Course objectives
The course aims at providing students with an overview of theorising in the field of International Relations. Although the field itself took shape as an institutionalised academic pursuit only in the twentieth century and for a long time remained a predominantly Western engagement, in many ways it emerged as a response to questions posed by European expansion beyond Europe’s traditional boundaries. Throughout the century, these non-European origins of International Relations (IR) theorising were, by and large, ignored. However, as the twentieth century was nearing its end, especially after the end of the cold war, more and more IR theorists started arguing against this initial Eurocentric view of the field. Not only because political ordering on the ground called for appreciation of the diversity of the world, but also because the analytical tools with which IR theory approached this world required critical re-examination. On the one hand, this led to significant widening of the traditional field of study, bringing in issues, subjects, culture and regions initially thought to be outside of the discipline’s focus; on the other, the discipline’s horizons were also extended in temporal terms, inviting more detailed study of historically distant ideas and practices. This course cannot possibly provide detailed analysis of this long and increasingly complicated process. Yet, it will attempt to present some important nodal points in it, as well as some possible connections between these points that students may then choose to explore in their individual projects.

So, the course’s main objectives are:
- to provide students with an understanding of intellectual and practical functions of theorising in international relations;
- to dispel the idea of ‘theory’ as a boring but mandatory engagement with abstract literature or a junk-shop of ready-made frameworks to be applied to various cases;
- to present theorising as a dramatic engagement with context-specific questions;
- to indicate how advances in understanding, once these occur, may be seen as outcomes of dialogical engagements between theories.

Learning outcomes
By the end of the course students will:
- develop ability to place their own research-questions into the overall context of IR theorising;
- critically engage with ideas discussed by various theorists and schools of thought;
- get an overview or some of the state-of-the-art theorising in the field.

Course outline
Requirements:
- Active participation in the seminars - 10%
- Three position-papers for weeks 2-7 (the exact allocation of this assignment to be discussed in detail during the first session) - 45% (15% each)
- Take-home exam (essay) - 45%
Week 1

Session 1 - September 19
General discussion, distribution of assignments
Background reading:
Mark Lilla, “How Colleges Are Strangling Liberalism: An obsession with identity has made students less likely to engage with a world beyond themselves” in The Chronicle of Higher Education, 22.08.2107.
David Foster Wallace, “This Is Water: Commencement Speech” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CrOL-ydFM!

THEORY

Session 2 - September 21

Week 2

Session 3 - September 26

Session 4 - September 28

POWER

Week 3

Session 5 - October 3

Session 6 - October 5
Week 4

Session 7 - October 10

Session 8 - October 12

GREATNESS

Week 5

Session 9 - October 17

Session 10 - October 19

Week 6

Session 11 - October 24
Thucydides, Archaeology and preliminaries (Book I, chapters 1-23); Pericles’ Funeral Oration (Book II, chapters 34-46); Pericles’ Speech 1 (Book I, chapters 139-146), Plague and Speech 3 (Book II, chapters 51-65); Archidamus Speech (Book I, chapters 79-85); Nicias and Alcibiades: contrasting speeches (Book VI, chapters 8-32).
Additional readings:

Session 12 - October 26
Machiavelli, The Prince, 5-7; Discourses, II.2-4.

GREAT POWERS

Week 7
Session 13 - October 31

Session 14 - November 2 (Scott)

Week 8

Session 15 - November 7

Session 16 - November 9 (Scott)

THEORY (REPRISE)

Week 9

Session 17 - November 14

Session 18 - November 16

Week 10

Session 19 - November 21
Jean-Christophe Graz and Andreas Nölke, “The Limits of Transnational Private Governance” in Diffusion of Power: 118-140.

Session 20 - November 23
Tanja E. Aalberts, “Patterns of Global Governmentality and Sovereignty” in Diffusion of Power: 229-255

Week 11

Session 21 - November 28

Session 22 - November 30

Week 12

Session 23 - December 5

Session 24 - December 7
Closing discussion