Realism in International Politics  
IGA-170m
Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday, 10:15am – 11:30am  
The first day of class is Tuesday, October 18.

Instructor: Stephen M. Walt  
Office: L367  
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-4:00  
Faculty Assistant: Leah Knowles, L340

Objectives: This course is an in-depth examination of the realist perspective on international politics and foreign policy. It will explore the philosophical foundations of realism, the evolution of realist theory since 1945, the competing strands of realist thought today, and realism’s implications for global politics in the 21st century and the foreign policies of different states.

Course Organization and Requirements: The course will be taught primarily through intensive in-class discussion in a seminar format. Students are expected to complete all of the required reading prior to each class and to arrive prepared to be called upon by name and to participate fully in the discussions. Individual students will be asked to provide brief summaries of key readings to begin the larger group discussion. Prompt, regular attendance is mandatory and students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

Expectations of professionalism: Written work must observe HKS rules regarding citation of sources. Any sentences or paragraphs taken verbatim from the writings of (or interviews with) any other person(s) must be placed in quotation marks and the source clearly identified. Changing the wording of a sentence or passage slightly does not evade the need for citation. Indeed, a reference to the original source is required whenever you are drawing an important argument or insight from someone else, even if expressed in your own words.

You are encouraged to discuss class topics with each other, but individual written work must be entirely your own. Collaboration is expected during group exercises, with an equitable division of effort among team members.

Grades will be based on class participation (20%), a short paper evaluating the work of one of the principal realist authors (30%), and a longer memo presenting a realist analysis of a specific country’s foreign policy (50%) or a concrete international issue (e.g., climate change, Ukraine, the Iran nuclear deal, TransPacific Partnership, etc.)

Course Materials: Readings for the course will be available on the course webpage; materials that are not available online will be available for purchase from the Harvard Coop or the Course Materials Office.

Textbooks: The following books are available for purchase


Who should take this course?

IGA-170m is an upper-level graduate course and enrollment is limited to 35 students. It is primarily intended for students interested in gaining a clearer understanding of the realist approach to international politics, and especially the competing theories that make up the realist paradigm. It is more academic in approach than some IGA courses, but it also devotes considerable attention to considering realism’s implications for policy and policymakers. There are no prerequisites, but students who have not taken IGA-100 and do not have prior background in IGA must have the instructor’s permission to enroll.
Class Schedule and Readings

October 18: Introduction:


October 20: Roots of Realism:


October 25: Classical Realism:

H. J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, chaps. 1, 2, 9, 11.

October 27: Structural Realism

K. Waltz, excerpts from Theory of International Politics, in Keohane, ed., Neorealism and Its Critics, read chapters 2 and 5; skim chapters 3-4.

November 1, 3: Offensive Realism:

J. J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, read chaps. 1-2, 8-10; skim rest.

November 8: Extensions and Refinements:

S. Walt, The Origins of Alliances, chapters 2 and 5.

November 10: Contemporary critiques:


**November 15: Realism vs. Liberalism in International Political Economy:**


**November 17: Realism and the European Union**


**November 22: Realism and Unipolarity**


K. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *International Security* 25, no. 1 (Summer 2000) [skim]


November 24 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

**November 29: Realism, Morality, and Human Rights**


**December 1: Realism and U.S. Grand Strategy**
