

# INTENTIONS IN PHILOSOPHY AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

University of Bayreuth  
Fall 2019/20

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar, co-taught by a philosopher and a political scientist, explores the concept of intentions and their significance in contemporary debates within both philosophy and international relations. In this interdisciplinary course, students first engage the philosophical foundations of intentions, focusing especially on their relation to actions and the question of whether groups can have intentions. Then, the course illuminates the central role of intentions in the study of international politics by exploring questions such as: how do states assess the intentions of their peers? Can they discern them with confidence? And what do the answers to these questions imply about the prospects for sustained cooperation in the international arena? In this way, the seminar achieves two things. First, students acquire insights into core philosophical disciplines such as theory of action and philosophy of mind as well as into the field of international relations theory. Second, students discover how debates within philosophy can crucially inform research in the social sciences.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Class Participation (15%):** Every student is expected to be prepared to discuss the required readings. We count on you to engage in lively discussions by, for instance, asking clarifying questions and sharing your reaction to the pieces we read. Attendance at every session is mandatory.

**Reading Questions (20%):** We require all participants to answer a set of questions about the required readings prior to the seminar. While the key purpose of this assignment is for you to demonstrate that you have familiarized yourself with the assigned readings, we also

hope that the questions will provide you with some guidance when approaching the readings for the first time and point you towards some of the issues we will discuss in more detail during the seminar sessions. You can find the question for each session in the reading list below. Your answer for each session should be 200-250 words long. This is, admittedly, a tight word limit and will force you to be as precise and concise as possible. A successful answer will address all parts of the question and give roughly equal weight to summary and critical evaluation. Compile your answers in one word document and send it via eMail to both [marcel.jahn@hu-berlin.de](mailto:marcel.jahn@hu-berlin.de) and [mgraefra@nd.edu](mailto:mgraefra@nd.edu) by 29 December 2019 (11:59 pm, CET) at the latest.

**Research Paper (65%):** Seminar participants are expected to write an original research paper after the conclusion of the seminar. The paper must be 6000-8000 words long. As long as it clearly relates to the content we covered together, your topic is completely up to you – but subject to our approval, of course. We urge you to discuss potential research questions with us as soon as possible. Your final paper will be due no later than *eight weeks* after your topic has officially been agreed upon. We will provide more details on this assignment during the seminar, but if you want to get a head start, we have included a reading list on methodology and research design in philosophy and the social sciences at the end of the syllabus. For inspiration on research topics, we suggest you skim through the latest issues of journals such as *Philosophical Studies*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, and *Ethics* if you are interest in current philosophical research, or *International Security*, *International Organization*, *Security Studies*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, and *Foreign Affairs* if you are more interested in issues concerning international relations.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Friday, 10 January 2020

12-1pm	Introduction
1-2:10pm	Session #1: Intentionality
15 min break	
2:25-3:35pm	Session #2: Intentional Action I
10 min break	
3:45-4:55pm	Session #3: Intentional Action II

15 min break	
5:10-6:30pm	Session #4: Collective Intentionality I - Anti-Reductionism

**Saturday, 11 January 2020**

9:30-10:40am	Session #5: Collective Intentionality II - Reductionism
10 min break	
10:50am-12pm	Session #6: Collective Intentionality III - Normative Anti-Reductionism
1h 15 min lunch break	
1:15-2:25pm	Session #7: Summary of the Philosophy Part and Outlook
10 min break	
2.35-3:45pm	Session #8: Intro to International Relations Theory (Lecture)
15 min break	
4:00-5:10pm	Session #9: The Security Dilemma
10 min break	
5:20-6:30pm	Session #10: Intentions Optimism

**Sunday, 12 January 2020**

9:30-10:40am	Session #11: Intentions Pessimism
10min break	
10:50am-12pm	Session #12: The Psychology of Intentions Assessments
1h 15 min lunch break	
1:15-2:25pm	Session #13: Intentions and the Rise of China
10min break	
2:35-4pm	Session #14: The Big Picture
4-4:30pm	Feedback/Wrap-up

## READINGS

### Session #1: Intentionality

Reading Question: *According to Searle, intentions are just one among many other intentional states such as beliefs, desires, hopes and fears. He suggests that intentional states are essentially characterized by their conditions of satisfaction. What does he mean by this? Moreover, what are the precise conditions of satisfaction for intentions (distinguish between the two kinds of intentions Searle discusses)? Do you find it plausible to characterize intentional states in terms of their conditions of satisfaction? Why/why not?*

#### Required:

John R. Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), ch. 2.

#### Recommended:

John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

### Session #2: Intentional Action

*Here is some background on what you are going to read for sessions 2 and 3. According to causal theories, an intentional action  $\phi$  is a bodily movement which is caused by antecedent mental states such as beliefs, desires and intentions. Famously, in his article "Actions, Reasons and Causes," Davidson defends such causal theory. According to Davidson, an agent A performs  $\phi$  intentionally iff (i) A has some desire towards some F, (ii) A believes that  $\phi$ -ing realizes F, and (iii) A's desire and her belief cause her (in the right way) to  $\phi$ . Davidson thinks that intentions are no distinctive mental state, but reduce to these belief-desire-pairs. If you want to, you can read Davidson's paper, but it is not required.*

*The two required readings for session 2 critically assess causal theories and specifically Davidson's theory. The required reading for session 3 criticizes a special assumption that most causal theories make, while at the same time developing an alternative causal theory.*

Reading Question: Pick one of the required readings and reconstruct their main criticism. Do not forget to explain what exactly the position is that is criticized. Do you find the criticism compelling? If so, why? If not, what could be said in response?

Required:

Harry G. Frankfurt, "The Problem of Action," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1978), pp. 157-162.

Rosalind Hursthouse, "Arational Actions," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (1991), pp. 57-68.

Recommended:

Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 60, No. 23 (1963), pp. 685-700.

**Session #3: Intentional Action II**

Reading Question: Bratman's main goal is to argue against what he calls "the Simple View": If an agent A performs some action  $\phi$  intentionally, then A has an intention to  $\phi$ . Reconstruct the argument Bratman develops against the Simple View utilizing his video game example.

Required:

Michael Bratman, "Two Faces of Intention," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (1984), pp. 375-405.

Recommended:

Donald Davidson, "Intending," in Yirmiahu Yovel, ed., *Philosophy of History and Action* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1974), pp. 41-60.

Michael Bratman, "Intention and Means-End Reasoning," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (1981), pp. 252-265.

#### **Session #4: Collective Intentionality - Anti-Reductionism**

Reading Question: Searle's text contains several lines of thought according to which we-intentions are indispensable, non-reducible primitives for cashing out collective intentionality. Pick and explain the one which you find most convincing. Do you find it compelling? Why/why not?

Required:

John R. Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," in Philip R. Cohen, Jerry Morgan, and Martha Pollack (eds.), *Intentions in Communication* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 401-415.

Recommended:

Leo A. Zaibert, "Collective Intentions and Collective Intentionality," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2003), pp. 209-232.

Raimo Tuomela and Kaarlo Miller (1988), "We-Intentions," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1988), pp. 367-389.

#### **Session #5: Collective Intentionality II - Reductionism**

Reading Question: According to Bratman, we can analyze shared intentions in terms of I-intentions. Why does Bratman think this is possible? Do you find his reasoning compelling? Why/why not?

Required:

Michael E. Bratman, "Shared Cooperative Activity," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (1992), pp. 327-341.

Recommended:

Björn Petersson, "Collectivity and Circularity," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (2007), pp. 138-156.

Michael E. Bratman, *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

### **Session #6: Collective Intentionality III - Normative Anti-Reductionism**

Reading Question: *Gilbert attempts to explain shared intentions by what she calls joint commitment. As a result, she views shared intentions as closely linked to normative notions such as reasons and obligations. Briefly state Gilbert's view on shared intentions. Then, think about how - on the basis of that - Gilbert might conceive of the state and political obligation.*

#### Required:

Margaret Gilbert, *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 5.

#### Recommended:

Michael E. Bratman, *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 5, sect. 3.

J. David Velleman, "How to Share an Intention," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (1997), pp. 29-50.

Facundo M. Alonso, "Shared Intention, Reliance, and Interpersonal Obligations," *Ethics*, Vol. 119, No. 3 (2009), pp. 444-475.

Margaret Gilbert, *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 17.

### **Session #7: Summary of the Philosophy Part and Outlook**

Reading Question: *According to Wendt, should international relations scholars attribute personhood to states? Why/why not? Are you convinced by his argument?*

#### Required:

Alexander Wendt, "The State as Person in International Theory," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2004), pp. 289-316.

Recommended:

Peter Lomas, "Anthropomorphism, Personification and Ethics: A Reply to Alexander Wendt," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005), pp. 349-355.

**Session #8: Intro to International Relations Theory (Lecture)**

Reading Question: Choose on one of the three most prominent paradigms within the international relations theory literature (realism, liberalism, or constructivism). Briefly note its key assumptions and propositions before identifying what you perceive to be its greatest strengths and weaknesses compared to one of the other two.

Required:

Joseph Grieco, G. John Ikenberry, and Michael Mastanduno, *Introduction to International Relations: Perspectives, Connections, and Enduring Questions*, 2nd ed. (London: Red Globe Press, 2019), ch. 3.

Recommended:

Joseph S. Nye Jr. and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 9th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2013), pp. 38-71.

Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), introduction, chs. 1-5.

**Session #9: The Security Dilemma**

Reading Question: What is the "irreducible dilemma" confronting all states in the international system? Describe its logic in detail and try to think through what key assumptions it rests on.

Required:



Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951), pp. 9-36.

Recommended:

John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1950), pp. 157-180.

Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1978), pp. 167-170, 186-190, 194-199.

Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, reissued ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), pp. 79-99.

Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 21-30.

Frank H. Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), pp. 197-232.

David Dequech, "Fundamental Uncertainty and Ambiguity," *Eastern Economic Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 41-60

Brian C. Rathbun, "Uncertain about Uncertainty: Understanding the Multiple Meanings of a Crucial Concept in International Relations Theory," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (2007), pp. 533-557.

## **Session #10: Intentions Optimism**

Reading Question: *Which of the numerous arguments made by intentions optimists do you find most convincing? Clearly lay out the causal logic of the argument you select and justify your choice.*

Required:

Sebastian Rosato, *The Road to Hell: Intentions, Uncertainty, and Great Power Politics*, unpublished manuscript, University of Notre Dame, September 2019, parts of ch. 3.

Recommended:

Andrew Kydd, "Sheep in Sheep's Clothing: Why Security Seekers Do Not Fight Each Other," *Security Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1997), pp. 114-155.

Andrew Kydd, "Game Theory and the Spiral Model," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (1997), pp. 371-400.

Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), ch. 3.

Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Marcus Holmes, "The Force of Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Mirror Neurons and the Problem of Intentions," *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (2013), pp. 829-861.

## **Session #11: Intentions Pessimism**

Reading Question: *Why do intentions pessimists believe that great powers find it virtually impossible to discern their peers' intentions with confidence? Do you find their arguments convincing?*

### Required:

Sebastian Rosato, *The Road to Hell: Intentions, Uncertainty, and Great Power Politics*, unpublished manuscript, University of Notre Dame, September 2019, ch. 2.

### Recommended:

Sebastian Rosato, *The Road to Hell: Intentions, Uncertainty, and Great Power Politics*, unpublished manuscript, University of Notre Dame, September 2019, ch. 4-7.

Dale C. Copeland, "The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism: A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2000), pp. 187-212.

Charles L. Glaser, Andrew H. Kydd, Mark L. Haas, John M. Owen IV and Sebastian Rosato, "Correspondence: Can Great Powers Discern Intentions?," *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Winter 2015/16), pp. 197-215.

## **Session #12: The Psychology of Intentions Assessments**

Reading Question: *What is procedural rationality? Can we measure it? If so, how? If not, why not?*

### Required:

Moritz S. Graefrath, "How Rare Are Rational Thinkers in International Politics? Revisiting the 'Guilty Men' of Interwar Britain," unpublished manuscript, University of Notre Dame, October 2019.

### Recommended:

Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1968), pp. 454-479.

Ernest R. May, "Conclusions: Capabilities and Proclivities," in Ernest R. May (ed.), *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 503-542.

Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 79-90.

Jack S. Levy, "Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision-Making," in Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 301-333.

## **Session #13: Intentions and the Rise of China**

Reading Question: *Will China's rise be peaceful? To what extent does the answer to this question depend on what China's actual intentions are?*

Required:

John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3 (2010), pp. 381-396.

Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (March/April 2011), pp. 80-91.

Recommended:

Sebastian Rosato, *The Road to Hell: Intentions, Uncertainty, and Great Power Politics*, unpublished manuscript, University of Notre Dame, September 2019, ch. 8.

Christopher Layne, "The Sound of Distant Thunder: The Pre-World War I Anglo-German Rivalry as a Model of Sino-American Relations in the Early Twenty-First Century," in Asle Toje, ed., *Will China's Rise Be Peaceful? Security, Stability, and Legitimacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 123-142.

Henry A. Kissinger, "The Future of U.S.-Chinese Relations: Conflict Is a Choice, Not a Necessity," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (March/April 2012), 44-55.

Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015).

**Session #14: The Big Picture**

Reading Question: Name and elaborate upon three potential research questions that occurred to you after having read all of the above material. Note that all research questions should lie at the intersection of international relations and philosophy of intentions.

Recommended:

John G. Bruhn, "Interdisciplinary Research: A Philosophy, Art Form, Artifact, or Antidote?" *Integrative Physiological and Behavioral Science*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2000), pp. 58-66.

Jonathan Kramnick, "The Interdisciplinary Delusion: Saving Disciplines Is the Only Way to Save Ourselves," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 11 October 2018. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Interdisciplinary-Delusion/244772>. Accessed on 30 July 2019.

## **Optional Readings on Methodology and Research Design in Philosophy and the Social Sciences**

### Philosophy:

Claire Benn, Christina Cameron, Amanda Cawston, and Shyane Siriwardena, *Tackling the Philosophy Essay: A Student Guide* (University of Cambridge, 2013). <https://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/curr-students/II/curr-students/writing-skills/>. Accessed on 7 October 2019.

Jim Pryor, "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper," <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>. Accessed on 20 October 2019.

### Social Sciences:

Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997),

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005)