JPM542 Rationalism in International Relations (TMV)

Winter Term 2015/2016
Time/place: the seminar will take place on Thursdays (8.00 – 9.20) at J4020, at odd weeks (of the academic year) and starts on October 1 (the first week of the academic year)

Lecturer
Doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, MA., PhD.
Office hours – Thursdays, 9:30-10:50, J3087
Contact - jk.kurzy@seznam.cz

Number of credits
4

Course form
0/1 (Seminar)

Course availability
Master course taught as a seminar for the obligatory course *Theories of International Relations – TMV* (JPM043). It is one of the seminars to which students who participate in the obligatory course JPM043 must enroll (they cannot pass the obligatory course without passing one of the seminars). The course can also be chosen as an elective course by any other students, including Erasmus and exchange students, but the number of students in the course is limited and the students of the obligatory course will be given preference.

Prerequisites
None

Co-requisites
Co-requisites are not preset in SIS but students who select the course as a part of the obligatory course *Theories of International Relations – TMV* (JPM043) must pass both courses in the same semester. Otherwise the seminar will not be accepted as a component of JPM043.

Annotation
This seminar focuses on the application of rational choice theory to the analysis of international relations. This theory, which is in the current IR frequently denoted by the term ‘rationalism’, belongs to the most influential theoretical approaches in social sciences. It builds mainly on theories and methods employed in economics, especially those associated with the so-called neoclassical school of economics. In terms of political science, it can, therefore, be viewed as an ‘economic’ approach to the study of politics. Rationalists are, in general, particularly concerned with explaining the outcomes (equilibria) of the collective action of rational individuals and their efficiency. Rational choice analysis is based on a (largely) individualist and materialist attitude to the social reality centering on the rationality of individual actors. It mostly proceeds from the positivist perspective, which aims at detecting behavioral regularities, and often utilizes deductive (especially game-theoretic) models.

The ideas and methods of rational choice started to be employed in political science in the 1950s and 1960s by scholars such as Anthony Downs, William Riker, or Mancur Olson. In both Comparative Politics and IR, the two key sub-disciplines of political science, rationalism is nowadays regarded as one of the two main theoretical approaches, with culturalism (alias
constructivism) being the other of the two approaches. The intellectual exchanges (‘debates’) between the proponents of these two approaches establish the core of both sub-disciplines.

The core of rationalist thinking in IR has been represented by three particular approaches, namely liberalism, neoliberalism, and neorealism. These approaches emerged in the 1980s as a synthesis of rational choice theory and liberalism and realism as two ‘classical’ IR approaches. While their adherents disagree on many crucial points, they share a rationalist attitude to international relations. They analyze the key outcomes of the modern international relations, in particular interstate cooperation and conflict. All three approaches regard states as actors seeking to maximize their individual utility in a more or less anarchical environment. In substantive terms, the course will be focused on the field of International Political Economy (IPE) and, in particular, on states’ actions and interactions in the area of international trade.

In this course, we will first deal with an overview of the general ideas of rational choice theory related to its application to political analysis, in particular to IR (Seminar 1). In the following seminars, we will make ourselves familiar with several theoretical models of international relations based on rational choice.

Some basic literature on the general issues related to the course (only recommended, not required):
- on rational choice in economics and political science, see e.g.:

- on rational choice in IR/IPE, see e.g.:

- a good introduction to game theory (used in the majority of rational choice models of international politics):

- on global trade regime, GATT, and WTO, see e.g.:

**Course objectives, learning outcomes**
Students attending this course should:
- become familiar with the main principles of the rational choice approach to the analysis of society and politics in general and international relations in particular
- obtain an ability to analyze key international processes, in particular international cooperation, with the use of the rational choice approach as one of the main theoretical approaches to IR
- be able to distinguish between divergent analytical perspectives on international relations, especially between rationalism and critical perspectives, and to formulate alternative explanations and substantiated arguments on the basis of these perspectives

**Teaching methods**
The course consists of six seminars. Each seminar (except for the first one) will be based on 1) introductory lecture, 2) in-class work, and 3) discussion.

**Preparation for classes**
For each seminar (except for the first one), every student reads all the assigned readings.

**Credit requirements**
1) Regular Attendance
   Only 2 absences per semester are allowed (one being at the first seminar).
2) In-class work (20% of the credit in total)
   One part of each seminar will be devoted to an in-class work (it may be a short written quiz or an interactive task based on the readings).
3) Seminar Activity (20%)
   Students are expected to be actively involved in the seminar discussions.
4) 1 Term paper (60% of the credit in total)
   The term paper will describe and assess one or several rationalist theories of IR or apply those theories to a particular case or cases chosen by the student according to his/her interest. It should be 3000-4000 words in length (that is about 10-13 standardized pages) in length. The paper must be submitted no later than January 31, 2016.

**Course structure**
The readings linked with “KSV” are available in the electronic databases of the Jinonice library (THE DATABASES CALLED “EBSCO” OR “JSTOR”). The readings linked with “SIS” WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THIS PAGE OF THE COURSE IN SIS (please look at the upper part of the page). They can be accessed just by the students who are signed up for the course.

1. **Introduction – rational choice in IR (October 1)**

2. **Liberalism I. – domestic preferences and institutions (October 15)**


   [in total 61 pages]
3. Liberalism II – domestic politics and international bargaining (October 29)


[in total 56 pages]

4. Neoliberalism – state preferences and international institutions (November 12)


[in total 58 pages]

5. Neorealism – state preferences and power (November 26)


[in total 45 pages]

6. Summary and extensions (December 10)


[in total 52 pages]