

<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	<i>International Development &amp; Global Studies</i>
<b>TERM</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> FALL 2020
<b>PROFESSOR:</b>	<i>Benjamin Zyla</i>
<b>RESEARCH TITLE:</b>	<i>The Practice Turn in International Relations Theory</i>
<b>NUMBER OF STUDENT:</b>	2-4
<b>LANGUAGE:</b>	<i>English, French</i>
<b>ASSIGNMENTS CAN BE SUBMITTED IN FRENCH</b>	<b>YES</b>

#### RESEARCH DESCRIPTION:

**Goals:** The goal of this course is to better understand the ‘practice-turn’ in international relations theory. In recent years a number of scholars have turned to studying practices in international politics, often drawing from the works of Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958), and Charles Taylor (1985) that contend “that practices can at once underlie subjects and objects, highlight nonpropositional knowledge, and illuminate the conditions of intelligibility” (Schatzki, 2001: 10). (s.f. Gadinger; Pouliot; Reckwitz etc.). In taking this approach, practice theory opposes a number of other ways of thinking like representationalism, rational choice theory, structuralism, systems theory and organizational approaches, and takes practice as the smallest unit of analysis: “in everything that people do, in world politics or in any other social field, there is always a practical substrate that does not derive from conscious deliberation or thoughtful reflection,” and that, “practice is the result of inarticulate, practical knowledge that makes what is to be done appear self-evident or commonsensical” (Pouliot, 2010: 12). As such, practice approaches focus on how groups perform their practical activities that renew and reproduce social order (Bueger and Gadinger, 2015). Practices then are “socially meaningful patterns of action... [that] simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world” (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 6).

While the development of practice theory has undoubtedly flourished in recent years (s.f. Reckwitz), there remain a number of conceptual and methodological puzzles. It is also unclear how practice theory can actually help practitioners (e.g. policy makers) in doing their daily jobs.

In this course that is primarily directed at students in the field of international relations/international politics, we will take stock of the recent practice theory literature and identify its limits, gaps, and future prospects.

*If you have questions, please email me at [Benjamin.Zyla@uottawa.ca](mailto:Benjamin.Zyla@uottawa.ca)*

#### KEY LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

*This course will allow students to:*

- *Participate and be a full member of an existing research team*

- *Expand your research knowledge (methodologies, techniques, analysis, etc.) on IR theories and practice theory in particular*
- *Gain an understanding of how to apply practice theory in a research programm*
- *Increase or validate their interests in graduate studies and gain a first practical experience of social science research;*
- *Learn how to do a literature review for grad school*