International Organizations

This research seminar has two broad objectives that conforms to the three sections of the course. Section I provides an overview of the different theoretical perspectives for understanding international organizations. Most of these approaches view international organizations as an effect of either state power, state interests, or global forces. We will spend several weeks examining these different theoretical perspectives, but conclude with an alternative approach that treats international organizations as cultural entities and therefore provides the basis for according them relative autonomy and some measure of independence.

Section II examines the effects of international organizations on world politics. Most theories presume that states delegate to IOs whatever effects they might have. Theories of international organizations that presume that they are established by states that are seeking to increase cooperation, therefore, look for a link between IO behavior and state policy coordination. Other theories of international organizations, however, examine how IOs might shape state interests and help constitute the social world. We will examine these different ways of thinking about the effects of international organizations. Sometimes IOs can make things better. Most of the time we really have no way of knowing whether IOs are effective or not. At other times IOs screw up, and we want to think about why that is. Are they responsible for their screw ups? Such issues relate to central questions of IO legitimacy and moral responsibility, the theme that concludes the course.

The third section of the course will apply these two themes to four contemporary issues - how to understand the workings of the Security Council, humanitarianism, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The UN in general and the Security Council in specific are generally viewed as little more than an effect of Great Power demands. Is that all there is? An alternative view sees the Security Council as a site of contestation and debate that has independent effects on world politics. Various international organizations present themselves as humanitarian actors dedicated to the provision of relief to those whose physical existence is at stake. How should we understand the nature of humanitarian action in contemporary politics? What is its relationship to state interests, discourses of global liberalism? What are the stated and unstated effects of humanitarian action? The UN is heavily identified with and invested in peacekeeping. But has it ever succeeded? Has the UN ever made a difference? Not only is it trying to keep the peace, it now is trying to build states after war. What are the forces that produced this development?

Requirements. Your grade is based on three contributions. One, a research paper worth 60% of your grade. This is a research seminar, after all. The expectation, therefore, is that the subject and the materials will inspire you to do a research paper that could be presented at a professional conference, be submitted to a professional journal, or provide the foundation for a dissertation prospectus. Accordingly, you can choose from one of the following three options: (a) a survey paper, akin to a literature review, that provides an exhaustive appraisal of a central concept or theme of this course; (b) a research design that covers literature, thesis statement, theory and hypothesis, and methods; or, (c) a research paper related to the course themes. The paper is due May 2. To help you on your way, I will ask that you turn in: a thesis statement
on February 28; a bibliography on March 7; and a detailed outline on April 4.

Two, you must write two critical essays of 5 pages in length: one essay should come from a week that falls within the first section of the course, the other from the second section. Each paper is worth 15% of your grade. Three, 10% of your grade will come from class participation.

Readings. I have assigned several books, which are available for purchase at the University Bookstore.


In addition, a packet of readings will be available on Web CT.

Office Hours. I will hold office hours on Mondays, from 10:30-12:00. I also am available by appointment. My email address is mbarnett@hhh.umn.edu and my telephone number is 626-3194.

SCHEDULE

Section I: Theoretical Approaches to International Organizations

January 24 Introduction

January 31 Realist Approaches. These readings introduce us to how realist scholarship imagines the relationship between states and international organizations, the role of international organizations, and the what if any autonomy international organizations possess. What are the different answers provided by realists to these basic concerns? What accounts for that difference?


Recommended:
Steven Krasner, “Power Politics, Institutions, and Transnational Relations,” in Thomas Risse-Kapen, ed. Bringing Transnational Relations Back In (NY:
February 7  **Institutionalist Approaches.** The institutionalist literature has two major branches (actually, three, counting the sociological institutionalism variety, which we examine in the next week’s readings). There is the fairly well known scholarship that largely developed in and around the assertion that it was possible for international institutions to play a quasi-independent role in helping states achieve their collective interests and goals. Questions that spring from this literature include: How do international institutions play that role? under what conditions? In what issue areas? What are the lingering and sometimes unanticipated effects of international organizations? There also is the less well known institutionalist approach (at least in terms of IOs) that involves historical institutionalist claims. Here there is greater attention to how institutions, broadly understood, shape the actions of actors which, in turn, potentially change these institutions.


**Recommended:**


February 14  **Domestic Approaches.** A general view is that states establish international organizations because it is in their interests to do so, which begs the prior question: to what extent does domestic politics shape when and why states believe it is in their interest to do so. By unpacking the state and looking at domestic politics, the presumption is that we have a better understanding of who benefits (and who loses?) from international collaboration. It also is possible
that once an international organization is established it provides advantages and
disadvantages to different domestic actors. How and why?

Lisa Martin and Beth Simmons. “Theories and Empirical Studies of International
Institutions.” In Martin and Simmons.
Liberalization of International Trade,” in Anne Krueger, ed.,
The WTO as an International Organization, 133-60,
Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Democracies Cooperate More: Electoral Control and International Trade
Agreements,” International Organization, 56, 3, Summer, 477-514.

Recommended:

Daniel Drezner, ed. 2003. Locating the Proper Authorities: The Interaction of Domestic
and International Institutions, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Read
the following: Drezner, “Introduction: The Interaction of Domestic and
International Institutions,” and Duncan Snidal and Alexander Thompson,
“International Commitments and Domestic Politics: Institutions and Actors at
Two Levels.”
Andrew Moravcsik. 1998. The Choice For Europe: Social Purpose and State Power
Helen Milner. 1997. Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and
International Relations, Princeton University Press. Read Chapter One.
Michael Zurn. 1993. “Bringing the Second Image (Back) In: About the
Domestic Sources of Regime Formation,” in Volker Rittberger, ed., Regime
Theory and International Relations, NY: Cambridge University Press,
282-311.
Orfeo Fioretos. 2001. “The Domestic Sources of Multilateral Preferences:
Varieties of Capitalism in the European Community,” in Peter Hall and David
Soskice, eds., Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of
Comparative Advantage, New York: Oxford University Press, 213-44.
Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics,
University of California Press.
Press.
Walter Mattli. 1999. The Logic of Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond,
New York: Cambridge University Press.
Stephan Haggard and Beth Simmons. 1987. “Theories of International Regimes,”
International Organization, 41, 3, Summer, pp. 491-517.

February 21 Principal-Agent Approaches Largely an extension of rational choice that was
developed in the context of American politics, principal-agent analysis offers a
range of insights into critical questions regarding the design, control, and
potential autonomy of international organizations. What are the advantages of a
principal-agent approach? What does it offer over earlier approaches? What remains to be done?


Recommended:
February 28 **Constructivist Approaches.** Constructivist scholarship has largely been interested in how international norms, rules, and principles shape and constitute global practices and order. The extension of constructivism to international organizations has largely meant a consideration of how broader normative forces constitute international organizations. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this theoretical move?


**Highly Recommended:**


March 5 **International Organizations as Cultural Creatures.** In recent years there has been an interest in treating international organizations as cultural creatures, that is, having a lifeworld that is independent of the broader environment and that potentially has an independent impact on that environment.


**Recommended:**


Section II: How Do IOs Make a Difference?

March 12 Institutional Effectiveness and Interstate Cooperation. There has been remarkably little attention to the effects of international organizations and whether, in fact, they are effective at their delegated functions. Why is that? Why is it difficult to determine whether international institutions matter at all? If we cannot figure out whether they are effective, what sorts of outcomes should we investigate?

Abraham Chayes and Antonia Chayes. “On Compliance.” In Martin and Simmons
George Downs et.al. “Is the Good News about Compliance Good News about Cooperation?” In Martin and Simmons.
Recommended:

March 21 IOs and Social Construction. Perhaps IOs not only shape state behavior but also help to constitute the actors and their purposes in world politics. How do international organizations have this impact? What evidence is there?

Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, Rules for the World: International Organizations and Global Politics, chap. 3.


Recommended:
Martha Finnemore. “International Organizations as Teachers of Norms.” In Martin and Simmons.


**Spring Break: March 14-18.**

**March 28 The Pathologies of IOs.** International organizations screw up. And, if we assume that they have some autonomy and can do good, then the presumption is that they also can be responsible for when they do bad. How should we think about IO failure? What are the potential causes?


**Recommended:**


**Section III: Explaining the UN**

**April 4 UN Security Council**


Ian Hurd. *Legitimacy and Power in International Relations: The Theory and Practice of the UN Security Council*, Unpublished manuscript. Pages to be assigned.
April 11  **Peacekeeping.** Over the last decade the international community has placed significant resources into the hands of the UN in order to help states end violent conflicts and establish stable states. But the record is not all the positive. Why not? Is the UN to blame? What does this mean for the future?


**Recommended:**


April 18  **Peacebuliding**


**Supplementary Reading:**


April 25 Humanitarian Action. IOs, NGOs, and states are increasingly involved in humanitarian action. Arguably at the heart of humanitarian assistance are various lead international organizations, such as UNHCR, and dozens of NGOs. What are they doing? What accounts for the expansion? Has this tremendous growth produced any visible sense of success? What has expansion produced? If humanitarian action has not produced the intended outcomes, then what function does it perform? Can humanitarian action become more effective? What is humanitarianism?


Recommended:


May 2 IO Legitimacy and Accountability. If IOs are failing, screwing up, and hurting others, then it is imperative that we examine their legitimacy and accountability. What makes IOs legitimate? Is their legitimacy being challenged by their failures, their expansion, their assumption of more and more activities? If they are powerful, then presumably we
want to make them accountable. How? What does accountability mean?


*Recommended:*


