

### POLIS, LENT 2021

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#### **Description**

This course is available to candidates for the POLIS M.Phil. and to any other postgraduate student for whom it is a permitted option. In this course, we will explore the theme of 'decline' in international politics, focusing on different levels of analysis: decline of particular international actors, decline of international institutions/orders and decline/collapse of world structures. Starting with great power decline and transition, we will then move onto considering the decline of international orders and hierarchies. We will end with a discussion about the likelihood of systemic decline due to crises beyond human control such as climate change. The goal of this course option is to get students familiar with both classical and cutting edge work in theoretical, sociological and historical IR, while simultaneously engaging them in contemporary debates about urgent problems and crises in world politics.

#### **Course organisation and expectations**

In the reading lists that follow, core (i.e. compulsory) readings are separated from supplementary readings. Ideally, students will come to class having done the core readings. Supplementary readings are included for students who may want to read further on each topic and may also come in handy when you are writing the assessment essays. [Reading list will be updated up to the start of Lent Term; please make sure you have the final version of the paper guide]

The course will be taught in seminar style, meeting 1.5-2 hours each week. Regular attendance and participation are expected but not assessed. I am also giving twelve lectures for undergraduates in POL2 for LENT on complementary themes. You are welcome to attend<sup>1</sup> these hour-long lectures as well, especially if the subject material is new to you.<sup>2</sup>

Assessment will be via a 3000-word essay at the end of the term.

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<sup>1</sup> Recordings will also be available.

<sup>2</sup> If you come to these lectures you will hear my particular take on these themes (and some of the overlapping readings). But do keep in mind that because this is a postgraduate seminar, I still want you to engage with the readings on your own and come to class prepared to discuss your position.

## Background Reading

The following are reference books you can consult before or during the course for contextualising the issues we will discuss in the seminars. They each have different strengths. Having at least one at hand as a reference book is recommended, especially if your background is not in IR.

- Baylis, John, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics. 5th edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Carlsnaes, Walter Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons (eds.). *Handbook of International Relations*. London: Sage, 2004.
- Dunne, Tim, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith (eds.). *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Jackson, Robert and Georg Sørensen. *Introduction to International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Hollis, Martin and Steve Smith. *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012 [1962].
- Reus-Smit, Christian and Duncan Snidal (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Reus-Smit, Christian. *International Relations: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

## Useful websites and blogs:

- 'The Duck of Minerva' (<http://duckofminerva.blogspot.com/>)
- 'The Disorder of Things' (<http://thedisorderofthings.wordpress.com/>)
- 'e-International Relations' (<http://www.e-ir.info/>)
- There are also some good IR podcasts that you may want to check out.

## WEEK 1

### **A world in crisis?**

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. More recently, some have argued that COVID-19 will fundamentally change our world. In this week, will get acquainted with some of these debates to frame the discussion in the coming weeks.

#### *Core Reading:*

- Chakraborty, Aditya (2016) Interview - Wolfgang Streeck: the German economist calling time on capitalism. *The Guardian*, Dec 9. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/dec/09/wolfgang-streeck-the-german-economist-calling-time-on-capitalism>
- Freeland, Chrystia (2015) The Disintegration of the World. *The Atlantic*. May. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/05/the-disintegration-of-the-world/389534/>
- Freedman, Uri (2020) I Have Seen the Future—And It's Not the Life We Knew. *The Atlantic*. May 1. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/05/life-after-coronavirus-china-denmark-south-korea/611011/>
- Haass, Richard N. (2018) Liberal World Order, R.I.P. *Foreign Affairs*. March 21. <https://www.cfr.org/article/liberal-world-order-rip>
- Mishra, Pankaj (2016) Welcome to the age of anger. *The Guardian*. December 8. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/08/welcome-age-anger-brexit-trump>
- Wright, Thomas (2018) The Return to Great-Power Rivalry Was Inevitable. *The Atlantic*. Sep 12 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/09/liberal-international-order-free-world-trump-authoritarianism/569881/>

#### *Supplementary Reading:*

- Fukuyama, Francis (2018) *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*. Profile Books.
- Mishra, Pankaj (2017) *The Age of Anger*. MacMillan.
- Runciman, David (2018) *How Democracy Ends*. Profile Books.
- Wallace-Wells, David (2019) *The Uninhabitable Earth: A Story of the Future*. Allen Lane.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2011) *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso.

## WEEK II

### Levels of Analysis in IR

What do we mean by the terms agent, order and system/structure? This week we learn about these terms and the ways they have been defined in IR theory. We also discuss the level of analysis problematic and its implications. The goal of the week is to help separate ongoing world political crises by level of analysis.

#### Core Reading:

- Bull, Hedley (2012) *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. 4th ed. Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Introduction.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. (1959) *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. Revised edition. NY: Columbia University Press. Introduction and Conclusion.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. (1979) *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. Chapter 3, 4, 5, 6. [Focus on 5]
- Wendt, Alexander (1987) The agent-structure problem in international relations theory. *International Organization*.

#### Supplementary Reading:

- Hurrell, Andrew (2007) *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Keohane, Robert O. (1984) *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Temby, Owen (2013) What are levels of analysis and what do they contribute to international relations theory? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28.4: 721-42.
- Zarakol, Ayşe. (2017) Introduction: Theorising Hierarchies, in Ayşe Zarakol, ed., *Hierarchies in World Politics. Cambridge Studies in International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## WEEK 3

### Decline of the US; Rise of China

To the extent IR has focused on decline, it has been at the level of agents, i.e. the decline of Great Powers. This week we learn about power transition theory, hegemonic decline and revisit debates about American decline and the rise of China. Is the US really in decline? And if so can the current levels of uncertainty in world politics be attributed to that? Do great powers always decline and rise in a predictable manner along the same trajectory?

#### Core Reading:

- Buzan, Barry (2010) China in international society: Is 'peaceful rise' possible? *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3.1:5-36.
- Cox, Michael (2001) Whatever Happened to American Decline? International Relations and the New United States Hegemony. *New Political Economy* 6.3: 311-340.
- Kim, Woosang and Scott Gates (2015) Power transition theory and the rise of China. *International Area Studies Review* 18.3: 219-226. [See the rest also]
- Lake, David (2006) American Hegemony and the Future of East-West Relations. *International Studies Perspectives* 7: 23-30.

#### Supplementary Reading:

- Acharya, Amitav (2018) *The End of American World Order*. Polity Press.
- Cooley, Alexander and Daniel Nexon (2020) *Exit from Hegemony*. Oxford University Press.
- Cox, Michael (2005) Empire by Denial: The Strange Case of the United States, *International Affairs* 81.1: 15-30.
- Ikenberry, John G. (2008) The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive? *Foreign Affairs* 87.1: 23-37.
- Kang, David C. (2003) Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks. *International Security* 27.4 (2003): 57-85.
- Kang, David C. (2007) *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia*. Columbia University Press.
- Kennedy, Paul (1987) *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Random House.
- Kugler, Jacek, ed. (2011) Special Issue: Power Transitions. *International Interactions* 38.5
- Layne, Christopher (2012) This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana. *International Studies Quarterly* 56.1: 203-13.
- Owen, J. M. (2019) Ikenberry, international relations theory, and the rise of China. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 21.1: 55-62.
- Tammen, Ronald L. (2008) The Organski Legacy: A Fifty-Year Research Program. *International Interactions* 34.4: 314-332.
- Tang, Shiping (2018) China and the Future of International Order(s) Ethics & International Affairs 31.1: 31-43.

## Week 4

### Decline of 'the Liberal International Order'?

Until recently, very few in IR considered the possibility of decline regarding international orders, or at least the idea that they could decline in such a way that they would not be replaced with similar international orders. Now that the Liberal International Order seems to be in decline, many are scrambling for answers. Is the Liberal International Order in decline because of the decline of the US and/or the Rise of China and/or the Global South? Some argue that the main challenge to the Liberal International Order is from within, from populist forces in the West such as Trump or Brexiteers. And some say the Liberal International Order never really existed in the first place. This week we will cover these debates and also discuss where (if anywhere) liberal internationalism went wrong.

#### Core Reading:

- Colgan, Jeff D., and Robert O. Keohane (2017) The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither. *Foreign Affairs* 96: 36-44.
- Fierros, Orfeo (2018) The syncopated history of the liberal international order. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 21.1: 20-28.
- Kurowska, Xymena and Anatoly Reshetnikov (2018) Neutrollization: Industrialized trolling as a pro-Kremlin strategy of desecuritization. *Security Dialogue* 49.5: 345-363.
- Porter, Patrick (2020) *The False Promise of Liberal Order: Nostalgia, Delusion and the Rise of Trump*. Polity Press. Introduction (skim the rest).

#### Supplementary Reading:

- Adler-Nissen, Rebecca and Ayşe Zarakol. [Forthcoming] Struggles for Recognition: The Liberal International Order and the Merger of its Discontents. [*International Organization* special issue; check out the rest as well]
- Deudney, Daniel and G. John Ikenberry (1999) The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order. *Review of International Studies* 25.2: 179-196.
- Ikenberry, John G., *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition*. Princeton University Press, 2006. An abridged version of the book's argument can be found here: 'The Future of the Liberal World Order: Internationalism after America', *Foreign Affairs* 90.3 (2011): 56-68.
- Jahn, Beate, 'Liberal Internationalism: From Ideology to Empirical Theory – And Back Again', *International Theory* 1.3 (2010): 409-438.
- Keohane, Robert O. (1984) *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mearsheimer, John J. (2018) *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
- Mudde, Cas (2016) Europe's Populist Surge. *Foreign Affairs* 95.6: 25-30.

- Reus-Smit, Christian (2013) The liberal international order reconsidered. In *After Liberalism?: The Future of Liberalism in International Relations*. Edited by Rebekka Friedman, Kevork Oskanian and Ramon Pacheco Pardo. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 167-186.
- Norris, Pippa (2019) *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Laruelle, Marlene. 2018. *Russian and American Far Right Connections: Confluence, Not Influence*. PONARS Policy Memo No.516. IERES, George Washington University.
- Prashad, Vijay, ed. (2018) *Strongmen: Trump/Modi/Erdoğan/Duterte/Putin*. OR Books.
- Tsygankov, Andrei P. (2019) *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. Fifth Edition. Rowman & Littlefield.

## Week 5

### Decline of 'the West'?

One of the main features of the modern international system has been the hierarchy between the West and the non-West. We review how this emerged and why it has been so durable. Some conflate the decline of the West with the rise of China, but the two things are not the same and do not presuppose each other. We also discuss what a post-Western world may look like.

#### Core Reading:

- Acharya, Amitav (2017) *After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order*. *Ethics & International Affairs* 31.3: 271-85.
- Buzan, Barry and George Lawson (2015) *The Global Transformation*. Cambridge University Press. Esp. Introduction and Chapter 9.
- Goldstone, Jack (2000) *The Rise of the West or Not? A Revision to Socio-Economic History*. *Sociological Theory* 18.2: 175-94.
- Zarakol, Ayşe (2011) *After Defeat: How the East learned to live with the West*. Cambridge University Press. Esp. Introduction, Chapter 1 and Conclusion.

#### Supplementary Reading:

- Abu-Lughod, Janet (1989) *Before European Hegemony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roger C. Altman (2013) *The Fall and Rise of the West*. *Foreign Affairs*, January/February.
- Buzan, Barry and George Lawson (2013) *The global transformation: the nineteenth century and the making of modern international relations*. *International Studies Quarterly* 57.3: 620-634.
- Chase-Dunn, Christopher (2010) *Adam Smith in Beijing: A World-Systems Perspective [Book Review Essay]* *Historical Materialism* 18: 39-51.
- Frank, Andre Gunder (1998) *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*. University of California Press.
- Goldstone, Jack A. (1987) *Cultural Orthodoxy, Risk, and Innovation: The Divergence of East and West in the Early Modern World*. *Sociological Theory* 5.2: 119-35.
- Hobson, John M and Jason C. Sharman (2005) *The Enduring Place of Hierarchy in World Politics: Tracing the Social Logics of Hierarchy and Social Change*. *European Journal of International Relations* 11.1: 63-98.
- Kupchan, Charles (2012) *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn*. Oxford University Press.
- Pomeranz, Keith. (2009) *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton University Press.
- Sharman, J.C. (2019) *Empires of the Weak: The Real Story of European Expansion and the Creation of the New World Order*. Princeton University Press.

## Week 6

### Are we facing an even bigger decline?

In this week we consider whether the current crisis goes even deeper than the previously considered options. We look at systemic pressures driving change, e.g. climate, disease, technology and finance. Do crises in these areas signal impending structural decline in world politics?

#### Core Reading:

- Blom, Philipp. 2019. *Nature's Mutiny: How the Little Ice Age of the Long Seventeenth Century Transformed the West and Shaped the Present*. Liveright. Prologue & Epilogue.
- Harvey, David (2015) *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. London: Profile Bookstore. Introduction.
- Parker, Geoffrey (2014) Lessons from the Little Ice Age. *The New York Times*. March 22. [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/opinion/sunday/lessons-from-the-little-ice-age.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/opinion/sunday/lessons-from-the-little-ice-age.html?_r=0)
- Wallerstein, Immanuel (2001) *End of the World as We Know It: Social Science for the Twenty-First Century*. Introduction.
- Zuboff, Shoshana (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Introduction & Conclusion.

#### Supplementary Reading:

- Bauman, Zygmunt (2003) *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Polity Press.
- Ghosh, Amitav (2016) *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hulme, Mike (2009) *Why We Disagree about Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mitchell, Timothy (2011) *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso. Introduction & Conclusion.
- Parker, Geoffrey (2013) *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*. Yale University Press.
- Tooze, Adam. (2018) *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*. Penguin.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel, Randall Collins, Michael Mann, Georgi Derluguian and Craig Calhoun (2013) *Does Capitalism Have a Future?* Oxford University Press.
- Zuboff, Shoshana (2015) Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization. *Journal of Information Technology* 30, 75–89.

## Week 7

### **Which one is it? And what is next?**

This week we will bring the discussion to a close by weighing all the options together. Are we really facing some type of major 'decline' in world politics? If so, which one? And what will the future look like?

#### *Core Reading:*

- Bauman, Zygmunt (2007) *Liquid Times: Living in Age of Uncertainty*. Polity Press.
- Stanley Robinson (2020) The Coronavirus is Rewriting Our Imaginations. *New Yorker*. May 1. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/the-coronavirus-and-our-future>

#### *Supplementary Reading:*

- Zarakol, Ayşe [Forthcoming] *Before Defeat: Rethinking the Decline of the East and the Future of the West*. Introduction & Conclusion.