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Complementary Studies  
**Power in International Relations**  
Sommer Semester 2022

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Office hours Tuesdays, 11.00 am – 12.30 pm, registration via *MyStudy*. In-person or online via Zoom.

**Time and place**

Wednesday (starting 6 April 8:15-9:45 pm Weekly seminar C 12.013 2022)

**Course description**

Is US hegemony in decline? What renders so-called ‘rising powers’ such as India and Brazil increasingly important in international relations? And why is Israel unable to defeat Hamas despite its superior military technology? All of these questions point to the importance of the concept of power in the study of world politics. Due to the anarchic nature of the international system – i.e. the absence of a central government with the legitimacy to impose binding rules – the international exercise of power is less constrained by rules and institutions than it is in domestic politics; it occurs in ‘purer’ form. Yet despite decades of scholarly debate, no agreement has emerged on the nature of power and its role in world politics. Power remains an essentially contested concept, not just in political science and International Relations but in the social sciences more broadly.

This English-speaking online course introduces students to various facets of the concept of power in analyzing world politics. We will seek to harness the disciplinary diversity of students in order to approach power from different disciplinary angles. The course is structured in three parts. In the first part, we acquaint ourselves with power as a concept in the social sciences and International Relations. In the second part, we discuss different forms of power drawing on a well-known typology in the field. In the third part, we review selected empirical applications and contemporary themes in power analysis, including power shifts from West to East, and the digital revolution and power.

## Course objectives

In this course students learn:

- to develop a solid understanding of the concept of power, as used in the social sciences and International Relations, and to get a sense of the methodological difficulties involved in using it;
- to understand alternative forms of power;
- to apply these alternative conceptions to key questions and debates in world politics;
- to improve their presentational and writing skills.

## Course assessment

This is a Complementary Studies course that is open to students with any disciplinary background. It does not require any prior knowledge of the field of International Relations. Assessment is via a combined exam (“kombinierte wissenschaftliche Arbeit”) that consists of two parts: an oral presentation and an essay.

### 1. Oral presentation (40 per cent of final grade)

Students give an oral presentation of not more than **7 minutes** on a course topic of their choice. Presentation topics will be distributed in the first session. Presentations give a concise answer to the question or task posed in the syllabus based on the mentioned text and the required reading. The presentation is accompanied by a **written handout** that summarizes the main points (length: 1-1.5 pages). Handouts are made available to students via *MyStudy* in the folder of the respective session under “Materials” prior to the presentation.

In sessions 11 and 13, group presentations of up to three people are possible. Groups can each present **up to 12 min**, and they are required to research **one additional reading each** beyond the literature stated in the syllabus.

### 2. Essay (60 per cent of final grade)

The essay is **2000 to 2500 words** in length (excluding references and cover page) and is **due on 6 July 2022**. The essay deals with a topic of your choice in parts 2 or 3 of the course by examining a contemporary event in world politics as an instance of a particular form of power. The essay draws on the literature assigned in the first part of the course, the relevant literature on the particular form of power that you choose to address, and **one additional** article. You can either answer one of the questions posed for a presentation or pick your own topic. Good essays will advance an independent argument and structure the text in a logical and coherent fashion. I will give some additional tips on essay writing in session 10.

Submit your essay until midnight on 6 July by uploading it into the respective folder on *MyStudy* (“Material”) as a **word document**. Essays that arrive late will receive a fail (grade: 5,0).

## Teaching arrangements

The course is designed primarily as a reading and discussion course. Each week, students are assigned one reading that they are required to prepare prior to coming to the course. Preparing means that you read the assigned reading carefully, mark and/or extract central ideas and arguments, note down your own ideas as well as issues that you do not understand. Such preparation will take time, especially if you have no prior background in political science or International Relations. I have sought to reduce the amount of reading I expect of you to enable you to prepare the readings properly. Required readings as well as those for the oral presentations and essays are either available through the Leuphana library, indicated by “[eJournal]”, or will be made available under “Materials.” You will need a VPN client to access eJournals from outside the university network.

Individual course sessions will consist of a mixture of group discussions, short interventions by myself, oral presentations and small group discussions. We will reserve time in each session to discuss terms, debates and ways of writing that you may be unfamiliar with given your distinct disciplinary backgrounds. I will try to create an atmosphere in which we can harness your diverse disciplinary backgrounds to understanding the concept of power from different analytical angles. I therefore ask two things of you: (1) Don't be shy to ask if you don't understand things; in any complementary studies course, this is bound to happen. (2) Don't be shy to contribute your own disciplinary perspective on the course's topics. Power is both an academic and an everyday concept that we all use and think about; getting to know different perspectives will enrich the debate.

As we will regularly discuss contemporary developments in world politics during the course, you are advised to stay up to date with international political developments by reading newspapers, blogs or listening to the news.

## Course overview

Session	Date	Topic
1	6 April	Introduction and overview
<b><u>Part 1: Concept</u></b>		
2	13 April	What is power?
3	20 April	To what extent is power an essentially contested concept?
4	27 April	Why is power an important concept in International Relations?
5	4 May	How do scholars in International Relations analyze power?
<b><u>Part 2: Forms of Power</u></b>		
6	11 May	Compulsory power
7	18 May	Institutional power
8	25 May	<i>Self-study / essay writing (no session!)</i>
9	1 June	Structural power
10	8 June	Productive power <i>Tipps on essay writing</i>
<b><u>Part 3: Themes and Applications</u></b>		
11	15 June	Power shifts from West to East
12	22 June	<i>Self-study / essay writing (no session!)</i> <i>Final course evaluation</i>
13	29 June	Digital revolution and power
14	06 July	Protean power and concluding discussion <i>Discussion of course evaluation</i> <u>Due date</u> Essay

## General reading

I recommend the following books as general works on the topic.

- Berenskötter, Felix and Michael Williams (eds.). 2007. *Power in World Politics*. London, New York: Routledge. [[eBook](#)]
- Barnett, Michael and Raymond Duvall (eds.). 2005. *Power in Global Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dowding, Keith (Ed). 2011. *Encyclopedia of Power*. London: Sage.

## Syllabus

### Part 1: Overview and Basics

#### **6 April: Introduction and overview**

In this introductory session, I give an overview of the content and structure of the course and outline its main requirements.

#### **13 April: What is power?**

In this session we discuss the concept of power. We will use the diversity of disciplinary backgrounds present in this course to approach the concept from different angles.

##### *Required reading*

- Dahl, Robert. 1957. The Concept of Power. *Behavioural Science* 2(3): 201-215. [read pp. 201-209 carefully; skim the rest] [\[eJournal\]](#)

##### *Presentation (1)*

- Describe Dahl's conception of power. What has been the major criticism levelled against Dahl's conception?
- Baldwin, David. 2016. *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2. [\[eBook\]](#)

#### **20 April: To what extent is power an essentially contested concept?**

In this session we try to evaluate the concept of power in terms of Gallie's notion of "essentially contested concepts." According to Gallie, the essentially contested nature of a concept stems, in part, from a concept's affinity with certain normative values on which different users of a concept may disagree. We will discuss some of these normative connotations in this session.

##### *Required reading*

- Collier, David, Hidalgo, Fernando D. and Andra Olivia Maciuceanu. 2006. Essentially Contested Concepts: Debates and Applications. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11(3): 211-246. [read only pp. 211-222; skim one empirical application] [\[eJournal\]](#)

##### *Presentations (2)*

- To what extent is power an essentially contested concept? One presentation may focus on criterion I, the other may focus on criteria II and III.
- Gallie, W.B. 1955. Essentially Contested Concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56: 167-198. [\[eJournal\]](#)

## **27 April: Why is power an important concept in International Relations?**

In this session we seek to understand the relationship between power and the study of world politics. In contrast to the hierarchical systems within nation states, the international system is a decentralized or anarchical system, characterized by the absence of a centralized authority. In such systems, power plays a particularly important role.

### *Required reading*

- Masters, Roger. 1964. World Politics as a Primitive Political System. *World Politics* 16(4): 595-619. [read only pp. 595-613] [[eJournal](#)]

### *Presentations (2)*

- How does the international system beyond states differ from political systems within states?
- What does this mean for the role of power in shaping political relations?
- Masters, Roger. 1964. World Politics as a Primitive Political System. *World Politics* 16(4): 595-619. [[eJournal](#)]

## **4 May: How do scholars in International Relations analyze power?**

In this session we will start delving into the analysis of power in the discipline of International Relations. What does it mean to analyze power and power relations? We will approach this question by focusing on some of the difficulties involved in power analysis.

### *Required reading*

- Baldwin, David. 1979. Power Analysis and World Politics. *World Politics* 31(2): 161-194. [read only pp. 161-175, 180-183] [[eJournal](#)]

### *Presentations (3)*

- Pick one of the following questions and illustrate your answer with reference to a contemporary case in world politics.
  - What is meant by the “paradox of unrealized power”?
  - Why may military power not be the ultimate power resource in today’s world?
  - Is power a zero-sum game?
- Baldwin, David. 1979. Power Analysis and World Politics. *World Politics* 31(2): 161-194. [[eJournal](#)]

## Part 2: Forms of Power

In the second part of the course we get to know different conceptions of power. Drawing on examples from contemporary world politics, we will discuss what these forms are, how they operate and what they tell us about the nature of world politics.

### 11 May: Compulsory power

#### *Required reading*

- Barnett, Michael and Raymond Duvall. 2005. Power in International Politics. *International Organization* 59(1): 39-75. [read only pp. 39-51; skim one of the empirical examples] [[eJournal](#)]

#### *Presentations (3)*

- What is compulsory power? How does it work? Illustrate your answer with a contemporary example from world politics. One presentation should focus on military, one on economic power, and a third one on power over opinion.
- Carr, E. H. 1964. *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1939*. New York: Harper and Row. Chapter 8.

### 18 May: Institutional power

#### *Required reading*

- Barnett, Michael and Raymond Duvall. 2005. Power in International Politics. *International Organization* 59(1): 39-75. [read only to 39-49, 51-52; skim one of the empirical examples] [[eJournal](#)]

#### *Presentations (2)*

- What is institutional power? How does it work? Illustrate your answer with a contemporary example from world politics. One presentation should focus on agenda-setting power (text 1); the other on how international institutions generate inequality between states (text 2).
- Text 1: Bachrach, Peter and Morton Baratz. 1962. Two Faces of Power. *American Political Science Review* 56(4): 947-952. [[eJournal](#)]
- Text 2: Hurrell, Andrew. 2005. "Power, Institutions, and the Production of Inequality." In Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (eds.). *Power in Global Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 33-58.

### 25 May: **Self-study / essay writing (no session!)**

This week, no session is held. Use this time to work on your essay, prepare outstanding presentations, catch up on readings from previous weeks or read ahead.

## 1 June: Structural power

### Required reading

- Barnett, Michael and Raymond Duvall. 2005. Power in International Politics. *International Organization* 59(1): 39-75. [read only to 39-49, 52-55; skim one of the empirical examples] [\[eJournal\]](#)

### Presentations (2)

- What is structural power? How does it work? Illustrate your answer with a contemporary example from world politics. One presentation should focus on a Marxist understanding of structural power as related to capitalist relations (text 1); the other on a feminist understanding of structural power as related to the dominance of patriarchy (text 2).
- Text 1: Gill, Stephen and David Law. 1989. Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital. *International Studies Quarterly* 33(4): 475-99. [\[eJournal\]](#)
- Text 2: Enloe, Cynthia. 1996. Margins, Silences, and Bottom Rungs: How to Overcome the Underestimation of Power in the Study of International Relations. In Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalweski (eds.) *International Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 186-202.

## 8 June: Productive power

### Required reading

- Barnett, Michael and Raymond Duvall. 2005. Power in International Politics. *International Organization* 59(1): 39-75. [read only to 39-49, 55-57; skim one of the empirical examples] [\[eJournal\]](#)

### Presentations (3)

- What is productive power? How does it work? Illustrate your answer with a contemporary example from world politics. One presentation should focus on Foucault's work directly (text 1), the other two on the productive role of discourses and scientific knowledge, respectively (texts 2 and 3).
- Text 1: Digeser, Peter. 1992. The Fourth Face of Power. *Journal of Politics* 54(4): 977-1007. [\[eJournal\]](#)
- Text 2: Doty, Roxanne. 1996. *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Text 3: Epstein, Charlotte. 2005. Knowledge and Power in Global Environmental Activism. *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10(1): 47-67. [\[eJournal\]](#)

## Part 3: Themes and Applications

In this part we will examine some recent themes in the study of world politics related to power. The discussion will also turn to some recent developments that may affect the exercise of power.

### 15 June: Power shifts from West to East

#### *Required reading*

- Cox, Michael. 2012. Power Shifts, Economic Change and the Decline of the West? *International Relations* 26(4): 369-388. [[eJournal](#)]

#### *Presentations (2)*

- To what extent are we witnessing a power shift from the United States, and the West more broadly, to Asia and China in particular? What are the likely consequences of this alleged shift? One presentation should make the case for a power shift (text 1), the other one against it (text 2).
- Text 1: Cox, Michael. 2012. Power Shifts, Economic Change and the Decline of the West? *International Relations* 26(4): 369-388. [[eJournal](#)]
- Text 2: Layne, Christopher. 2012. This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the *Pax Americana*. *International Studies Quarterly* 56(1): 203-213. [[eJournal](#)]

### 22 June: *Self-study / essay writing*

This week, no session is held. Use this time to work on your essay, prepare outstanding presentations, catch up on readings from previous weeks or read ahead.

### 29 June: Digital revolution and power

#### *Required reading*

- Carr, Madeline. 2016. *US Power and the Internet in International Relations: The Irony of the Information Age*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 1 (Introduction). [[eBook](#)]

#### *Presentations (2)*

- Does the Internet fundamentally change the nature and exercise of power in world politics? One presentation considers the case for a deep change (text 1), the other one a more skeptical position (text 2).
- Text 1: Carr, Madeline. 2016. *US Power and the Internet in International Relations: The Irony of the Information Age*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 1, 2, and 4. [[eBook](#)]

- Text 2: Rosecrance, Richard. 2014. The Partial Diffusion of Power. *International Studies Review* 16(2): 199-205. [[eJournal](#)]

## 6 July: Protean Power and concluding discussion

In this session, we will widen our discussion to some newly coined terms on the analysis of power. Moreover, we summarize what we have learned about the concept of power in analyzing world politics. And we discuss your course evaluations.

### Required reading

- Katzenstein, Peter and Lucia Seybert. 2018. Protean Power and Uncertainty: Exploring the Unexpected in World Politics. *International Studies Quarterly* 62: 80-93. [80-86; skim one of the empirical applications] [[eJournal](#)]

### Presentations (2)

- What is Protean power and how does it relate to the ability of human beings to be creative? Illustrate your answer with a contemporary example from world politics. One presentation should focus on the nature of Protean power, the other one on its effects.
- Choose one empirical chapter from Katzenstein and Seybert (eds.). 2018. *Protean Power: Exploring the Uncertain and Unexpected in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [print version]