

17.445/17.446

International Relations Theory in the Cyber Age

ASSIGNMENTS

During this course, students will be given two take home essays:

A midterm essay, worth 25% of the final grade, and due at the end of Week 7.

A final essay, worth 35% of the final grade, and due during the final class in Week 13. In lieu of the final exam, students can do a research paper on the topic of their choice with the approval of the instructor.

MIDTERM ESSAY

Instructions

Please answer two (2) of the following three (3) questions.

Suggested length: No fewer than 5 pages and no more than 10 pages for each question, one inch margin, suggested 1.5 spaces—not double or triple spaced with wide margins. (Of course if you can do an excellent essay in less than 5 pages, by all means proceed).

- Each answer is in essence an 'essay' on the topics you have selected. You must draw on the assigned readings.
- Please draw on materials weeks 1–7.
- Do not use the same assigned readings for both questions. If you find it necessary to draw on the same assignments, use additional references to make up for the 'double duty factor.'
- Try to use at least 4 different sources in your answer to each question.

For general points, please note that you need the author's name; for specific points noted, you need author plus the relevant page. Please add your reference list at the end of each question.

Relevant for all Questions

Traditional theories of international relations were developed long before the construction of the Internet, the core cyberspace. But we all understand that the Internet is international and cyberspace transcends state boundaries. The current challenge is to determine what contributions, if any, can

the traditional theories of international relations make to our understanding and analysis of world politics characterized by a pervasive cyberspace, with the Internet at its core.

Questions

1. Please write an essay on the relevance (if any) of realist theory and power in international relations to the cyberspace and its core, the Internet, as you understand these facets of the world today. What are the assumptions of realism, the instruments of influence, and the overall characteristic features? What elements should we retain for 21st century international relations theory? Please draw on relevant theory materials as well as sources (or class discussions) addressing cyber matters.
2. Please write an essay on coordination and collaboration in international relations, focusing on institutionalism and regimes. What are the assumptions of institutional approaches, the instruments of influence, and the overall characteristic features. What is the logic for this approach? What are the assumptions? What contributions if any they can make to our understanding of cyberpolitics in international relations and / or building 21st century international relations theory?
3. Boundaries, jurisdictions, territoriality, governments, are among the key features for the domain of international relations. How do different traditional theories address these features? Please illustrate with reference to at least two theoretical approaches. In what ways, if any, does the cyber domain reinforce or challenge these features as conventionally understood? What implications for 21st century international relations theory?

Helpful Hints

1. Make sure that the **first** and **last** paragraphs of your essays are coherent and related to each other.
2. It is often useful to do an **outline** before writing.
3. If possible please be specific about what you intend to **cover** and what you do not.

FINAL ESSAY

Instructions

Please answer Question 1, then choose either Question 2 or Question 3.

Suggested length: No fewer than 5 pages and no more than 10 pages for each question, one inch margin, suggested 1.5 spaces—not double or triple spaced with wide margins. (Of course if you can do an excellent essay in less than 5 pages, by all means proceed).

- Each answer is in essence an 'essay' on the topics you have selected. You must draw on the assigned readings.

- Do not use the same assigned readings for both questions. If you find it necessary to draw on the same assignments, use additional references to make up for the ‘double duty factor.’
- Try to use at least 4 different sources in your answer to each question.

For general points, please note that you need the author’s name; for specific points noted, you need author plus the relevant page. Please add your reference list at the end of each question.

Questions

The questions are framed in broad terms to allow you to set your operational terms of reference, as you see most relevant or useful.

1. It is often said that “what you see depends on how you look at it.”

Please review the architecture of the Internet—as presented in the Clark paper plus any information or sources you wish to draw upon from the course or elsewhere—and address the following dilemmas in world politics today:

- Where is authority in the operations of the Internet located? What type of authority? Does that matter, and if so how? If not, why not?
 - Given the current debates about multilateral vs. multistakeholder models of internet governance, where could the operational differences be manifested if one or the other position prevailed?
 - Internet architecture, the core of cyberspace, is generally viewed largely in technical terms. As a constructed system, where—if at all—are traces of realism, constructivism, and institutionalism? What insights might each provide about the structure and processes of that constructed system?
2. The course has focused more on the impacts of cyberspace on the levels of analysis in international relations, than on the effects of international relations on cyberspace and on its core, the Internet. Please “reverse the arrows” and write an essay on the impacts of international relations on cyberspace and on the Internet.
 3. To what extent are the core features of international relations—state, territoriality, power, influence, jurisdiction and the like—being reproduced in, or “mapped” onto, the cyber domain? If so how? If not, why not? Does this matter? If so how? If not why not?

Student Example

The following final essay appears courtesy of a MIT student and is anonymous upon request.

[“The Distribution of Authority in Cyberspace \(PDF\).”](#)

https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/17-445-international-relations-theory-in-the-cyber-age-fall-2015/c6ad3b8ed6b09f9d46ed6212b1111692_MIT17_445F15_Essay1.pdf