

International Relations & Pop Culture  
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The course will explore topics and themes in International Relations through the use of various examples found in pop culture. Through the utilization of movies, television, music, sport, social media and more, we will examine topics such as IR theory, war and diplomacy, as well as authoritarianism vs. democracy. In doing so, we can begin to understand not only how these topics are handled, but also how they begin to shape the consumers' understanding and expectations for their own societies and policymakers. We will explore what popular culture gets right and wrong, how it has been used as a tool for propaganda and statecraft, and where it has even helped create or curb societal change. In the end, the course asks students to come to some conclusions on what degree popular culture serves as a helpful pedagogical medium for both academics and society as a whole

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#### COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the basics of International Relations theory and what they predict for state behavior.
  - Gain a broad understanding of various forms, genres, and franchises have informed the general population about IR theory.
  - Understand how movies, sports, comic books and other forms of pop culture creates and forms the general expectations surrounding war.
  - Understand how pop culture militarizes societies and serves as a tool for propaganda, recruiting or shaping society,
  - Explore the role the modern pop culture tools play in influencing governmental control, diplomacy, and order.
  - Understand how pop culture informs the decisions of policy makers and stakeholders.
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#### COURSE MATERIALS

There is no required textbook for this course, however, there are mandatory readings that are posted to Canvas or will be handed out in class. All readings are subject to change but students will be notified in advance. Unless otherwise noted, all readings, audio files, or videos are mandatory. In addition, there are a number of resources available on reserve at the library. Students may also decide to access materials on their own as many of the reserve materials may also be accessible via the library, private subscription/rentals/streaming services or within the public domain. However, students do so on their own accord and accept all the rights and responsibilities of choosing this option. It is recommended but not required that students have some familiarity with the following: *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars* (original 3 movies), and *Harry Potter* (films). There will be other films, television and media introduced where familiarity is not quite as important. And please know familiarity does not mean memorization of names, characters, lands, etc. but more so story and events.

***\*Please be aware that this course may contain material that could be considered by some as violent, graphic, or offensive. By taking this course you are acknowledging this fact and are okay with the use, viewing or listening to this type of material.***

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## FALL 2020 SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

- The Fall semester could become a bit crazy due to Covid. I will be following the University protocols for Covid-19

### **Expectations and Guidelines**

Each of us has a responsibility to ourselves and our fellow Yellow Jackets to be mindful of our shared commitment.

We are all required to wear a face covering while inside any campus facilities/buildings, including during in-person classes, and to adhere to social distancing of at least 6 feet. If an individual forgets to bring a face covering to class or into any indoor space, there will be a clearly marked supply of these in each building. If a student fails to follow Georgia Tech's policies on social distancing and face coverings, they will initially be reminded of the policy and if necessary, asked to leave the class, meeting, or space. If they still fail to follow the policy, they may be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students. [Information on the Institute's policy on face coverings.](#)

Students are expected to sit in assigned seats and to come to class only on days that are assigned to them.

Papers, projects, tests, homework, and other assignments will only be accepted in electronic form unless the assignment is a physical artifact.

**Instructor Illness or Exposure to Covid-19** During the fall 2020 semester, I may be required to quarantine due to exposure or isolate due to a Covid-19 diagnosis. Some disruption to classes or services is inevitable, but Georgia Tech is making every effort to ensure continuity of operations. As is the case in any semester, I may cancel a class if I have an illness or emergency situation. If I need to cancel a class, I will notify students as early as possible.

If I need to cancel a class repeatedly due to Covid-19 symptoms, a backup will be supplied in the form of a temporary substitute instructor or asynchronous work. No course will be canceled after the first class has occurred.

**Student Illness or Exposure to Covid-19** During the semester, you may be required to quarantine or self-isolate to avoid the risk of infection to others. Quarantine is the separation of those who have been exposed to someone with Covid-19 but who are not ill; isolation is the separation of those who have tested positive for Covid-19 or been diagnosed with Covid-19 by symptoms.

If you have not tested positive but are ill or have been exposed to someone who is ill, please follow the [Covid-19 Exposure Decision Tree](#) for reporting your illness.

During the quarantine or isolation period you may feel completely well, ill but able to work as usual, or too ill to work until you recover.

*Remote class sessions during hybrid courses.* Unless you are too ill to work, you should be able to complete your remote work while in quarantine or isolation.

*In-person class sessions during hybrid courses.* When in isolation or quarantine you will be unable to attend in-person course sessions but your instructor may require you either to participate in the course remotely, complete some complementary work that parallels what you are missing in class, or make up some class work when you return.

If you are ill and unable to do course work this will be treated similarly to any student illness. The Dean of Students will have been contacted when you report your positive test or are told that it is necessary to quarantine and will notify me that you may be unable to attend class events or finish your work as the result of a health issue. I will not be told the reason. I will be lenient and understanding when setting work deadlines or expecting students to finish work, and so you should be able to catch up with any work that you miss while in quarantine or isolation. I will make available any video recordings of classes that have been used while you are absent, and I may prepare some complementary asynchronous assignments that compensate for your inability to participate in discussion sessions.

**CARE Center, Counseling Center, Stamps Health Services, and the Student Center-**

These uncertain times can be difficult, and many students may need help in dealing with stress and mental health. The **CARE Center** and the **Counseling Center**, and **Stamps Health Services** will offer both in-person and virtual appointments. Face-to-face appointments will require wearing a face covering and social distancing, with exceptions for medical examinations. Student Center services and operations are available on the **Student Center** website. For more information on these and other student services, contact the Vice President and Dean of Students or the **Division of Student Life**.

**Accommodations for Students at Higher Risk for Severe Illness with Covid-19-**

Students may request an accommodation through the Office of Disability Services (ODS) due to 1) presence of a condition as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or 2) identification as an individual of higher risk for Covid-19, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Registering with ODS is a 3-step process that includes completing an application, uploading documentation related to the accommodation request, and scheduling an appointment for an “intake meeting” (either in person or via phone or video conference) with a disability coordinator.

If you have been approved by ODS for an accommodation, I will work closely with you to understand your needs and make a good faith effort to investigate whether or not requested accommodations are possible for this course. If the accommodation request results in a fundamental alteration of the stated learning outcome of this course, ODS, academic advisors, and the school offering the course will work with you to find a suitable alternative that as far as possible preserves your progress toward graduation.

**Course Homeworks/Assignments/Papers-** All course assignments will be submitted electronically via Canvas.

*Final remarks-* With everything being recorded and likely students participating in those recordings, it is absolutely imperative that class materials are not disseminated in any way. Lectures should only be viewed by individuals currently registered to this class and all students taking this class are bound by the honor code to not distribute materials in any way.

Statement of Inclusion: The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society.

Request for Modification - If you are a learner that requires some adaptations for you to succeed in this course or are a student with disabilities that requires accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability at (404) 894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu> as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your needs and obtain the appropriate accommodations letter. Any student requiring instructional modifications due to a documented disability should make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible so that the appropriate accommodations can be made. I am happy to do whatever I can to ensure that you succeed.

Academic Integrity - By attending Georgia Tech you have all committed to upholding the ideals of honor and integrity as well as refusing to betray this trust that has been bestowed upon you as a member of our academic community (<http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>). Any student who is suspected of violations of this honor code including but not limited to cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be automatically reported to the Office of Student Integrity. This office will investigate the incident as well as recommend the penalties for the violations.

Attendance and Participation – Attendance is expected for this class whether it is an in person class or remote. **The various class formats are address below and the expectations for each.** Attendance will be recorded for every “in person class” session for potential contact tracing purposes. All lectures will be recorded and available online, however, there is value to being in class when possible and attending synchronous discussions online when scheduled.

\*Excused Absence policy – This course will follow the University's policy for excused absences. Absences for medical or personal emergencies will be excused upon verification by the Office of Student Life. You can find an outline of the policy here <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student-absence-regulations/> This would apply to illness as well as personal emergencies. Please review this page if you are not familiar with it. In addition, all institute approved absences will honored, which would include university sanctioned function, athletics, etc. when accompanied by the appropriate documentation. **\*\*\*Please, if you are not feeling well, do not attend in person class. Consideration will be made based on our current unusual circumstances.**

Classroom Policies - Professional behavior will be required of all students at all times. The following behavior is not appropriate: use of cell phones, texting, extraneous conversations, and disrespect toward other students or professor. In addition, all students will be assigned a seat and students will be expected to remain in those seats during the duration of the semester as that will be a critical component for social distancing procedures and if contact tracing needs to be done. In addition, no audio or video recording is allowed in class unless approved by the professor in accordance with an accommodation letter. Nor is the distribution of any content from this class available in class or online. Any violations of these policies will not be tolerated.

### Current USG Language for Cloth Face Coverings

Effective July 15, 2020, University System of Georgia (USG) institutions will require all faculty, staff, students, and visitors to wear an appropriate face covering while inside campus facilities/buildings where six feet social distancing may not always be possible. All members of the campus community will be provided reusable cloth face coverings.

Face covering use will be in addition to and is not a substitute for social distancing. Anyone not using a face covering when required will be asked to wear one or must leave the area. Refusal to comply with the requirement may result in discipline through the applicable conduct code for faculty, staff or students.

There are a few exemptions. Reasonable accommodations may also be made for those who are unable to wear a face covering for documented health reasons.

For more information about face masks and coverings, review the [guidelines from Human Resources](#).

Correspondence - All course-related concerns/email will be addressed by me Monday through Friday, within 48 hours. ***Please first email me through Canvas.*** If you have not received a reply within that time frame, please call or text me at 860-830-4915 making sure you clearly state who you are and what class you are in.

*All policies subject to review by the professor and are subject to change with written notice to the students ahead of time.*

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### COURSE STRUCTURE

Exams (Midterm-15%, Final Exam- 20%)- The exams will test your knowledge of the material covered in lecture, the readings, videos, etc. There will be both objective as well as analysis based questions. These will be open note, timed exams on Canvas. Do not, however, mistake these as being easy! You will still want to prepare ahead of time. We will discuss best practices when we get closer to the exam

Response/Analysis papers (20% each)-There will be ***two short papers*** assigned during the course of the semester and require analysis and argument surrounding a topic we will be/have covered. We will have a lecture about best practices when it comes to writing in international relations prior to the first paper.

Reading quizzes/assignments (15%)- Short out-of-class writing assignments or quizzes on the readings. They will be submitted through Canvas. Turnitin software is active for all written assignments. The quizzes will be multiple choice or true/false type questions. I will be dropping your lowest two scores.

Participation/Discussion grade- (10%)- Although there are traditional lecture slides throughout the course a large part of this course will be critical analysis and discussion. That only works if I am not doing all the talking. Thus, participation will be an important part of this course through either “live” guided discussion or online guided discussion. Participation grades will be calculated based on active participation in class and/or online through discussion questions, surveys, brief response questions, etc.

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### GRADING PROCEDURES

A = 100-90; B = 89-80; C = 79-70; D = 69-60; F = 59 and below. Mid-term grades or progress reports will be listed as S = Satisfactory, meaning 70 and above, or U = Unsatisfactory, indicating a grade below

70. *If you are taking the class Pass/Fail, then the same mid-term grade standard will also be applied for a final grade of “S” = Satisfactory as well.*

*In addition, Canvas will be used only for posting grades and NOT GRADE CALCULATION. Thus, students should not use any calculation made by the system as being representative of their actual grade in the class.*

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## WEEKLY READINGS AND SCHEDULE

This is meant as a guide and students will be notified of any changes. Students should note that for each exam, they are accountable for all of the readings and lectures up until that point and if there are schedule changes those will not impact exam dates. Finally, additional readings may be added.

*I have attempted to plan out the semester with a mix of class formats and have listed the anticipated format for each class below the topic for each day. It should be noted that this could all change for a number of reasons both within my control and outside of my control. The types of classes are as follows:*

- 1) IC Lecture, Discussion, or Viewing- This class type will be held within the scheduled classroom and students are expected to attend in class. However, each class will be recorded and made available if students were unable to attend. I plan on doing BlueJeans for recording these classes.*
- 2) Touch point class-Hybrid classes require meaning in class experiences during the course of the semester. A class that is designated as a “Touch point class” attendance is considered mandatory unless you either have an excused absence, have talked with me ahead of time, are quarantined, or otherwise not able to come to campus due to a preexisting restriction. Please refer to the “Excused Absence policy”. I plan on doing BlueJeans for recording these classes.*
- 2) Remote-Synchronous- This class format is a 100% remote class for the entire class and everyone is expected to attend live. I plan on doing BlueJeans for these classes*
- 3) Remote-Asynchronous-This will be a recorded lecture done to set up material that will utilized within a future discussion or class. Viewing can be done on your own schedule, however, it will be posted on the day it appears on the schedule. I will either use BlueJeans or Kaltura to record these.*

August 17– Syllabus Day and open discussion about the semester  
*Remote- Synchronous*

August 19 – The Study of Pop Culture and IR...where’s the relevance?  
*Remote- Asynchronous Lecture*

**IR Theory and the Usefulness of Pop Culture:**  
**This section will utilize various pop culture vehicles to analyze**  
**how much “theory” do we see in various theoretical worlds.**

August 24- Paradigms, Analytical Frameworks, and Intro to the “isms” of International Relations

*IC Lecture*

Readings:

- 1) Sterling-Folker pgs. 15-20
- 2) Sterling-Folker pgs. 67-74

August 26- Introduction to the “isms” of International Relations

*IC Lecture*

Readings:

- 1) Sterling-Folker pgs. 109-113
- 2) Sterling-Folker pgs. 127-135

August 31 and September 2 – *World War Z* video

*IC Lecture/Viewing*

*\*This will be a scheduled viewing of World War Z to set up discussion and material we will use in the following weeks and later in the semester. Students may watch it on their own but it is required viewing. There should be a copy on reserve in the library and it may be available for viewing through private rental or subscription as well. However, this is one I cannot record.*

***September 7- No Class Labor Day***

September 9 and September 14 - IR theory and Zombies

*Remote Synchronous Discussion*

Readings:

Drezner (All chapters in Drezner Module) But don't be too worried on length...you will see what I mean.

September 16- IR in a Fantasy World

*IC Lecture*

Readings/Viewings

- 1) *LOTR: The Fellowship of the Ring*, “Council of Elrond” [scene 1](#) and [scene 2](#)
- 2) Ruane and James, “Thinking About International Relations and Middle-Earth”, *The International Relations of Middle Earth: Learning from Lord of the Rings*

Recommended Viewing:

- 1) *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*

September 21 – **Guest lecture, “Leadership Lessons from Lord of The Rings”**

**Gen. Philip Breedlove**

**Distinguished Professor of the Practice**

**Touch point class**

September 23- Jedi, Storm Troopers and Vulcans...oh my

*Remote Synchronous*

Readings:

1) Campbell and Gokcek, "Roddenberry's Dream: Liberalism/Liberalism and *Star Trek*"

2) Campbell and Gokcek, "The Fall and Rise of Republics: Liberalism, Realism, and *Star Wars*"

September 28 - IR Theory: Fact vs. "Fiction" discussion

*Remote Synchronous*

September 30 – Catch up class if needed/Writing in International Relations discussion

***Response paper 1 assigned and Due no later than***

***5pm Atlanta local time October 7, 2020***

*Remote- TBD*

### **Pop Culture and War-**

**This section will exam how pop culture handles various forms of war and periods of war through its coverage, depiction, and popularization**

October 5 and October 7- Levels of Analysis and Causes of War

*IC Lecture*

Readings/Viewings

1) Ruane and James, "Middle Earth, Levels of Analysis and War" *The International Relations of Middle Earth: Learning from Lord of the Rings*

2) Corrigan, "The War in Westeros and Just War Theory"

3) Barratt, "The Only One He Ever Feared: The Nature of War," *The Politics of Harry Potter*

October 12 – **MIDTERM EXAM (Done Remotely in Canvas)**

October 14- War and Film

*Remote-Synchronous*

Reading

1) Alford, Chapters 1-3 in *Reel Power*

October 19 - Bipolarity, the Cold War, and Pop Culture

*Remote-Synchronous*

Readings/Viewings

1) Genter. "With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility": Cold War Culture and the Birth of Marvel Comics"

2) Lipschutz, "Reds Among Us" from *Cold War Fantasies*



October 21- Nuclear Weapons

*IC Lecture*

Readings:

- 1) Sachleben, *World Politics on Screen (excerpt)*
- 2) Lipschutz, “Nukes!” from *Cold War Fantasies*
- 3) Westmeyer, “Dragons and the Nuclear Weapons Nexus”

October 26- Militarism of Culture

*IC Lecture or Remote Synchronous*

Readings:

- 1) Martin and Steuter, *Pop Culture Goes to War*” Chapters 2 and 3 (available online through GATech Library, ProQuest Ebook Central)
- 2) Jenkins, “The Militarization of American Professional Sports: How the Sports– War Intertext Influences Athletic Ritual and Sports Media

October 28 – Militarism of Culture

*IC Discussion or Remote Synchronous*

Readings:

- 1) Martin and Steuter, *Pop Culture Goes to War*” Chapter 5 and 6 (available online through GATech Library, ProQuest Ebook Central)
- 2) Edney-Browne, “Like Drone Strikes, ‘Eye in the Sky is Much Less Accurate than Claimed”  
***Response paper 2 assigned and Due no later than  
5pm Atlanta local time November 4, 2020***

November 2 – Catchup class

*Format TBD*

November 4 – Terrorism and the War on Terrorism

*IC Lecture*

Readings:

- 1) Barratt, “Death Eaters and Dark Wizards: Terror and Counter Terror”
- 2) Martin and Steuter, “Hollywood Mobilizes Support for the War on Terror” *Pop Culture Goes to War* (available online through GATech Library, ProQuest Ebook Central)

***Additional Topics Within IR and Pop Culture***  
***(All topics and dates below are subject to change based on speakers availability  
and the world in general)***

November 9 – Soft Power diplomacy: music and more

*Remote TBD*

Readings

- 1) Zawisza, “How Music is the Real Language of political diplomacy”
- 2) [“BTS and the Global Spread of Korean Soft Power”](#)
- 3) **TBD**

November 11- Sports and Sports Diplomacy

*IC Lecture*

Readings:

1) Trunkos and Heere, “Sports Diplomacy: A Review of How Sports Can Be Used to Improve International Relationships”, in *Case Studies in Sports Diplomacy*

2) Kellison and Cintron, “Building Stadiums, Building Bridges: Geopolitical Strategy in China”, in *Case Studies in Sports Diplomacy*

2) Albert and Grix, “The Mixed Record of Sports Diplomacy”

November 16 – Food Diplomacy

*Guest Speaker*

*Remote TBD*

Readings:

*TBD*

November 18 – The Politics of Wine (Alternative Topic Social Media)

*Guest Speaker*

*Remote TBD*

Readings:

*TBD*

November 23 – Course Wrap up Discussion and Some Conclusions

*Class choice on Format (either IC discussion or Remote Synchronous)*

***Thanksgiving Recess November 25-27***

***FINAL EXAM Monday December, 7 2020 (Remote Via Canvas)***

**Additional Important Dates to keep in mind**

**August 21-** Last day to register, make schedule changes, and/or drop without a "W" grade for Spring Semester 2019

**September 28-** Midterm progress reports posted

**October 24-** Deadline to change grade mode from Letter/Grade to Pass/Fail (and vice versa) and last day to withdraw from individual courses with "W" grades