in the Twentieth Century – Dr Amar Sohail

Focusing on ideas of religion, minority and secularism that helped to found India and Pakistan, this course traces competing visions of an Indian Muslim future in the years prior to, and shortly after, independence and Partition in 1947. It studies a range of Muslim thinker-politicians including: Muhammad Iqbal, Abul Kalam Azad, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan; and puts their thought in dialogue with their equally influential contemporaries: the Congress leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and M. K. Gandhi, as well as the father of Hindu nationalism V. D. Savarkar and the Dalit activist B. R. Ambedkar.

International Constitutional Law – Prof Marc Weller (runs over both terms)

The appreciation of law in international relations seems to undergo radical change at almost regular intervals. At certain periods, the international rule of law is proclaimed as the core principle of international life. After the devastation of WWI--the first war meant to end all war-- the 'legal approach' to international politics was deployed to replace the traditional system of power politics and war. World War II left the legal approach thoroughly discredited. The US/UK invasion of Iraq in 2003 started to dent the belief in a New World Order. Since then, fragmentation of global values is said to have occurred. Regional particularities are being invoked when human rights are discussed—rights that by their nature ought to be fully universal. New, contentious issues are dividing East and West and North and South, including demands for a changed global economic order, demands for the preservation of the environment, the problems relating to the competition for scarce resources and increasing competition over the control of internationalized spaces, etc.

Throughout, the course considers international law as a paradigm for the critical analysis of international relations, while at the same time not forgetting the specific nature of law as a distinct and practical tool for the management of transnational affairs.

Nationalism and International Order - Jaakko Heiskanen

The demise of the nation-state and the disappearance of nationalism have been predicted on a number of occasions, yet they stubbornly refuse to fade away – if anything, the last decade has witnessed an intensification of nationalist rhetoric and a recentring of the nation-state in international politics. This module will explore the past, present, and possible futures of nationalism and the nation-state, focusing on their central role in the make-up of the modern international order.

Political Regimes: The End of Democratisation? - Dr Pieter van Houten

The development of and variation in political regimes are a central concern in the study of comparative politics. While for decades the main focus was on processes of democratisation and the conditions under which democracies emerge and persist, in more recent years - as a result of political trends around the world - authoritarian and 'hybrid' regimes have received increasing attention again. This module will provide students with a sense of different strands of contemporary research on political regimes. Themes will include an overview of different approaches to the study of political regimes and democratisation (partly based on some 'classical' works on these topics in comparative politics), the relation between inequality and democratisation or democratic stability, recent research on the social bases of political regimes, factors and strategies supporting authoritarian regimes, the nature and prevalence of 'hybrid' regimes, and the alleged current 'democratic recession' in long-standing democratic states. The core readings use a variety of methodological approaches and draw on data and case studies from different parts of the world.

Politics and the Anthropocene - Prof Duncan Kelly

The Anthropocene is both a problem of modern politics, and a problem for politics. It is a problem of modern politics, for although there is no fixed agreement upon when exactly the

Anthropocene might have emerged stratigraphically, the two most relevant proposals for its modern development, the industrial revolution and the nuclear age, are coterminous with the origin and fraught evolution of modern, representative politics. Yet the Anthropocene is also a problem for politics. For although it seems unlikely that any kind of politics as we have known it, democratic or otherwise, could unilaterally deal with all the globally connected problems thrown up by environmental threats in the modern age of the Anthropocene, without politics, there is nothing that might authorize, legitimate or constrain any choices peoples might make about how best to proceed in its wake. The Anthropocene, in other words, raises questions both about how we consider the responsibility of modern politics for having brought about the challenge of the Anthropocene, and raises questions about the practice of politics, because only through political action can claims about responsibility be understood and developed. The seven classes for this course consider various dimensions of this relationship between politics and the Anthropocene, primarily from the perspective of the overlapping intellectual histories of modern political and economic thought. Likely topics for consideration will be, the competing temporalities of the Anthropocene and modern politics; questions of economic growth amid finite resources; issues of debt and indebtedness; the centrality of capitalism and colonialism; problems of value and political/humanistic versus scientific argumentation.

Religion and Politics: Islam, Secularism, Global Movements - Dr Iza Hussin

This 7 week session will be organised around three major themes in the study of religion and politics: Islam and Politics, Secular/ism, Global Movements. With readings drawn from recent published work in the field, it applies comparative political analysis to key theoretical, historical, methodological, and policy issues in religion and politics research: is Islam an exception in the study of religion and politics? How do modern states define, order, and reproduce religion? How does mobility, and mobilisation, matter for research and policy on religion and politics?

The crisis of party democracy: origins, consequences, remedies - Dr Chris Bickerton

This course is a comparative politics course focusing on the crisis of political parties and the problems faced by representative government across advanced democracies. The course begins by studying party democracy as a distinctive political regime rooted in 20th century mass politics. It then considers the pressures and challenges faced by party democracy since the 1970s, culminating in the contemporary “populist explosion”. The course then ends looking at possible remedies to the crisis, including alternatives to political parties.

The Middle East in Global Politics - Dr Glen Rangwala

The Middle East is usually studied in international relations with an emphasis placed on power politics and inter-state relations, with attention given principally to crisis events that happen within the region. This course starts with this traditional literature, but moves quickly on to two approaches largely overlooked in it. First, it develops an understanding of the Middle East's politics that looks to the importance of transnational factors, including regional economic change, diasporas and refugee movements, and the politics of global religious movements. Secondly, it looks to how the Middle East figures in global political change; it interrogates the 'crisis perspective' on the Middle East through exploring international advocacy groups around the world which present the Middle East as a problem region, and it looks at how a conception of the Middle East shapes political sensibilities in other parts of the world. The course presumes pre-existing knowledge of the modern history and politics of the region. There will be no lectures accompanying the seminar series.

Norms of Humanity: Traditional and Critical Approaches

– Dr Giovanni Mantilla

This seminar discusses three core strands of modern international norms and laws devoted to ameliorating human suffering: human rights law, the humanitarian regulation of armed conflict, and international criminal law. It introduces students to traditional and critical approaches to these normative bodies, covering their theories, histories, and institutional manifestations.

Feminist Political Thought - Dr Rebecca Buxton

This module aims to introduce students to feminist political thought, with a particular focus on contemporary debates. It begins in week one and two by considering the history of feminist thought and then interrogating “womanhood” and the category of gender. The remainder of the course then aims to consider core debates in feminist politics, including theorizing misogyny, intersectionality, love and desire, and imagining a feminist utopia. We will touch on core thinkers in feminist political thought including (but not limited to) Nancy Fraser, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Davis, Shulamith Firestone and Judith Butler.

Latin America in the International Order - Dr Carsten-Andreas Schulz

This module focuses on Latin America’s relationship with and contributions to international order. Most Latin American states emerged from the collapse of Iberian colonialism in the early nineteenth century. However, despite being formally sovereign for over two centuries, these states have long occupied a peripheral position in international politics. This module will examine how Latin Americans perceived and dealt with their international marginalization. For one, it will explore how Latin Americans discussed the nature of the international order, including ideas about sovereignty, great power politics, and the rights and duties of states. For another, it will debate how these ideas shaped Latin American legal and diplomatic practices, and the extent to which Latin Americans were able to influence the development of the practices, norms, and institutions that organise world politics today.

Environmental Political Thought - Sean Fleming

This module explores a range of contemporary political ideas about the environment - from reformist to radical, from optimistic to apocalyptic, from left to right, and from West to East. The focus is on critiques of liberal environmentalism.

Fiscal Politics in Westminster Democracies - Dr Peter Sloman

This module will explore the relationship between fiscal policy, economic management, and electoral politics in three Westminster democracies (the UK, Canada, and Australia) since the 1990s. It will draw on a range of disciplinary perspectives – from fiscal sociology and history to economics and public administration – to explore how governments in these three countries have responded to budgetary crises, rising levels of poverty and inequality, and complex debates over fiscal federalism. Seminars will explore the politics of austerity, public attitudes to tax, spending, and borrowing, and the role of policy costings in elections. The module would be ideally suited to students who are carrying out dissertation research on policy-making or public opinion, or who intend to work in public policy.

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