

## **POLI676—INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

**Winter 2021**

Tuesdays, 1-2:30pm on ZOOM

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Fridays, 2-3pm on ZOOM

### **1- Course Description**

Fifteen years ago, the International Studies Association created a new section and launched a scientific journal called International Political Sociology (IPS). These institutional developments attest that IPS has become a vibrant alternative approach in the study of world politics. Building on, and extending the constructivist turn in International Relations (IR), IPS is primarily concerned with the political constitution of social artifacts such as institutions, practices, orders, identities, norms, hierarchies, fields and organizations, which are pervasive across human configurations—global or otherwise.

The course pursues three objectives. First, it seeks to critically assess the merits and limits of approaching international politics from a political sociological perspective, which rests on relational ontology, process explanation, and historicization. Second and related, the course moves from theory to practice by exploring the various ways in which IPS frameworks and conceptual tools can be put to work in the empirical study of world politics. Third, the class aims to train students in efficient reading of theoretically complex materials. More specifically, students are expected to make sense of the main arguments of a text and develop an original and internal critique building on distinct social/IR theories and approaches.

### **2- Format**

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the seminar is run in a dual mode—fixed and flexible:

- The *fixed* part takes the form of weekly sessions on Zoom, running on Tuesdays from 1-2:30pm, for a total of 19.5 “live” hours. These sessions comprise presentations by the instructor, group discussions, and interactive debates. Students are strongly encouraged to turn on their individual cameras as a seminar like this one is based on quality social interaction. Should a student not be able to join a live session, s/he may watch the recording afterward and post a response paper (see conditions below).
- The *flexible* part of the course, centered on the mycourses platform, is made of activities performed by students on their own, including readings and discussion pieces.

**Important notes on online teaching:** Note that, as per McGill guidelines on remote teaching (accessible here: <https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/class-disruption/guidelines-remote>):

- It is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that course videos and associated materials are not reproduced or placed in the public domain. This means that each of you can use files posted on mycourses for your educational (and research) purposes, but you cannot allow others to use them, either by putting it up on the Internet or by giving or selling them to others;

- Multiple modes of communication are used to share pedagogical materials with students. Slides, video recordings, lecture notes, etc. remain under exclusive intellectual property. As such, you may use these only for your own personal learning (and research, with proper referencing/citation) ends. You are not permitted to disseminate or share these materials; doing so may constitute a violation of intellectual property rights and could be cause for disciplinary action.
- By enrolling in a remote course, you accept that lectures may be recorded, and that some of your personal information may be disclosed to others, whether during the lecture or in viewing the recording.
- The University recognizes the importance of maintaining teaching spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all involved. Offensive, violent, or harmful language arising in online contexts may be cause for disciplinary action.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course may be subject to change.

### **3- Materials**

Readings are listed below. All articles and books are available in e-version from the McGill library. Given the COVID-19 situation, no paper copies have been ordered from the bookstore, although books are easily available on (and usually rapidly shipped by) Amazon.ca and the likes. To combat screen fatigue and facilitate cumulative learning, it is strongly recommended to read the books in paper format.

### **4- Course Requirements**

**1) Participation (10 percent):** students are expected to take an active part in discussions and debates, as well as to show a high level of preparedness involving not only reading the materials but also reflecting on them and preparing notes ahead of class.

Except for special circumstances backed by proper justification, oral participation is the default option and all students should join each fixed session and contribute to group discussions as much as possible.

Students unable to join fixed sessions for a valid reason may use the written option, by watching the Zoom recordings of the seminars and posting a 500-words commentary on mycourses by the following Friday, 5pm. A question to this purpose will be posted by the instructor each Tuesday by 4pm.

In order to use the written option, students must obtain permission PRIOR to the session in question, by emailing the instructor in advance. Under no circumstances can the written option be used to compensate insufficient preparation or unjustified absences in the fixed portion of the course.

**2) Discussion memos (10 percent):** except for the first week of the term, and then for the two weeks for which a critical essay is submitted (see below), students must submit a discussion memo prior to seminars (10 in total).

Memos consist of short (250 words max.) explorations of an aspect of the readings that the student found intriguing or problematic. Where relevant, they may also respond to earlier posts by peers.

Memos must be posted under the proper discussion thread on mycourses by the preceding Monday, noon. Unless the quality is problematic, memos are worth one point per submission, for a total of ten.

**3) Critical essays (2 X 15%):** critical essays take the form of 1,500-words critical reviews of two books assigned for the course (see the list below). Students are free to select the books of their choice.

Essays should contain two main parts: an analytical summary of the key arguments presented in the books (max. 300 words) and an original critique questioning and comparing them. The critique should be internal (it must “ride the bicycle” of the argument, that is, critique it for what it is trying to do) and, where relevant, refer to IR literatures.

Since students are invited to give a short oral presentation as a springboard for group discussions, essays must be submitted on mycourses (Assignments) prior to class (Tuesdays, 1pm; PDF files only).

Note that in order to balance coursework, the first essay must be submitted by Week 7.

**4) Take-home exam (50%):** the take-home exam requires students to wrap up their learning experience by discussing the various materials covered in the course.

A choice of two wide-ranging questions will be handed out at the end of the last class (April 6<sup>th</sup>); students will then have three days or 72 hours to prepare an answer and submit it to the instructor.

Students should not only develop an original argument (i.e., take an analytical stance) but also show breadth and depth of knowledge of the IR theoretical landscape, starting with IPS. Connections across authors and frameworks, as well as references to key debates in IPS and IR more largely, are strongly encouraged.

Take-homes are due on mycourses (Assignments; PDF files only) by Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 4pm. There is no late penalty for the take-home: failure to submit on time will result in a zero grade.

## **5- Communications Policy**

Office hours are held weekly on Fridays, 2-3pm on Zoom (link provided on mycourses). Priority will be given on a first come, first serve basis. It is also possible to set an appointment via email.

Legitimate email inquiries will normally be answered within two business days. If you do not receive a reply within this period, please resubmit. Issues of general interest will be answered in class only. Extensive advice or feedback on students’ works should be sought in person during weekly office hours or by appointment.

## **6- Late penalties and extensions**

The written requirements in this class (discussion memos, critical essays and take-home exam) are all time-sensitive and thus not subject to a late penalty. Failure to submit on time results in a zero grade for that component.

Extensions are not granted except in cases consistent with the Faculty of Arts’ guidelines. Be prepared to provide all the relevant documentation (medical notes with clear date indications, etc.). Students should advise the instructor about extensions prior to deadline if possible and at most one week later.

## **7- Plagiarism**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information). A number of tools, including public search engines, may be used to detect plagiarism. In addition, students are not permitted to hand in the same assignment in two or more courses.

## **8- Disabilities and other special needs**

Students with learning disabilities should advise the instructor as soon as possible. They should also contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (398-6009, [www.mcgill.ca/osd](http://www.mcgill.ca/osd)). Arrangements may also be made to accommodate special needs such as religion, chronic illness, social discomfort or else.

Students facing personal issues are invited to seek help with McGill's Counselling Service ([www.mcgill.ca/counselling](http://www.mcgill.ca/counselling)). Please note that in order to avoid penalties, it is imperative to inform the instructor of any possible delays as soon as possible. Additional policies governing academic issues affecting students can be found in the Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities, Charter of Students' Rights ([www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/greenbookenglish.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/greenbookenglish.pdf)).

## **9- Course Schedule**

### **1) (05.01.2021) Introduction: What is IPS and where is it coming from?**

- Richard K. Ashley (1987), "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives* 12(4): 403-434.
- John Gerard Ruggie (1998), "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52(4): 855-885.
- James P. March and Johan Olsen (1998), "The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders," *International Organization* 52(4): 943-969.
- Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon (1998), "Relations Before States: Substance, Process and the Study of World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 5(3): 291-332.
- David M. McCourt (2016), "Practice Theory and Relationalism as the New Constructivism," *International Studies Quarterly* 60: 475-485.
- Stefano Guzzini (2020), "International Political Sociology, or the Social Ontology and Power Politics of Process," in Xavier Guillaume and Pinar Bilgin, eds., *Routledge Handbook of International Political Sociology*, 368-377.

## **PART I—THE CONSTRUCTIVIST TURN AND BEYOND**

**2) (12.01.2021)** Alexander Wendt (1999), *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

**3) (19.01.2021)** Ted Hopf (2002), *Social Construction of International Politics: Identity and Foreign Policy, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*. New York: Columbia UP.

**4) (26.01.2021)** Lene Hansen (2005), *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. New York: Routledge.

## **PART II—GLOBAL HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY**

**5) (02.02.2021)** Christian Reus-Smit (1999), *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

**6) (09.02.2021)** Andrew Phillips (2011), *War, Religion and Empire: The Transformation of International Orders*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

**7) (16.02.2021)** Daniel H. Nexon (2009), *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires and International Change*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

**8) (23.02.2021)** Lora Anne Viola (2020), *The Closure of the International System: How Institutions Create Political Equalities and Hierarchies*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

*No class on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 (Reading week)*

## **PART III—GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

**9) (09.03.2021)** Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (2003), *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.

**10) (16.03.2021)** Vincent Pouliot (2016), *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

**11) (23.03.2021)** Séverine Autesserre (2014), *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Interventions*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

**12) (30.03.2021)** Ian Hurd (2017), *How to Do Things with International Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

**13) (06.04.2021)** Michael Zürn (2018), *A Theory of Global Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.