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Details on booking appointments and accessing the zoom office hour can be found [on stud.ip](#).

Summer Term 2021

## **Social Theory and International Relations**

**Tuesdays, 13-16 (GMT+1) via zoom**

**MAIR, University of Bremen/Jacobs University**

**Version 31.03.2021**

### *Preface*

**Seminar blurb:** The seminar connects social theory with the study of the international, building on foundations laid in “Modern Social Theory” and “Actors, Institutions, and Global Governance”. We will investigate how current theoretical debates and empirical research in International Relations are informed by social theories (practice theory, Marxism, dependency, feminism, post-colonial theory...), discuss key concepts of IR (statehood, imperialism, war, inequality, governance, capitalism...), and analyse concrete issues of global politics (climate change, development aid, the rise of China, global social policy, global trade...). The syllabus will be discussed in the first session and students are invited to bring their own suggestions. Different didactic approaches will be combined to encourage diverse and equitable participation and create a good working environment. The seminar has three overall aims: enabling students to critically reflect on the limits and potentials of established IR paradigms; understanding the value of using classic social theory in the study of international relations; and learning to apply theoretical lenses to empirical phenomena.

**Course format:** Unfortunately, as of now, the situation does not allow us to meet for in-person teaching. We will hence work through zoom until better times arrive! Even though I suspect that everyone will be familiar with this strange format by now, a few words on digital studying. First of all, the University of Bremen have acquired a zoom licence that seems more data-secure than the freeware, which is why we have all given in to what seems like the most user-friendly programme at the moment. If you still have any data-related concerns regarding zoom, perhaps [this info site](#) of the University can help (but it's only available in German, sorry). It is probably self-explanatory, but nobody is allowed to record or take pictures of any of our meetings.

Secondly, it might make sense to have some basic rules for our meetings. I suggest using the hand-raising option of zoom if you want to make a contribution. If this is not possible, you can also try waving. I usually use the gallery view in zoom so I can see all faces at once. I am always happy (and I assume, so are others) if participants switch on their cameras, it makes exchange a bit more “real”. However, I totally understand that there can be good reasons why you do not switch it on (having no functioning camera, other people cleaning the flat in the background, wanting to hide that you're on Zanzibar...). I have gotten used to seeing everyone's living rooms or studies by now (and showing mine) and I think we shouldn't have too high expectations for looking good etc. So, the more faces to be seen, the merrier! As usual: please switch off your microphones when not

talking (and on when talking!). Also, I might use the chat or survey function once in a while for “didactic” purposes but will not always keep track of the chat at all times. If you ever have any suggestions on how to improve this sub-optimal course format, please do not hesitate to share them! I always appreciate collective efforts at making this a good learning experience. To make the long session more bearable, we’ll break twice for about 5-10 minutes.

Thirdly and lastly, even though we have all gotten somewhat accustomed to these weird and worrying times, I think it is worth pointing out once more that in the middle of a pandemic, none of us function a hundred percent as we normally do. Apart from technical challenges (restricted library access, missing hardware, lack of a perfect study space), we might be distracted/depressed/confused/exhausted etc. once in a while. So, let’s all be patient with ourselves and each other (and: with regards to any such personal concerns, too, I am always happy to hear how you are and if/how I can help!).

## Outline and class readings

### *Part 1: Basics*

#### **Session #1, 23.03.2021: Warm-up and course organisation**

- Introductions
- Agreeing and reflecting on procedures
- Recap of major IR paradigms
- Discussion and finalisation of the syllabus
- Assigning presentations and commentaries

Preparatory reading: Smith, Karen (2020): Order, ordering, and disorder, in: Tickner, Arlene B., and Karen Smith (eds.): International Relations from the Global South: Worlds of Difference. Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp. 77-96.

#### **Session #2, 30.03.2021: What kind of world are we living in?**

##### Readings:

Barnett, Michael (2020): Covid-19 and the Sacrificial International Order, in: International Organization 74, pp. E128-E47.

Strange, Susan (1994): Wake up, Krasner! The world has changed, in: Review of International Political Economy 1: 2, pp. 209-219.

Andrews, Kehinde (2021): Imperial Democracy (chapter 7), in: idem: The New Age of Empire, Penguin/Allen Lane, pp. 163-188.

#### **Session #3, 06.04.2021: And (how) can IR make sense of it?**

##### Readings:

Guzzini, Stefano (2013): The ends of International Relations theory: stages of reflexivity and modes of theorizing, in: European Journal of International Relations, 19: 3, pp. 521-541.

Hutchings, Kimberly, and Patricia Owen (2021): Women Thinkers and the Canon of International Thought: Recovery, Rejection, and Reconstitution, in: American Political Science Review, pp. 1-13.

Acharya, Amitav (2014): Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds, in: International Studies Quarterly 58, pp. 647-659.

## *Part 2: Concepts*

### **Session #4, 13.04.2021: Sovereignty**

#### Readings:

Migdal, Joel S., and Klaus Schlichte (2005): Rethinking the State, in: Schlichte, Klaus (ed.): The Dynamics of States: The Formation and Crises of State Domination, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 1-40.

Urt, João Nackle (2016): How Western Sovereignty Occludes Indigenous Governance: the Guarani and Kaiowa Peoples in Brazil, in: Contexto Internacional 38: 3, pp. 865-886.

#### Presentation: Kurdish nationalism and feminism

Al-Ali, Nadejda, and Latif Tas (2019): Reconsidering nationalism and feminism: the Kurdish political movement in Turkey, in: Nations and Nationalism 24: 2, pp. 453-473.

### **Session #5, 20.04.2021: Capitalism**

#### Readings:

Bhambra, Gurinder K. (2020): Colonial global economy: towards a theoretical reorientation of political economy, in: Review of International Political Economy, ahead of print, pp. 1-14.

Azmanova, Alena (2020): The Crisis of Capitalism, Almost (chapter 1), in: idem: Capitalism on Edge: How Fighting Precarity Can Achieve Radical Change Without Crisis or Utopia, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 11-24.

#### Presentation: The rise of China

Amin, Samir (2006): Does the rise of China challenge the imperialist order? Chapter 2 in: idem: Beyond US Hegemony: Assessing the Prospects for a Multipolar World, Beirut: Zed Books, pp. 25-48.

### **Session #6, 27.04.2021: War**

#### Readings:

Tickner, Arlene B. (2020): War and conflict, in: Tickner, Arlene B., and Karen Smith (eds.): International Relations from the Global South: Worlds of Difference. Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp. 115-138.

Owens, Patricia (2007): The Humanitarian Condition? On War and Making a Global Public, in: idem: Between War and Politics: International Relations and the Thought of Hannah Arendt, Oxford: OUP, pp. 128-148.

#### Presentation 1: "Rebel governance"

Berti, Benedetta (2018): Violent and Criminal Non-State Actors, in: Draude, Anke, Tanja A. Börzel, and Thomas Risse (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of Governance and Limited Statehood, Oxford: OUP

Presentation 2: Mercenaries (focus on Middle East)

Dallas-Feeney, Christopher P. (2019): Violent Non-State Actors in the Middle East: Origins and Goals, in: Koch, Bettina, and Yannis A. Stivachtis (eds.): Regional Security in the Middle East: Sectors, Variables and Issues, E-International Relations Publishing.

**Session #7, 04.05.2021: Neoliberalism**

Readings:

Biebricher, Thomas (2018): What is neoliberalism? Chapter 1 in: idem: The Political Theory of Neoliberalism, Stanford University Press, p. 11-28.

Brown, Wendy (2019): In the ruins of neoliberalism: the rise of antidemocratic politics in the West, New York: Columbia University Press. Instead of reading a part of the book, listen to this interview: <https://www.thedigradio.com/podcast/ruins-of-neoliberalism-with-wendy-brown/> (a transcript can be found here: <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/12/neoliberalism-wendy-brown-interview-nihilism-political-theory>)

Presentation: Neoliberalism in Chile

Madariaga, Aldo (2020): The resilience of neoliberalism: Lessons in Democracy and Development from Latin America and Eastern Europe, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

*Part 3: mid-term reflection*

**Session #8, 11.05.2021: Structure and Agency**

Readings:

Franke, Ulrich, and Ulrich Roos (2010): Actor, structure, process: Transcending the state personhood debate by means of a pragmatist ontological model for international relations theory, in: Review of International Studies 36: 4, pp. 1057-1077.

Braun, Benjamin, Sebastian Schindler, and Tobias Wille (2019): Rethinking agency in International Relations: performativity, performances and actor-networks, in: Journal of International Relations and Development 22, pp. 787-807.

Presentation: The “practice turn” in IR – this presentation is still open

Leander, Anna (2008): Practices Providing Order: The Private Military/Security Business and Global Security Governance, Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, Copenhagen Business School.

*Part 4: Issues*

**Session #9, 18.05.2021: Emancipation and resistance**

### Readings:

Ghodsee, Kristen (2018): Introduction (pp. 1-27) and chapter 6 ("The lead-up to international women's year", pp. 135-145), in: idem: *Second world, second sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Cepeda-Másmela, Carolina (2020): Resistances, in: Tickner, Arlene B., and Karen Smith (eds.): *International Relations from the Global South: Worlds of Difference*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp. 275-295.

### Presentation: Feminist food sovereignty movement

Conway, Janet M. (2018): When food becomes a feminist issue: popular feminism and subaltern agency in the World March of Women, in: *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20: 2, pp. 188-203.

## **Session #10, 25.05.2021: Developmentalism**

### Readings:

Kay, Cristóbal (2001): Why East Asia Overtook Latin America: Agrarian Reform, Industrialisation and Development, in: *Third World Quarterly* 23: 6, pp. 1073-1102.

Amsden, Alice (1994): Why isn't the whole world experimenting with the East Asian way to develop? Review of the East Asian miracle, in: *World Development* 22: 4, pp. 627-633.

### Presentation: developmental states in Africa

Pérez, Francisco (2021): East Asia has delinked – can Ethiopia delink too? In: *Review of African Political Economy* 48: 167, pp. 102-118.

## **Session #11, 01.06.2021: Global social governance**

### Readings:

Kaasch, Alexandra, Martin Koch, and Kerstin Martens (2019): Exploring theoretical approaches to global social policy research: Learning from international relations and inter-organisational theory, in: *Global Social Policy* 19: 1-2, pp. 87-104.

Berten, John, and Lutz Leisering (2017): Social policy by numbers. How international organisations construct global policy proposals, in: *International Journal of Social Welfare* 2017: 26, pp. 151-167.

### Presentation: Randomised Controlled Trials

Kabeer, Naila (2020): Women's Empowerment and Economic Development: A Feminist Critique of Storytelling Practices in "Randomista" Economics, *Feminist Economics*, 26: 2, pp. 1-26.

## **Session #12, 08.06.2021: Group politics in climate governance**

Prys-Hansen (2020): Differentiation as Affirmative Action, Transforming or Reinforcing Structural Inequality at the UNFCCC, in: *Global Society*, 34:3, pp. 353-369.

Karen Smith and Katie Laatikainen (eds.) (2020): Group politics in UN multilateralism → chapter to be selected once book has arrived (either “Group Interaction in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change” by L. Groen, or “The Alliance of Small Island States at the UN: the Promise and Pitfalls of Single-Issue Groups in Multilateral Negotiations” by K.V. Laatikainen)

Presentation: Brazil’s South-South cooperation – so far only one presenter

Hochstetler and Aoki Inoue (2019): South-South relations and global environmental governance, Brazilian international development cooperation, in: Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional, 62: 6, pp. 1-22.

### **Session #13, 15.06.2021: Concluding discussion**

- So, what have we learned? And what not (open questions)
- Reflections on the role of theories, students, and universities
- What does covid mean for the future of globalisation?

#### Readings:

Mamdani, Mahmood (2019): Decolonising universities, in: Jansen, Jonathan D. (ed.): Decolonisation in universities: the politics of knowledge, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, pp. 15-28.

McNamara, Kathleen R., and Abraham L. Newman (2020): The Big Reveal: COVID-19 and Globalization’s Great Transformations, in: International Organization 74 Supplement, December 2020, pp. E59–E77.

### Course Requirements

**Reading, attendance, participation:** The first requirement, on which this class builds, is that you read the assigned literature and participate in class. If you cannot make it to a session, please send me an email in advance. The texts will all be made available through stud.ip. There are usually two texts per session (three in the second and third session), plus one assigned reading on which the presentation builds (see below). The latter is not mandatory for the rest of the group, but all are of course invited to read that, too, if time allows. While reading, ask yourselves: which social theories does this connect to; how does it relate to other things we have discussed; what are the main messages; what are my thoughts on this text?

**Commentaries:** The next requirement is to write on 800-1000-word commentary on one text during the term (you can choose this from anywhere in the syllabus, we will allocate texts in the first session). The commentary shall include a short summary of the text (no more than max. a third of the overall commentary). The rest is a critical discussion of the text. Upload that commentary in the respective folder on stud.ip on Thursday before the session in which the text is to be discussed! **Responses:** Throughout the term, everyone is expected to write two responses to the commentaries of others. I.e., if you wish to write a response, read a commentary (that is uploaded on Thursdays, see above) and write a 500-600-word reply (there is no need to assign these in advance, you can decide spontaneously). The responses shall be uploaded before the respective session (so, Tuesdays 13hrs at the latest). We will hear the commentaries and responses in our sessions! *Attendance of and participation in classes, commentaries and responses are not graded and count as “SL”.*

**Presentations:** In most weeks, the class discussions will be complemented by group presentations. Topics are suggested above (but can be discussed). In groups of 2-3, you have one hour to design. You can give a classical PPT and then moderate a discussion, or organise a group exercise based on your input, stage a play – be creative. For this, start off from the respective text provided in this syllabus but go further and do your own research on the topic. The group works should provide some empirical substance based on which we can practice theoretical arguments. Please upload something written (i.e., your PPTs or a summary of a group exercise, or a script...) on stud.ip. Idea: upload presentation/podcast/etc. prior to class, then reduce duration of meeting to 2,5 hours. The grades will be awarded on a group basis. The main expectations for the group works are to provide an accessible introduction to the stated topic; to provide some empirical material based on which we can deepen our discussion of the session's overall concept/issue; and to show that you have approached the topic in an independent manner. You are free to take the topic into a direction that interests you! I am happy to (try and) provide further literature suggestions if needed!

**Essays and term papers:** If you want to acquire 6 CP in this course, you need to write a 6-page essay, if you wish to acquire 9 CP, a 15-20-page term paper. Essays are more argumentative and less "in-depth"; they can draw on a variety of examples and materials and take a fairly free form – the main criterion is that they are convincingly argued (i.e., develop an independent argument that is well-grounded and well-presented). Term papers should draw on social theory to explore a phenomenon of global politics in some depth. For both, please follow the MAIR style guide. Deadline for essays and term papers is Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Weighting of the grades:** For **6 CP**: Presentation 50%; Essay 50%. For **9 CP**: Presentation 25%; Term paper 75%. → You have to decide which option you take (6 or 9 CP) when you register on PABO (registration period: 10 June through 30 June).