“Realism” is often invoked in international relations to mean many different things. By policymakers, it is often cited as a source of support for – and opposition to – the use of force by the U.S. in world politics. By scholars, the term realism has been deployed as a rhetorical weapon (implying opponents are “unrealistic”), as a challenge to well-intended but “utopian” foreign policies, and, often, in an academic context, as a synonym for “structuralism,” which it need not be. In this course, we will look closely and critically at the tradition of realism in International Relations Theory, both to find out exactly what realism does stand for and to see how it can help us better understand world politics more generally.

There are three principal requirements for this course:
- A paper evaluating the work of a specific realist, due Friday, March 25
- A long analytical, puzzle-driven paper, due Friday, May 13
- Active and thoughtful class participation

The specific attributes of these assignments differ for 4847 and 6847.

A note on the requirements: students are expected to come to class prepared to actively and thoughtfully discuss the readings; moreover, all students every week will be required to prepare, in writing, several queries for discussion. The reading load is heavy and requires close attention: each class meeting will be devoted to a careful consideration of the week’s reading. Class participation will account for 40% of the course grade.

Note that this is an electronics free seminar – no laptops, no phones, no anything

Most of the books for the course have been made available for purchase at the campus store, and can also be ordered from various on-line retailers. All of the books have also been placed on reserve in Uris Library; some other readings will be posted to the course blackboard site.

Course Outline

Tuesday February 2 – Overview and Introduction

Classics

Tuesday February 9


Supplementary Reading:

Tuesday February 23

Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (1519/1531), Book I, preface, chapters 58-60; Book II, preface, chapters 4, 9-12, 25, 31; Book III, chapters 16, 41.

Supplementary Reading


Tuesday March 1


Supplementary Reading:


Tuesday March 8


Supplementary Reading:

Edmund Burke, “Conciliation with America” (1775); “Remarks on the Policy of the
Allies” (1793); in Fidler and Welsch, *Empire and Community*, pp. 118-47, 264-86.

Tuesday March 15


Supplementary Reading:


**Moderns**

Tuesday March 22


Supplementary Reading:


Tuesday April 5


Supplementary Reading:

Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (eds.), *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (2009), pp. 1-74, 280-99.
Tuesday April 12


Supplementary Reading:

John Ikenberry (ed.), *Power, Order and Change in World Politics* (2014), 1-60; 83-163.

Tuesday April 19


Supplementary Reading:


Tuesday April 26 – Why Did Britain Appease Nazi Germany?

*NOTE: THIS WEEK’S READINGS AND CLASS DISCUSSION ASSUME A BASIC FAMILIARITY WITH THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF THE INTERWAR YEARS. FOR A CONCISE BACKGROUND, SEE RICHARD OVERY, THE INTER-WAR CRISIS.*


Supplementary Reading:

Tuesday May 3 – Why Did the U.S. Fight in Vietnam?

*NOTE: THIS WEEK’S READINGS AND CLASS DISCUSSION ASSUME A BASIC FAMILIARITY WITH THE COURSE OF THE VIETNAM WAR. FOR A CONCISE BACKGROUND, SEE GEORGE HERRING, AMERICA’S LONGEST WAR.*


Supplementary Reading:


Tuesday May 10 – Why Did the U.S. Invade Iraq?


Supplementary Reading: