

# Syllabus

## **Constructivist Theories of International Institutions**

**Spring 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Alejandro Esguerra, [esguerra@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:esguerra@uni-potsdam.de)  
Time/place: Thursday, 2pm – 4pm. University of Potsdam, Campus Griebnitzsee, room 3.06.S22  
Office Hours: Thursday, 4pm – 6pm, and by appointment, room 2.07

This is an advanced BA course on the study of international institutions from a constructivist perspective. By now constructivism has been well established as meta-theoretical paradigm that is particularly good in explaining how institutions emerge, why they reproduce themselves, and how they change.

Researching institutions is crucial since our present political landscape teaches us that institutions cannot be taken for granted. The Brexit or the rise of populism in established democracies are examples which challenge supra-national institutions such as the European Union as well as the institution of democracy itself. At same time, international institutions such as NATO which have been as some argue less important in recent years are now back on the agenda of intergovernmental negotiations.

We will discuss key theoretical concepts such as legitimacy, knowledge, norms, discourse and practice teasing out how constructivist scholars research international institutions as well as how constructivists view the role of institutions in world politics. While we will focus on theoretical concepts students will also learn how these concepts are operationalized to study international institutions empirically. We engage with international institutions in the in the policy fields of global environmental governance, human rights, international economy as well as security politics.

The aim of the seminar is to familiarize students with various strands of constructivist thinking in the discipline of International Relations. At the end of the course students should be able to formulate research questions and carry out research that adheres to a constructivist paradigm.

### **Organization of sessions**

From May 4 til July 13 each session will be split in two: In the first part of the session we will engage with the main theoretical narrative. Student have to prepare a paragraph for each session in which s/he states a question or a problematization of the text. Please send this paragraph to me via email until Thursday 11am.

The second part of the session, however, will be organized by a group of students. Their task is to illustrate the theoretical themes of the session empirically. The empirical cases are “best-fit” examples for the theoretical approach of the session. However, as a student group please do not lecture for 45 minutes. The idea is to give an empirical input as well as to provoke and facilitate a discussion.

To organize this as productive as possible the group of students who is responsible for a session has to come to my office ideally *two weeks in advance for a discussion on the topic*. I am asking you to have read the required and the student input readings *before* you come to my office hours.

### **Readings**

All students have to thoroughly engage with the *required readings* to be able to participate productively in the session. The readings of *student input* are selected for the empirical part of the session. While all students are welcomed to also have a look at this text, it is mainly chosen to provide a basis for the student groups. The *additional readings* are also carefully selected and give students the opportunity to further study the session’s topic. All required readings are available on moodle.

Moodle: Students should be able to register with the moodle course by entering the code CTII.

### **Course requirements and grading**

- (a) Readings and paragraph (10%)
- (b) Group presentation and participation in class (30%)
- (c) Term paper (60%)

### **Term paper**

The length of the term paper should be around **3000** words. The paper should focus on one or two theoretical approaches we discussed in the seminar and apply them to an empirical case. Further information will follow in the session of July 20. In this session we will also talk about issues of plagiarism. Please see the guidelines of the University of Potsdam <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/am-up/2011/ambek-2011-01-037-039.pdf>.

20 April **Introduction to the Course: What is theory? What is constructivism?  
What are institutions?**

*Additional readings*

- Adler, E. (2013), “Constructivism in International Relations: sources, Contributions, and Debates”, in Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T. and Simmons, B.A. (Eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, SAGE, London, pp. 112–138.
- Haraway, Donna (1988): The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist studies* 14(3): 575–99
- Joas, Hans and Knöbl, Wolfgang (2009): What is theory? In: Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl: *Social Theory. Twenty Introductory Lectures*. Cambridge University Press: 1-19.
- Martin, L. and Simmons, B.A. (2013), “International Organizations and Institutions”, in Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T. and Simmons, B.A. (Eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, SAGE, London, pp. 327–351.

27 April **The Social Construction of Reality**

*Required Reading*

- Berger, Peter L. /Luckmann, Thomas (1966): *The social construction of reality*. London: Penguin books. Chapter 1, 31-62.

*Additional readings*

- Adler-Nissen, R. and Kropp, K. (2015), “A sociology of knowledge approach to European integration: Four analytical principles”, *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 155–173.
- Knoblauch, H. (2017), *Die Kommunikative Konstruktion Der Wirklichkeit*, Springer.
- Onuf, N.G. (1989), *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia.
- Wendt, A.E. (1992), “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics”, *International Organization*, pp. 391–425.

4 May **The Social Construction of Reality II – Institutions and Legitimation**

*Required Reading*

- Berger, Peter L. /Luckmann, Thomas (1966): *The social construction of reality*. London: Penguin books. Chapter 2, 65-146.

*Student input*

- **Defining international institutions**  
Martin, L. and Simmons, B.A. (2013), “International Organizations and Institutions”, in Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T. and Simmons, B.A. (Eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, SAGE, London, pp. 327–351.  
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*Additional readings*

- Barnett, M. and Finnemore, M. (2004), *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*, Cornell University Press.
- Scott, W. Richard (2001): *Institutions and Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 1-47
- Martin, L. and Simmons, B.A. (2013), “International Organizations and Institutions”, in Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T. and Simmons, B.A. (Eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, SAGE, London, pp. 327–351.

11 May **Logic of Appropriateness and the Politics of Legitimation**

*Required reading*

- March, J.G. and Olsen, J.P. (1989), *Rediscovering Institutions. The Organizational Basics of Politics*, The Free Press, New York. Chapter 1.

*Student input*

- **International Monetary Fund – IMF**  
Seabrooke, L. (2007), “Legitimacy Gaps in the World Economy: Explaining the Sources of the IMF’s Legitimacy Crisis”, *International Politics*, Vol. 44 No. 2–3, pp. 250–268.

*Additional readings*

- Esguerra, A., Beck, S. and Lidskog, R. (2017), “Stakeholder Engagement in the Making: IPBES Legitimization Politics”, *Global Environmental Politics*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 59–76.
- Geis, A., Nullmeier, F. and Daase, C. (2012), *Der Aufstieg Der Legitimitätspolitik*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Reus-Smit, C. (2007), “International crises of legitimacy”, *International Politics*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 157–174.

18 May **Logic of Arguing: Changing preferences in Discourse**

*Required Reading*

- Risse, T. and Kleine, M. (2010), “Deliberation in negotiations”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 17 No. 5, pp. 708–726.

*Student input*

- **The International Criminal Court – ICC**  
Deitelhoff, N. (2009), “The Discursive Process of Legalization: Charting Islands of Persuasion in the ICC Case”, *International Organization*, Vol. 63 No. 01, pp. 33–65.

*Additional Readings*

- Deitelhoff, N. (2006), “Überzeugung in der Politik”, *Grundzüge Einer Diskurstheorie Internationalen Regierens*, Frankfurt A. M.
- Esguerra, A. (2017), “‘A Comment That Might Help Us to Move Along’: Brokers in Negotiation Systems”, *Sustainability Politics and Limited Statehood*, Springer, pp. 25–46.

- Risse, T. (2000), “Let’s argue! Communicative action in world politics.”, *International Organization*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 1–39.

25 May            **No Class – Public Holiday**

1 June            **Epistemic Communities: Speaking Truth to Power**

*Required Reading*

- Haas, P.M. (1992), “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination”, *International Organization*, Vol. 46 No. 1, pp. 1–35.

*Student input*

- **The Ozone Regime**  
Haas, P.M. (1992), “Banning chlorofluorocarbons: epistemic community efforts to protect stratospheric ozone”, *International Organization*, pp. 187–224.

*Additional Readings*

- Adler, E. and Haas, P.M. (1992), “Conclusion: epistemic communities, world order, and the creation of a reflective research program”, *International Organization*, pp. 367–390.
- Esguerra, A. (2015), “Toward two Narratives of Knowledge”, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 3–10.
- Haas, P.M. (2004), “When does power listen to truth? A constructivist approach to the policy process”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 569–592.
- Litfin, K.T. (1995), “Framing science: precautionary discourse and the ozone treaties”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 251–278.

8 June            **No class**

15 June           **Organizing Science: Knowledge and Representation**

*Required Reading*

- Allan, B.B. (2017), “Producing the Climate: States, Scientists, and the Constitution of Global Governance Objects”, *International Organization*, Vol. 71 No. 1, pp. 131–162.

*Student input*

- **Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services – IPBES**  
Turnhout, E., Neves, K. and de Lijster, E. (2014), “‘Measurementality’ in biodiversity governance: knowledge, transparency, and the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and

Ecosystem Services (IPBES)”, *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 581–597.

*Additional Readings*

- Beck, S., et al. (2017): “The making of global environmental science and politics In: Felt, U., Fouché, R., Miller, C.A., Smith-Doerr, L. (eds.). *The handbook of science and technology studies, 4th edition* MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, p. 1059 – 1086.
- Bueger, C. (2015), “Making Things Known: Epistemic Practices, the United Nations, and the Translation of Piracy”, *International Political Sociology*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 1–18.
- Lövbrand, E. and Stripple, J. (2011), “Making climate change governable: accounting for carbon as sinks, credits and personal budgets”, *Critical Policy Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 187–200.

22 June **The Power of International Norms and Non-State Actors**

*Required Reading*

- Finnemore, M. and Sikkink, K. (1998), “International norm dynamics and political change”, *International Organization*, Vol. 52 No. 04, pp. 887–917

*Student input*

- **Banning Landmines (Ottawa Treaty)**  
Price, R. (1998), “Reversing the gun sights: transnational civil society targets land mines”, *International Organization*, Vol. 52 No. 03, pp. 613–644.

*Additional Readings*

- Krook, M.L. and True, J. (2012), “Rethinking the life cycles of international norms: The United Nations and the global promotion of gender equality”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 103–127.
- Legro, J.W. (2003), “Which norms matter? Revisiting the ‘failure’ of internationalism”, *International Organization*, Vol. 51 No. 01, pp. 31–63.
- Risse, T. and Sikkink, K. (2013), *The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance*, Vol. 126, Cambridge University Press.

29 June **Doing Norm Translation**

*Required Reading*

- Zwingel, S. (2016), “Theorizing Norm Translation: Women’s Rights as Transnational Practice”, *Translating International Women’s Rights*, Springer, pp. 9–34.

*Student input*

- **Village Courts in Bangladesh**

Berger, T. (2017), *Global Norms and Local Courts: Translating the Rule of Law in Bangladesh*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Chapter 4.

*Additional Readings*

- Acharya, A. (2011), “Norm Subsidiarity and Regional Orders: Sovereignty, Regionalism, and Rule-Making in the Third World”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 55 No. 1, pp. 95–123.
- Berger, T. and Esguerra, A. (2017), *World Politics in Translation: Power Relationality and Difference*, Routledge, London.
- Zimmermann, L. (2017), “More for less? The interactive translation of global norms in post-conflict Guatemala”, *International Studies Quarterly*.

6 July **The Power of Discourse**

*Required Reading*

- Epstein, C. (2008), *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse*, MIT Press, Cambridge. Chapter 1.

*Student input*

- **Terrorism and the United Nations**

Herschinger, E. (2013), “A battlefield of meanings: The struggle for identity in the UN debates on a definition of international terrorism”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 183–201.

*Additional Readings*

- Holzscheiter, A. (2014), “Between Communicative Interaction and Structures of Signification: Discourse Theory and Analysis in International Relations”, *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 142–162.
- Milliken, J. (1999), “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5 No. 2, p. 225.
- Oels, A. (2012), “From ‘securitization’ of climate change to ‘climatization’ of the security field: comparing three theoretical perspectives”, *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict*, Springer, pp. 185–205.

13 July **The World of Practices**

*Required Reading*

- Bueger, C. and Gadinger, F. (2015), “The play of international practice”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 59 No. 3, pp. 449–460.

*Student input*

- **Doing Diplomacy**

Neumann, I.B. (2005), “To be a diplomat”, *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 72–93.

*Additional Readings*

- Adler-Nissen, R. and Pouliot, V. (2014), “Power in practice: Negotiating the international intervention in Libya”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 889–911.
- Pouliot, V. (2010), *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy*, Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, T.R., Knorr-Cetina, K. and von Savigny, E. (2001), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Routledge, London.

20 July **Doing constructivist research**

*Additional Readings*

- Gusterson, H. (2008), “Ethnographic Research”, in Klotz, A. and Prakash, D. (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 93–113.
- Neumann, I.B. (2008), “Discourse Analysis”, Klotz, Audie/Prakash, Deepa (Ed.): *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 61–77.

27 July **Conclusion and presentation of students’ term papers (abstracts).**