Course
Theoretical and methodological issues of International Relations research (TMIR)

Lecturers
Prof. em. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Reinhard Meyers
Prof. Dr. Markus Bresinsky

Objectives
The course focuses on the roles of theories and research methods in International Relations. Students are introduced to basic ontological and methodological concepts and major contending epistemological perspectives on theories and approaches in the field of International Relation. Furthermore, students will be acquainted with the background debates in the philosophy of the social sciences that undergird different methodological approaches.

Main intention is to provide a sophisticated overview of the current scientific debates in the domain of International Relations exemplified by current international issues and challenges.

Another idea is to assist students in the choice of the appropriate methodological approach for their research project, not to train them in a multitude of research techniques as such. The seminar will finish, however, with a session on how to construct a research proposal for a Bachelor / Master thesis.

In an optional role game play students deepen their theoretical and conceptual knowledge by discussing and negotiating international issues.

Competencies:
- Understand the research field of International Relations
- Know how to research about International Relations theories and models
- Know how to apply different theories and models of International Relations
- Identify scope and limits of different theories and models
- Know how to analyze the actor, structures and processes of international political issues with International Relation theories
- Know how to present results to plenum and work groups
- Improve English conversation, reading and writing

Content
A. Basic ontological concepts
- Basic concepts I: How can we know what we know? The sociolinguistic construction of world views. A simple start.
- Basic concepts II: Levels of Analysis and their consequences. Agency vs. structure: exclusivities or dialectical oppositions?
- Basic concepts III: The growth of theory - ordering the universe. Ontological and methodological perspectives on I.R.

B. Basic Ontologies of I.R.: From Hobbes via Grotius to Kant?
- I: Realism – the shadows of international anarchy: national actors in a zero-sum game system of deterrence and security dilemmas
- II: Idealism/Liberalism – from cooperation to interdependence: societal actors in a positive sum-game of progress and modernization
III: International Society – consensually ordered pluralist anarchical society with rules, norms, and institutions

C. Basic Epistemologies of I.R.: Understanding or explaining international phenomena. The methodological controversy between Traditionalism and Scientism


II: The scientific or behavioral perspective: Quantitative Methods, Empiricism, Social Science without Values.

III: Methodological pragmatism: the inter-paradigm debate and the Neo-Neo-discussion. Anything goes or Feyerabend for Epistemology?

D. From radical to post-modern critique of methodological traditionalism: the anti-foundationalist deconstruction of internationalist meta-narratives

I: Superstructurally superficial: some consequences of traditional Marxian methodological premisses for the analysis of I.R.; can scientific statements be interest-free?

II: The meaning, condition, and means of (international) emancipation: Critical Theory and the return to normative praxis.

III: The epistemology and methodology of post-modernism: how to describe the undescribable...

E. Excursio

I: Excursio: Unequal exchange, dependency, and core-periphery relationships

II: Excursio: Feminist perspectives in I.R. analysis – man maketh war…[??]

F. Role play game / exercise

Grading/Evaluation

Participation in class – 20%

Seminar paper on the premises, assumptions, characteristics, performance, achievements, and consequences of a particular theory/approach/method for I.R. analysis – 80% OR

Outline/disposition/research proposal for a Bachelor or a Master thesis on a subject of your choice based on an assessment of the relevant secondary literature and a discussion of the research methods to be used – 80%

Written essay (English) 1500 words

Attendance

Max. 30 students (circa 15 IRM, circa 15 BW)

Admission

Registration via mail (Katrin.baumgartner@oth-regensburg.de)

Attendance at the first lecture mandatory

Start

2017-07-20 until 2017-08-03

Special Note

Bloc course after summer exams period.

Reading of literature, scientific working style, and self-commitment to this course is mandatory!

The course will be conducted together with students of the study program "International Relations and Management".
Introductory literature:


Perspectives on and Theories of International Relations:


Christopher Lamont: Research methods in International Relations. London: Sage 2015