

Nov 29 2016

2015-16 MSc Dissertation Prizewinners announced

Blog editor

The International Relations Department is pleased to be able to announce the MSc dissertation prizewinners for the 2015-16 session:

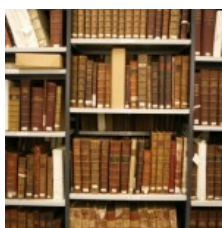
MSc International Relations Philip Windsor Dissertation Prize



This was awarded jointly to **Leo Barincou** for his dissertation entitled *The political determinants of the internationalisation of the Chinese currency*.

[Click here to read a summary of Leo Barincou's dissertation](#)

MSc International Relations Philip Windsor Dissertation Prize



This was awarded jointly to **Gregory Raleigh Jenkins** for his dissertation entitled *American Identity, Threat Perception, and Film: Empowering the Productive Visualities of American Foreign Policy*.

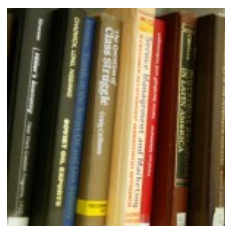
[Click here to read a summary of Gregory Raleigh Jenkins's dissertation](#)

MSc International Relations Theory Fred Halliday Dissertation Prize

This was awarded to **Madeline Rose McSherry** for her dissertation entitled *In Defense of the Homeland: Reimagining American Identity in Post-9/11 Discourse*.

[Click here to read a summary of Madeline Rose McSherry's dissertation](#)

MSc International Political Economy Susan Strange Dissertation Prize



This was awarded to **Hannah Dimpker** for her dissertation entitled *Carrots, Sticks and International Finance – An Analysis of Financial Market Discipline in Developed and Developing Countries*.

[Click here to read a summary of Hannah Dimpker's dissertation](#)

MSc International Relations Research Martin Wight Dissertation Prize

This was awarded to **Yuji Maeda** for his dissertation entitled *Neorealism and the Conducts of War: Systemic and Behavioural Implications of the Russo-Japanese War*.

[Click here to read a summary of Yuji Maeda's dissertation](#)



MSc International Relations IR410 International Politics Michael Donelan Prize



This was awarded to **James Wilken-Smith** for the highest mark (77) in the IR410 International Politics core course.

Summary of Leo Barincou's dissertation *The political determinants of the internationalisation of the Chinese currency*

Summary forthcoming.

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Summary of Gregory Raleigh Jenkins' dissertation *American Identity, Threat Perception, and Film: Empowering the Productive Visualities of American Foreign Policy*

America is a state imagined; according to Campbell (1992), “the imagined community par excellence.” To understand America and its foreign policy maneuvers, one must first understand *how* America imagines its identity. Inspired by critical and constructivist research concerned with the politics of aesthetics, this dissertation explores how contemporary Hollywood war films imagine the American Self and the Arab Muslim Other. The three films examined – *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), *Lone Survivor* (2013), and *American Sniper* (2014) – were the most popular contemporary war films in their respective years and, as such, had the ability to not only entertain, but also educate a large number of viewers on what it means to be an “American.” Though not without nuance, all three films imagine – through repeated, hegemonic scopic regimes – the American Self as exceptional and superior to the Arab Muslim Other. To different degrees, each film visually looks down on Arab Muslims, dehumanizes them, and incriminates them. The films, then, contribute at once to an exceptionally good and moral imagination of America and to the constitution of Arab Muslims as enemies and threats. The productive and reproductive power of these ways of seeing must not be understated. As 99% of Americans are *not* Muslims, and the number of U.S. movie theatres that showed *American Sniper* (3,885) heavily outnumbers the number of mosques in the U.S. (around 2,000), it is clear that Americans are much more likely to see a movie theatre than they are a mosque, to see “real Muslims” *in* the movies than *at* the movies. When the most popular films visualize Americans as supremely exceptional and Arab Muslim Others as threats, boundaries are reproduced and efforts to work towards a new era of mutual peace and respect are undermined. These films have the ability to become vital referents in the imagination of an American identity and to shape the contours of American encounters with Others: at UN conferences, in business meetings, as tourists, and at the polls. To ignore film, then, is to ignore a crucial site of identity (re)production and, in turn, a significant player in geopolitics. It is imperative that IR scholars take more seriously the implications of film, and, by so doing, further extend the epistemic boundaries of the discipline.

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Summary of Madeline Rose McSherry's dissertation *In Defense of the Homeland: Reimagining American Identity in Post-9/11 Discourse*

The first definition of “homeland” in the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “a person’s home country or native land; the land of one’s ancestors” (2016). The United States of America is not—and never has been—an easy fit for this traditional definition. But today, homeland as a description for the U.S. has become pervasive in American politics. With the standard definition of the word so at odds with America’s self-image, how and why did America “become” a homeland?

This paper explores, questions, and lays bare representations of the American homeland in post-9/11 political discourse. In doing so, it seeks to de-naturalize the dominant discourses that helped justify, produce, and sustain a variety of policies in the post-9/11 era, from expanded government surveillance to the global War on Terror. With its unorthodox approach to discourse analysis that centers on a single word, this work also adds variety to and expands the range of post-structural research in IR.

In seeing language and identities as both transformative and transformable, this analysis invites readers to imagine new and different ways of defining and forging American identity. As we move further away from the events of 9/11, how can we reconstruct an American homeland that is less vulnerable, more inclusive, and just?

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Summary of Hannah Dimpker's dissertation *Carrots, Sticks, and International Finance – An Analysis of Financial Market Discipline in Developed and Developing Countries*

Do financial markets exercise their structural power to discipline governments using a 'carrots and sticks' approach by relying on punishment and reward to induce wanted behavior? And do governments succumb to financial market pressure due to their structural dependence on international credit? In order to answer these questions, I empirically test the two-way relationship between financial markets and states. More precisely, I use an instrumental variable technique to account for simultaneity between interest rates on sovereign bonds and primary budget balances.

My research findings add to the existing literature in six ways: First, I provide evidence confirming that financial markets systematically constrain fiscal policymakers through punishment and reward – in both developed and developing countries. Unsurprisingly, I find that punishment is harsher for developing countries. Second, whereas I provide the first empirical study showing that developing countries indeed respond to financial market pressure; government responsiveness is greater in developed countries. My interpretation here is that structural dependence on international credit is greater in developed countries given greater aggregate debt levels. Moreover, interest rates are generally much less volatile in developed countries which could potentially create greater anxiety among policymakers – even when bond rates increase only moderately.

Third, I find that financial market behavior is often not primarily the result of government action or non-action, but that sovereign bond rates are largely driven by external market conditions. Given that there is no association between capital restrictions and both market punishment and government responsiveness, national authorities seem unable to shield themselves from external market pressure. These are two particularly important findings in that they relate to the asymmetrical interdependence between financial markets and national authorities: While financial markets impose fiscal discipline on national governments, national authorities are ultimately unable to control external market conditions and, thus, unable to control for much of the variation in interest rates.

Fourth, I present evidence suggesting that government expenditures increase as the terms of trade deteriorate (and domestic constituencies demand compensation for external risks), but that this is only a temporary effect and that politicians use positive shocks to consolidate budgets. Fifth, when controlling for institutional and political factors, I find that the number of veto players in governments significantly mediates national responsiveness to financial market pressure, but only in developed countries. Finally, I contribute methodologically by proposing a new set of instrumental variables to address the bidirectional relationship between interest rates and fiscal budget balances.

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Summary of Yuji Maeda's dissertation *Neorealism and the Conducts of War: Systemic and Behavioural Implications of the Russo-Japanese War*

The discipline of International Relations in general and Neorealism in particular have dealt most extensively with the question of whether war happens or not, at the expense of how war is waged. The paper identifies four reasons why Neorealism focuses on the causes of war and neglects the conduct of war: 1) a historically entrenched understanding of disciplinary historiography; 2) an overwhelming emphasis on material capabilities; 3) peace among great powers facilitated by nuclear deterrence; 4) confusing an interactive process of war-fighting conducts with the unit-level strategy. However, these four considerations do not justify the Neorealist inclination toward the war-peace binary, because the conduct of war could have an independent and important effect on the wider course of international politics.

The paper endeavours to introduce the concept of battle effect, defined as the effect of the manner in which war is waged, to fill the gap. The concept is developed along two cross-cutting dimensions – systemic/behavioural and pre-war/post-war – and the post-war behavioural variant of battle effect is presented as the most promising to refine Neorealist theories. The paper then seeks to demonstrate the potential value of this concept by applying it to the balance of threat theory and the offence-defence balance theory in the case of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. The concept contributes to the latter theory by suggesting that the perception of offence-dominance prior to 1914 stemmed partly from how the Russian and Japanese armies had clashed in the battlefield, and to the former theory by revealing how the post-war pattern of great power alliance formations was influenced by the distribution of threat revised by the perceived Russian ineptitude during the Russo-Japanese War.

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