

**You are already
global!**



A promotional image for the movie 'Who Am I?' featuring Jackie Chan. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a blue leather jacket over a white shirt, looking off-camera with a slight smile. The background is a warm, orange-toned image of a large Buddha statue. The title 'JACKIE CHAN'S WHO AM I?' is overlaid in the bottom left corner.

JACKIE CHAN'S
WHO AM I?

Winner of the International Studies Association's Deborah Gerner Innovative Teaching in International Studies Award (2025)

According to the judges:

We had many strong applications and this was a tough decision, so we want to congratulate you on the award and the excellent work that you are doing. The committee was very impressed with your work, and not only as a teacher, but also as a rising scholar taking on timely security questions through a rigorous, critical lens (ISA Award Committee).

Winner of the British International Studies Association's (BISA) Early Career Excellence in Teaching International Studies Prize (2024)

In assessing my nomination, the judging panel noted:

"Akinyemi Oyawale's nomination stands out in its clear emphasis on decentring mainstream approaches to the study and teaching of IR, including his work at integrating non-Western perspectives. We are particularly impressed with the clear teaching philosophy he outlined based on principles of inclusivity (Nobody Left Behind), which are not only noteworthy in themselves, but which are supported by detailed student testimonies as well as by two teaching awards he received in 2023. His contributions are further evidenced by the fact that he led a segment on inclusive seminars at the 2021/2022 PAIS Teaching Away Day. Dr Oyawale provides a highly evidenced submission that clearly demonstrates his reflective and thoughtful approach to teaching."

Winner of the Butterworth Memorial Award (2023)

In addition to WATE, Akinyemi was also awarded the Butterworth Memorial Award which celebrates the exceptional achievement of early career WATE winners (within the first five years of their academic career).

Winner of the Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence (WATE) Faculty of Social Sciences (2023)

In recognition of my contribution to teaching and student support, I was recently awarded the much coveted Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence (WATE). To sum up my approach:

“My teaching philosophy is underpinned by the doctrine of Nobody Left Behind. In my teaching, I view students as partners with agency to not merely listen and absorb knowledge from a so-called ‘sage on a stage’, but rather as active participants who bring a diversity of rich lived experiences to the classroom. Combining Warwick’s ambition of boundless learning with a critical ethos that encourages endless questioning and a transgressive (against oppressive structures) praxis, I have actively supported students in their overall development including providing academic and pastoral support, feedback and assessment that can help students grow.”



Akinyemi Oyawale, PhD. Assistant Professor in IR, PAIS, Warwick.





Introduction to International Studies

**Lecture/Seminar Delivered at the Pre-University Summer School,
University of Warwick, UK.**

Date: 21 July 2026

Time: 10:00 – 13:00

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Why Does the World Need International Studies?

The highest number of simultaneous active conflicts since World War II – the world is not getting simpler.

A single virus (COVID) originating in one city shut down the entire global economy within weeks. No country was immune. Ebola is ongoing in the DRC axis and epidemics and pandemics are always a threat to people and the global economy.

Can we truly understand the modern world through the lens of just one country, one discipline, or one perspective?



What is International Relations?



- International relations could be used to refer to a branch of Political Science which focuses on the study of these interactions.
- It could refer to an academic discipline, International Relations (note the capitalisation) which encompasses a wide range of academic fields, ranging from history to environmental studies, and there are a number of areas of specific specialty, for academics who are interested in them.
- The concept of international relations on some level is probably quite old, given that humans have been establishing governments and communicating with each other for thousands of years.

What's in a name?



‘Inter-
national’
Relations?

‘Inter-
national’
Politics?

‘Global’
Politics?

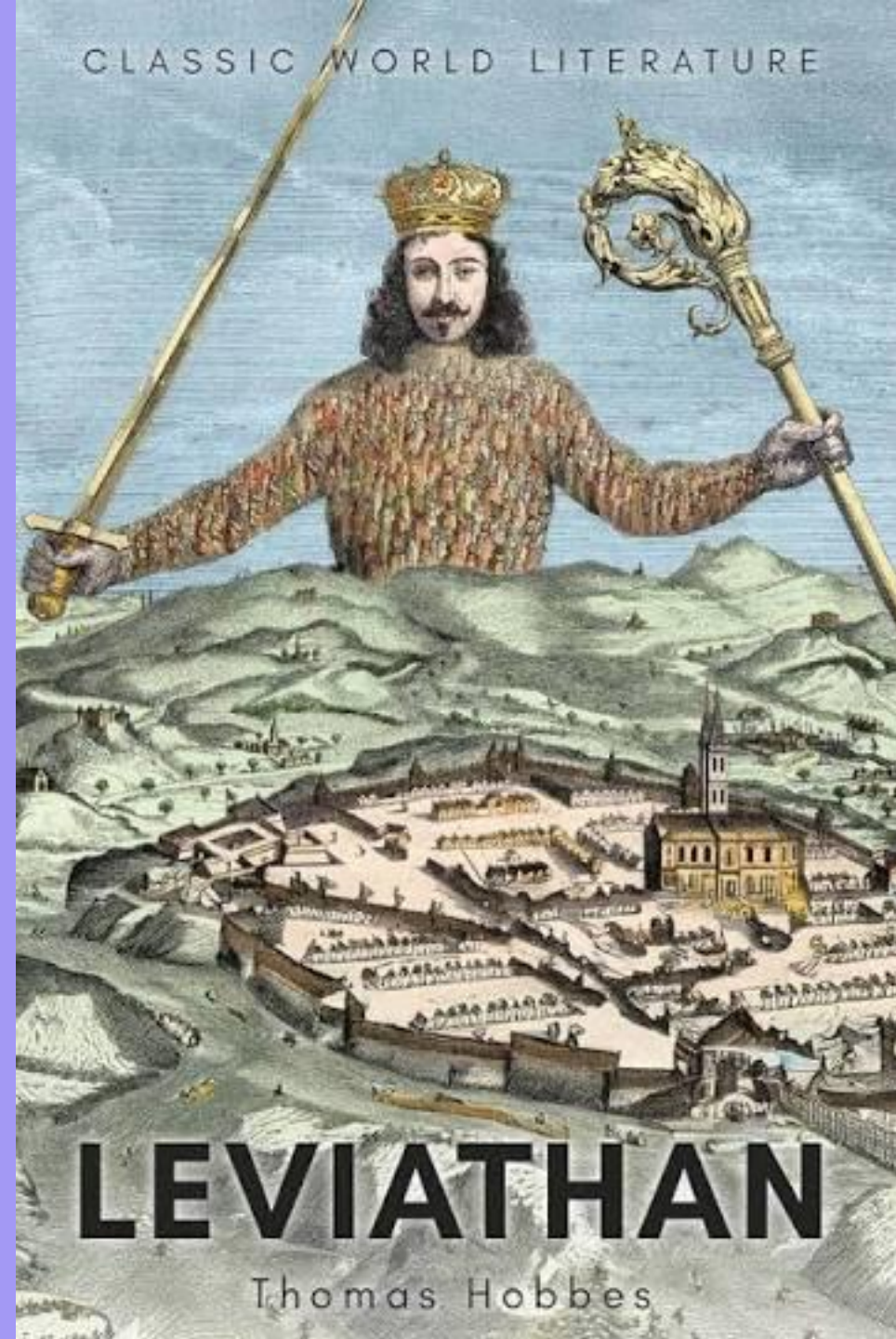
‘World’
Politics?

‘What’s in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet’ – William Shakespeare (Romeo and Juliet).



Anarchy Problematic!

The Problem: There is no world government!



History of IR: The 'Great Debates'



1. **'First Great Debate'**: Also known as the 'Realist-Idealist Great Debate', it was a dispute between idealists and realists which took place in the 1920s and 1930s.

2. **'Second Great Debate'**: Also known as 'realists versus behaviourists' or 'traditionalism versus scientism', it was a dispute between 'scientific IR' scholars who sought to refine scientific methods of inquiry in international relations theory and those who insisted on a more historicist/interpretative approach to international relations theory.

3. **'Third Great Debate'**: the inter-paradigm debate between proponents of liberalist, realist and Marxist international relations theories, as well as the academic debate between proponents of realism, institutionalism and structuralism.

4. **'Fourth Great Debate'**: It was a debate between positivist theories and post-positivist theories of international relations.

The background of the slide features three vertical panels, each containing a historical portrait. The left panel shows a man with a full grey beard and balding head, wearing ornate armor with a sun emblem. The middle panel shows a young man with short dark hair and a red collar. The right panel shows an older man with long white hair and a white collar.

Realism: historical ‘family portrait’

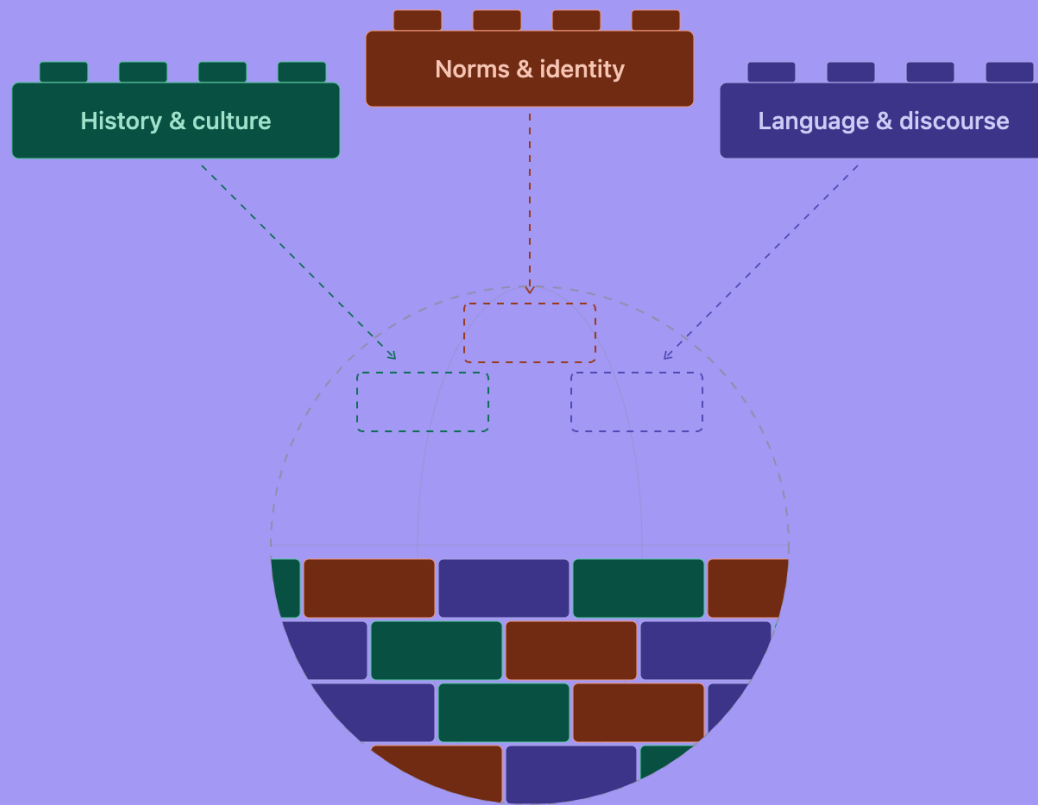
- Three Ss: States, Self-Help, Survival
 - National Security
 - Negative security

The background of the slide features three vertical panels, each containing a portrait of a philosopher. The left panel shows John Locke with long, wavy grey hair and a dark coat. The middle panel shows Immanuel Kant with a powdered wig and a dark, buttoned coat. The right panel shows Adam Smith with a powdered wig and a dark coat. The text is overlaid on these portraits.

Liberalism: historical 'family portrait'

- States+, Cooperation, institutions, and democracy can tame conflict.
- Kant's "Perpetual Peace" → the UN, WTO, EU

Main theories in IR: Social Constructivism



1. Ideas Matter: It's not just about military power or money. What states believe to be true shapes their actions. Why are North Korea's nuclear weapons more threatening to the US than the UK's?

2. Identity Shapes Interests: The UK acts like the UK because of its history and self-image. The US acts like the US. Interests are not fixed; they come from who we think we are (our identity).

3. Reality is Socially Constructed: The "International System" isn't a physical law (like gravity). It exists because we collectively agree to act as if it does. Change the conversation, change the world.

Critical Theories

- What if the state isn't the most important thing? What if 'international politics' is just a story told by the powerful to stay powerful?
- What if theory is not neutral? What if 'theory is always for someone and for some purpose' (Robert Cox)?
- While problem-solving (mainstream) theories work within existing systems to make them run more smoothly, critical theories question the very foundations of those systems to expose power imbalances and promote transformative social change

Marxism	Feminism	Postcolonialism
Follow the money: Global politics is about who owns the factories, the data, and the debt.	Follow the gender: Whose voice is missing? War and peace are shaped by masculine ideas of strength.	Follow the empire: The Global North didn't get rich by accident—it got rich off the Global South.

Key Actors Beyond the State

Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) e.g., UN, EU, WTO, NATO: States join these to coordinate behaviour. They can sanction, peacekeep, and set global laws. But they only have power if states agree to listen.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) e.g., Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Red Cross: They don't represent governments – they represent people and causes. They shape public opinion, expose abuses, and hold states accountable

Multinational and Transnational Corporations (TNCs) e.g., Apple, Shell, Alibaba, Tesla: Apple's revenue exceeds the GDP of 140+ countries. They move money, jobs, and technology across borders – often with more freedom than states have.

Non-State Armed Groups e.g., ISIS, Hamas, Kurdish militias, cartels: The Spoilers. They reject state authority and use violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological goals. They force states to react, often reshaping entire regions.

Individuals: Wangari Maathai, Greta Thunberg, Julian Assange – how much can one person shift global agendas?



Key Issues in IR

War & Security: interstate wars (Russia v Ukraine; US-Israel v Iran) Nuclear proliferation, civil wars (Sudan), cyberwarfare, and the return of great-power rivalry (US vs. China).

Terrorism: September 11 attacks, July 7 Attacks, Islamic State, Boko Haram, etc.

Migration: Movement of people including refugees across borders.

Climate & Resources: Rising sea levels, water scarcity, mass migration, and 'climate refugees'. No state can solve this alone.

Inequality & Justice (The North-South Divide): The gap between the Global North and Global South and between the rich and poor in most countries. Debt, trade rules, and who gets vaccines first.

Technology & Surveillance: AI, drones, social media manipulation, and mass surveillance. Who owns your data? Who controls the algorithms?

Democratic backsliding: Freedom House reports democracy in decline for 18 consecutive years (2006–2024). Authoritarianism is on the march.

Global Health: COVID-19 exposed how deeply interdependent — and profoundly unequal — global health systems truly are.



Lecture Takeaways



Not just current affairs

International Studies is a rigorous, theory-driven discipline — not a glorified news commentary class.



Multiple perspectives

No single theory explains everything. The real skill is knowing which lens to apply – when, and why.



Global problems, global solutions

Climate, inequality, war, democracy – everything you care about needs a global solution.

Thank you and any questions?

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Seminar Questions



- 1 Is International Relations just “current affairs with a fancy name”? Use a theory to defend your answer.
- 2 Realism or Liberalism — which better explains a conflict in today’s headlines, and why?
- 3 Can any single country solve climate change alone? What does that reveal about global power?
- 4 Who really runs world politics: states, institutions, corporations, or ordinary people?
- 5 In an “anarchic” world with no global government, is cooperation possible — or is conflict inevitable?

Facilitator's Guide



Activity	Groups	Time	You'll need
Crisis Simulation	4–6 per bloc	20 min	Role cards, one-page crisis brief, visible timer
Theory Goggles	4 groups	15 min	Four theory cards, one shared news headline
Headline Hunt	Pairs	10 min	Newspapers or phones, IR concept checklist
Build a Nation	3–4 per team	25 min	Resource & geography cards, blank map

Total run time = 70 min. I'll give a 2-minute warning before each round ends, and rotational “rapporteur” approach in every group to feed back.

Seminar Activities



Crisis Simulation

Role-play world leaders reacting live to a breaking crisis – a border clash, pandemic or cyber-attack. Can you negotiate a way out?



Theory Goggles

Each group adopts a different lens – Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, Marxist – and reacts to the same headline. Whose story wins?



Headline Hunt

Race to match today's news stories to IR concepts: power, anarchy, sovereignty and interdependence.



Build a Nation

Design your country's geography, resources and foreign policy – then broker alliances (or rivalries) with rival teams.

Debrief & Reflection



What happened?

Recap each activity: which decisions shaped your outcome, and whose choices mattered most?



So what?

Which theory best explains how your group behaved — and where did the “lenses” disagree?



Now what?

How will this change the way you read tomorrow’s headlines and think about global problems?