

17.420

Advances in International Relations Theory

ASSIGNMENTS

Students are given the option of taking a final exam or submitting a longer research paper at the end of the term. Below are some past paper topics and abstracts. In some cases the topic is fairly defined, in others, students may pick an issue and discuss it within the framework of a broader theme.

1. “Contributions of IR theory to analysis of conflict and violence”.

Compare and contrast the origins of World War II and I from the perspectives of (a) liberals, (b) realists, and (c) constructivists, and (d) lateral pressure theorists. In so doing, please pay special attention to the variables of time, actor and units, levels of analysis and matters of feedback.

2. “Critical Contentions in International Relations”

What are the similarities and the differences between evolutionary approaches to international relations, and the more ‘conventional’ ones? Please address taking into account specific terms of reference of your choice, and the selection of evolutionary and conventional works that you use for your arguments.

3. “Institutionalization of International Relations”

To what extent has the development of international institutions responded to the needs of the international community rather than the priorities of the major powers? Please develop a research design to address that would help you address the question, and provide a first order approximation of its implementation. You can select the issue, institution, time frame, or other terms of reference of your choice as long as you are explicit.