

Lecture 1 Notes

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1. **International Relations** — Concerns relations between different actors in the world, the characteristics of those relations, and their consequences
 - (a) Has to do with the nature of those actors, how they have changed over time, and how their interactions have changed over time
 - (b) Includes questions of international conflict, economics, and questions that transcend actors but confront them nevertheless
2. **International Relations Theory** — A set of principles and guidelines used to analyze both world events and relations between states. These theories help to assess past and present conditions, and, in turn, a basis for predicting future trends
3. Key Concepts:
 - (a) Hypothesis — An educated guess or proposition about how or why something, an event or specific set of conditions, occurred
 - (b) Concept — An idea, thought or notion. A universal descriptive word
 - (c) Generalization — A set of concepts that are related
 - (d) Theory — A set of generalizations that try to analyze, explain, or predict something
4. Descriptive “Empirical” Theories — Try to explain events and circumstances. They are based on description and evaluation of past events, conditions, and patterns of behavior
5. Prescriptive “Normative” Theories — A set of principles and guidelines that contain value judgments about how the world ought to be, rather than who the world really is. Also known as “normative” theories
6. Levels of Analysis — A method for examining international relations theory based on three different perspectives or levels (individual, state, and system levels)

- (a) Individual — An approach that focuses on the role and impact of particular individuals, or looks for explanations based on “human nature” or common characteristics of all individuals
- (b) State — An analytical approach that focuses on the domestic or internal causes of state actions. An attempt to explain international relations by emphasizing the internal workings of the state or civilization itself
- (c) System — An approach that focuses on the manner in which the structure of the international system shapes and constrains the actions of states