Rethinking Sovereignty in an Era of Globalization

Syllabus prepared by Maria Guzikova
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Are states under siege? Is power and authority shifting to super-empowered individuals, international organizations, transnational networks, or subnational organizations and actors? Or some combination of these? How are these actors impacting or challenging state policy and international norms? Is this the end of the state system as we have known it?

The goal of this course is to provide students with a set of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical tools to better understand sovereignty and the system of sovereign states in the globalizing world. Students should walk away from this course with a better understanding of important concepts such as sovereignty and globalization; a theoretical foundation for analyzing international politics as it pertains to sovereignty, states, and non-state actors, and finally, empirical examples and data with which to evaluate the main questions running through the entire course.

The course is divided into five major units, beginning with a historical approach to the evolution and emergence of the state system and sovereignty as we know it today. The next three units pose the question of whether or not states and this system are challenged by three types of actors: supranational/international organizations and institutions, transnational networks, and/or subnational actors such as regions within states. The last unit deals with the reconceptualization of sovereignty in current IR research.

The course is geared for upper-level undergraduate students who have had at least one introductory course in international relations theory. Students who have not taken any international relations courses are advised to take this course until after doing so.

Course requirements:

1. Weekly attendance and active participation in seminar. The readings in this syllabus are mandatory.

2. Each class from the third week will include brief (no more than 5 minute) presentations by one or more students. Each presenter will serve as “discussant” for one of the week’s readings. The model is that of discussant on a conference panel. Each presenter should first briefly summarize the
questions and conclusions of the relevant paper, and then evaluate the paper critically. These presentations will count for 20 percent of the course grade.

**Reading Guidelines for Students:**

In preparing for class, you may find it useful to check your comprehension of the reading against these study questions. What is the author's purpose in writing this piece? What are the author's guiding questions? What concepts does the author emphasize? How are these concepts defined? How are these concepts related to each other? What are the author's conclusions? Do they seem logical given the evidence provided? Would you draw different conclusions? Why or why not? What questions remain unanswered? How might questions/research be framed differently?

Reading publications related to the IR topics you should focus more closely on following questions: what are the actors, what are their interests, what are the resources.

3. There will be no oral exam. As a mid-term exam each student should write a short abstract of an article of his choice. The final exam is going to be an essay which will ask the students to combine the theories under discussion with substantial empirical evidence from a particular case. The essays are to be posted on the website of the IR department where they will be evaluated and graded by other class participants.

**Grading:**

Class attendance and participation – 15%
Presentation – 20%
Abstract of an article – 25%
Exam essay – 40%
UNIT ONE – Theories of Sovereignty

WEEK 1: The Emergence of the State System
In order to understand the future of the states and sovereignty in the international system, this week’s readings take a look at the history and origins of the state system. What forms of authority and power preceded states? How did states emerge? What does this history tell us about the permanence and durability of the state system?


Advanced Readings:


WEEK 2: Sovereignty & the State System – A Westphalian Framework
This week’s readings investigate the traditional Westphalian conceptualization of sovereignty. What is Westphalian sovereignty? What does it mean for a “state” to be “sovereign?”


Advanced Readings:


WEEK 3: Postwestphalian Notion of Sovereignty: Approaches & Conceptualizations
In this week, we look at recent conceptualizations of sovereignty and authority in the international system. How are these similar and different from previous conceptualizations?

Rodney Bruce Hall and Thomas Bierstecker (eds), *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Chapter by Hall and Bierstecker on “Private Authority as Global Governance”


**WEEK 4: The State in the Globalizing World**

Here we introduce the concept of globalization. What is globalization and how does globalization impact state power, capacity and authority?

**Readings:**


**Additional Reading:**


**UNIT TWO – Challenges to State Sovereignty from**

**WEEK 5: International Organizations**
This week we read a set of articles that frame the debate for the role of international institutions and organizations. Why do they exist? Are institutions the key to promoting world peace? What are their pathologies? What is the relationship between states and IOs?


Advanced Reading:
Read the responses to Mearsheimer’s article in *International Security* in the summer 1995 issue by Wendt “Constructing World Politics”, and by Ruggie “The False Premise of Realism”

**WEEK 6: International Interventions**
This week investigates international intervention in cases of human rights and post-conflict reconstruction, focusing on the case of the UN. What do these cases tell us about state sovereignty and state-building?


**WEEK 7: Supranational Organizations – the case of the EU**
This week looks at the role of supranational organizations (such as the EU) – why would states give up sovereignty? Are they giving up sovereignty? How do supranational organizations get created? What are the differences in these authors’ arguments about the creation of the EU?


**Advanced Reading:**

**WEEK 8: International Organizations – the case of the IMF**
This week highlights the role of international financial organizations by taking the case of the IMF. What are these authors saying about the role of the IMF in international politics? What authority and influence does the IMF have over states?


**Additional Reading:**

**WEEK 9: International Organizations – the case of the WTO**
This week focuses on the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO). What role does the WTO play in international politics? What is the relationship between states and the WTO? What types of capacities does the WTO have? What is the future of the WTO?


**UNIT THREE – Challenges to State Sovereignty from Networks and Flows?**

**WEEK 10:**

**Economic Globalization: MNCs, Global Finance & Capital Flows**
This week’s readings address a key debate: are the nature and extent of increased financial and capital flows challenging state sovereignty, or are states able to adapt to these changing circumstances? Are states able to regulate capital and financial flows, and if so, how?


**Advanced Reading:**


**WEEK 11: Globalization of Norms: Transnational Advocacy Networks**
This week focuses on networks of human rights and environmental NGOs and activists. How are these networks able to shape and influence the codification/adoption of international norms? What is their impact on state policy and sovereignty?


**Advanced Reading:**


**WEEK 12: Flows of People – Migration and Refugees**
This week investigates two increasing flows of people in today: labor migrants and refugees. What are the causes of these flows and how are states responding to these flows? What are the implications for states and sovereignty?


**WEEK 13: Globalization of Violence and Crime– Criminal & Terrorist Networks**

This week investigates networks of criminal and terrorist organizations. How do these networks thrive in an era of globalization? What does this mean for states and their ability to regulate and provide basic security?

Readings:

Fiona Adamson, “Globalisation, Transnational Political Mobilisation, and Networks of Violence, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Volume 18, Number 1, April, 2005, pp. 31-49


**UNIT FOUR – Challenges to State Sovereignty from**

**WEEK 14: Federalism, Paradiplomacy, and Regional Authority**

This week’s readings look at the role of sub-national regions in forging foreign policies and relations with other international actors. What does this mean for the traditional role that states have played in conducting foreign policies? Does this challenge their authority?


**Additional Reading:**  
For more additional cases from around the world, see the remaining chapters of the books by Michelmann/Soldatos and Aldeocca and Keating.


**WEEK 15: Self-determination, Autonomy, and Secessionism**  
This week looks at the challenges to state sovereignty from ethnic and other separatist movements. Under what conditions are these challenges end up in the creation of new states? How does the international community respond to secessionist threats?


**UNIT FIVE – New Theories of Sovereignty**

**WEEK 16: Theoretical Innovations & Empirical Directions for the Study of Sovereignty**  
What new ideas and ways to conceptualize sovereignty are raised here? What do previous weeks’ readings tell us about these innovations and directions? What types of studies on sovereignty, globalization, and non-state actors would you like to see in the future?


Additional Reading:


**WEEK 17: Bringing the State back In: The concepts of sovereignty in modern Russia**

How does modern Russia respond to sovereignty shifts? What are the views on the concept of sovereignty among Russian policymakers and researchers?

