

Lecture #1: Contending Approaches to International Relations

**Theory**

- What is it?
  - Abstract thought
  - Speculative element
  - Way of organizing facts
    - Explains things in a more general framework...organizes facts and information

**What is IR Anyway?**

- Debates over subject matter
  - What is politics?
  - What are international relations?
  - What does it matter?
    - Has something to do with what you should spend your time on/what you should draw your attention to
    - Deals with the idea of lenses...different viewpoints

**IR vs. ir**

- Relationship of theory to the subject matter it studies

**Structure of Theory and Argument**

- Role of assumptions...deductive reasoning
- Ontology and epistemology
  - Ontology: what is means to be real/nature of reality
  - Epistemology: how do we know what we know
    - Each theoretical approach has its own epistemology

**Assumptions and Points of Dispute**

- 1. What is IR?
- 2. Main actors of IR...NGOs, terrorist organizations, etc.
- 3. Levels of analysis...location of driving forces of IR (war/peace)
- 4. Object of analysis
- 5. IR vs. other realms and disciplines
- 6. Human nature; people's' motives; free will?...are we driven by forces outside of our control?
- 7. Possibilities for change
- 8. Optimism or pessimism
- 9. Impact of ideas and thought
- 10. Importance of values/ethics?
- 11. Purpose of theory/theorising
- 12. What kinds of methods should we use?

- Comparing or combining theories?
  - What do we choose?

### Notes from the Reading

#### Diversity of Theory

- Carr and Morgenthau were not only explaining the world ‘out there’ but also the powerful argument about what States could hope to achieve in the competitive world of International politics

#### The Foundation of International Relations

- Many members of early IR believed the war was partially due to ‘international anarchy’ and partly the result of misunderstandings, miscalculations, and recklessness on the part of politicians losing control in 1914
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