

Identification	Subject (code, title, credits)	PSIR 300 Theories of International Relations 3KU /6ECTS credits
	Department	Political Science & Philosophy
	Program (Undergraduate, Graduate)	Graduate
	Term	Fall 2026
	Instructor	Vasif Huseynov
	Email:	Vhuseynov@khazar.org
	Classroom/hours	122 Bashir Safar-Oghlu St,
Prerequisites	N/A	
Language	English	
Compulsory/Elective	Compulsory	
Textbooks and course materials	Core readings: - Dunne, T., Kurki, M., Smith, S. and Kušić, K. (eds), 2022: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, 6th edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford. - Jackson, R. and Sørensen, G.: Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches, Oxford University Press, Oxford (latest edition). - Burchill, S. et al.: Theories of International Relations, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke (latest edition). - Waltz, K. N., 1979: Theory of International Politics, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA. - Wendt, A., 1999: Social Theory of International Politics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge..	
Course description	This course introduces MA students to the major theoretical traditions and debates that structure the discipline of International Relations (IR) and seeks to develop a critical understanding of how competing theories explain and interpret world politics. The course is divided into two parts. The first part, covering the historically dominant paradigmatic traditions (e.g., classical and structural realism, liberalism and neoliberal institutionalism, the English School, and constructivism) and introduces students to the principal ontological and epistemological premises underlying mainstream IR theorizing and encourages them to identify the assumptions, strengths, and limitations of each tradition. The second part of the course, which starts after the Midterm, introduces students to critical and reflectivist approaches (including Marxism and Critical Theory, feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and normative and green theory) that challenge and extend the mainstream research agenda. This part also invites students to apply theoretical frameworks to the analysis of contemporary and regional cases, including the post-Soviet space and the South Caucasus.	
Course objectives	- To develop a sound and critical understanding of the major theoretical paradigms of IR (realism, liberalism, the English School, and constructivism). - To familiarize students with critical, reflectivist, and alternative approaches to IR (Marxism and Critical Theory, feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and normative and green theory). - To provide students with the conceptual tools needed to identify the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying different theories. - To build students' capacity to apply IR theories to the analysis of contemporary international and regional developments.	

Learning Outcomes	Upon completion of the course, the students are expected to articulate good analytical and critical thinking on... - historically contextualizing the evolution of mainstream IR theories, - students will also learn about the leading debates aimed at de-centering and pluralizing the knowledge-base of IR. - The debates and conversations on the genealogies of - Azerbaijan perspectives on IR are anchored in this backdrop.		
Teaching methods	Presentation		x
	Class discussion		x
	Course paper		x
	Experiential exercise		x
	Lecture		x
Evaluation Criteria	Methods	Date/deadlines	Percentage (%)
	Midterm Exam	TBA	25
	Attendance	During the semester	5
	Participation in Class Discussions	During the semester	5
	Case-study Presentation	Assigned in Week 2	10
	Review Presentation	Assigned in Week 2	10
	Research Paper	10 December 2026	10
	Final Exam	TBA	35
	Total		100
Class Policy	You are expected to: - attend classes on a regular basis as the classes are conducted in a combined lecture/seminar format where students should play an active part. - read the assigned and suggested readings before you come to class - engage actively in classroom discussions - offer thoughtful and informed classroom presentations and written work - submit all your assignments on time - follow assignments closely and carefully. Class Attendance: Attendance is strongly required. The grades for the course will consist of the following components: Participation: Students following this course are not simply expected to listen and memorize the lectures but to study the reading materials well, to engage in class discussions and small group-works and be able to demonstrate and debate his/her viewpoints. Each week the instructor will note your weekly grades for participation. However, also remember that the quality of your inputs matters no less. Do not merely speak for the sake of speaking. Any efforts to imitate an “informed student” without in fact having done the homework will be easily discernible. There is a value in bearing this in mind.		

Case-study Presentation: Each student is required to make, depending on the group size, one or two case study presentations on the topics agreed with the instructor in advance. (20 minutes – presentation, 20 minutes - subsequent Q&A session).

Review Presentation: Students are required to make one or two review presentations, depending on the group size. These presentations are expected to cover the learning outcomes of the previous week under the title “what did we learn last week?”. Students are required to present 2-3 questions for discussions at the end of the presentations. (10 minutes – presentation, 15 minutes for Q&A session)

Research Paper: Students are required to write a research paper on a question that analyzes an IR theory covered in the course, or that applies a theoretical approach to a concrete international or regional issue. Your paper should contain an introduction, main body and conclusion. The paper format is as below: 12 font size, Times New Roman, 1.5 spacing, 5 pages excluding references. Papers must adhere to the academic principles of quotation and citation. The papers that do not correspond to these requirements will not be considered. The Deadline for Paper Submission is 10 DECEMBER 2026.

Mid-Term Exam: This will be a written, in-class exam. It will cover all of the course readings plus class lectures and discussions.

Final Exam: This will be a written, in-class exam. It will cover all of the course readings plus class lectures and discussions encompassing the period after the midterm exam.

Attendance – 5%

Attendance is defined as physical presence in class. It is an indispensable element of the educational process.

Integrity: Students are expected to respect basic rules of academic integrity, including but not limited to avoidance of plagiarism.

Academic Misconduct

Academic honesty plays an essential part in maintaining the integrity of Khazar University. Students are expected to recognize and uphold high standards of intellectual and academic integrity. The following acts are examples of academic dishonesty, therefore are strictly forbidden and will, if proven, be penalized:

- plagiarism,
- cheating,
- unauthorized collaboration,
- falsification,
- multiple submissions.

On Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unethical and an offence under the University regulations. Please familiarize yourself with the regulations relating to plagiarism and cheating in examinations.

Plagiarism is copying other people's work without proper attribution. The students committing plagiarism and the students providing materials for plagiarizing will automatically receive a zero (0) for the assignment. Students must always indicate that they used someone else's words and ideas if they have done so, by using quotation marks and mentioning the source in the text or a footnote. A bibliography must also follow after the end of your essays.

Rules of Professional Conduct

The students shall behave in the way to create favorable academic and professional environment during the class hours. Unauthorized discussions and unethical behavior are

	strictly prohibited. Classroom behavior that seriously interferes with either (a) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to benefit from the course program will not be tolerated. When a student's behavior in a class is so seriously disruptive as to compel immediate action, the instructor has the authority to remove a student from the class on an interim basis, pending an informal hearing on the behavior. AI Policy This policy governs the responsible use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) in coursework and research. It applies to undergraduate students and academic researchers, ensuring transparency, integrity, and accountability. GAI may support learning and research by helping organize ideas, checking grammar, or assisting with planning. However, it must never replace original analysis, creativity, or independent thinking. All uses of GAI must be disclosed clearly in assignments, projects, theses, and publications. Example: “ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) was used for language editing. All ideas and conclusions are my own.” Students may use GAI only as a supportive tool, with a maximum of twenty-five percent of text-based assignments. Its use is strictly prohibited in exams, quizzes, and graded in-class assessments. Researchers may use GAI for structuring, editing, and idea generation, but not for writing entire papers, fabricating references, or producing false data. Accuracy must always be verified. Violations include hidden or unauthorized use, failure to disclose, plagiarism, or data falsification. Penalties may involve warnings, resubmission, grade reduction, or disciplinary action. Instructors and supervisors must specify permitted levels of GAI use in syllabi or research guidelines. GAI is allowed only as a supportive tool. Students remain fully responsible for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of their work.
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Tentative Schedule			
Week	Date/Day (tentative)	Topics	Textbook/Assignments
1	21.09.26	Introduction: What Is Theory? Ontology, Epistemology, and the “Great Debates” in IR	Smith, S., “Introduction: Diversity and Disciplinarity in International Relations Theory.” In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, edited by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith and Katarina Kušić, 6th edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022. Kurki, M. and Wight, C., “International Relations and Social Science.” In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity (as above), Ch. 3.
2	28.09.26	Realism in theory	Williams, M. C., “Classical Realism.” In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 4.

3	05.10.26	Realism in practice	Mearsheimer, J. J., "Structural Realism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 5. Waltz, K. N., 1979: Theory of International Politics, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA, Ch. 6 ("Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power").
4	12.10.26	Liberalism and Neoliberal Institutionalism	Jørgensen, K. E., "Liberalism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 6. Sterling-Folker, J., "Neoliberalism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 7. Keohane, R. O., 1988: "International Institutions: Two Approaches," International Studies Quarterly, 32(4), pp. 379–396.
5	19.10.26	The English School and the Idea of International Society	Dunne, T., "The English School." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 8.
6	26.10.26	Constructivism	Fierke, K. M., "Constructivism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 11. Wendt, A., 1992: "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," International Organization, 46(2), pp. 391–425.
7	02.11.26	Midterm exam	TBA
8	09.11.26	Marxism and Critical Theory	Anievas, A., "Marxism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 9. Kušić, K., "Critical Theories." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 10. Cox, R. W., 1981: "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," Millennium, 10(2), pp. 126–155.
9	16.11.26	Feminist International Relations Theory	Sjöberg, L., "Feminism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 12.

10	23.11.26	Poststructuralism and Discourse Analysis	Campbell, D. and Bleiker, R., "Poststructuralism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 13.
11	30.11.26	Postcolonialism and Global IR	Biswas, S., "Postcolonialism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 14. Acharya, A., "Global International Relations." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 2.
12	07.12.26	Normative International Relations Theory and Green Theory	Erskine, T., "Normative International Relations Theory." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 15. Eckersley, R. and Corry, O., "International Relations, the Environment, and Green Theory." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 16.
13	14.12.26	Levels of Analysis Revisited: From Grand Theory to Foreign Policy Analysis	Wæver, O., "Still a Discipline After All These Debates?" In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, concluding chapter.
14	21.12.26	Applying IR Theories: Competing Readings of Regional Order in the Post-Soviet Space and the South Caucasus	Instructor-selected case-study readings on the South Caucasus and the post-Soviet regional order, to be distributed in class.
15	28.12.26	Marxism and Critical Theory	Anievas, A., "Marxism." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 9. Kušić, K., "Critical Theories." In: International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity, Ch. 10. Cox, R. W., 1981: "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," Millennium, 10(2), pp. 126–155.
Final exam			