International Relations: Perspectives and Controversies, K. L. Shimko
Lecture Outline: Chapter 2 – Contending Perspectives on International Politics

I. Proliferation of Perspectives and Answers in IR
   A. Social sciences typically present a range of competing perspectives (examples from outside international relations)
   B. Elements of each perspective
      1. Analytical/explanatory component
      2. Prescriptive component
      3. Philosophical/theoretical roots (perspectives on IR are actually specific application of more general propositions/assumptions)

II. Realism
   A. Conservative foundations
      1. Pessimistic view of flawed human nature (religious and secular)
      2. Humans are social beings—group tendencies/identities
      3. Collective/group egoism
      4. Inevitability of social conflict—impossible to create social, economic and political order that benefits all equally
      5. Beneficiaries of status quo always come into conflict with those who would benefit from revisions of the status quo
   B. Applied to IR (Realism)
      1. Early (classical) realists share view of flawed human nature (Read a few quotes.)
      2. The nation-state is the prime conflict group identity at the global level
      3. Conflict among nations is inevitable (status quo vs. revisionist states)
      4. International anarchy sets limits to the feasible management of international conflict. War remains an ever-present possibility.
      5. The chances of war can be reduced (e.g., by balance of power) but never completely eliminated in an anarchical world

III. Liberalism (Idealism, Liberal Internationalism)
   A. Liberal foundations
      1. More optimistic view of human nature
      2. Harmony of interests
      3. Belief in human progress
   B. Applied to IR
      1. Reject realist overemphasis on war and conflict
      2. See powerful forces at work for fundamental change in international relations
         a. Spread of democracy (democratic liberalism)
         b. Trade and interdependence (commercial liberalism)
         c. Growth of norms of human rights and peaceful settlement of conflicts (normative liberalism)
         d. Emergence of international institutions such as United Nations and European Union (liberal institutionalism)

IV. Marxism
   A. Discuss the historical roots of Marxism in Marx’s reactions to early industrial capitalism
   B. Foundations of Marxism
      1. Class division is the defining feature of capitalist societies
      2. Classes defined by their relations to the means of production
      3. Relations between classes are unequal and exploitive
4. Inequality and exploitation fundamental cause of social conflict
5. Non-neutrality of the state—state (government) protects and advances the interests of dominant economic class

C. Marxism and IR
   1. Behaviors of states needs to be understood as expressions of class (not “national”) interests
   2. World seen in class terms: core and periphery analogous to bourgeoisie and proletariat involved in an unequal and exploitive (and, thus, conflictual) relationship

V. Feminism
   A. Feminist perspectives share two basic elements
      1. Greater empirical study of women’s experiences
      2. Theoretical focus on gender and how socially constructed gender norms influence social relations and phenomenon (explain and illustrate difference between sex and gender)
   B. Feminist approaches to IR
      1. Emphasize the obvious exclusion of women from institutions of public power that dominate the conduct of international relations
      2. This exclusion shapes international relations through the gender norms of masculinity
      3. International relations theory (in addition to practice) has been equally affected by these gender norms. What much IR theory, especially realism, accepts as neutral realities of international relations are actually manifestations of socially constructed (masculine) gender norms.

VI. Constructivism
   A. Basic assumptions of constructivism
      1. The behavior of social actors is shaped by their beliefs about who and what they are and how they are supposed to act (illustrate with some non-IR examples). It is interesting here to refer back to feminist emphasis on social construction of gender. Constructivists, however, apply this insight well beyond the confines of gender.
      2. The behavior of actors is thus susceptible to change as beliefs, norms and identities change.
   B. Constructivism and IR
      1. Critical of any approach, particularly realism, that portrays and understands state behavior as the result of some objective laws or inevitable consequence of certain conditions (such as anarchy)
      2. States (or the people who make decisions in their name) react to conditions on the basis of their ideas and beliefs about what sorts of behaviors are appropriate. Different ideas and beliefs yield different behaviors even in similar situations.

VII. Conclusion: Perspectives as General Roadmaps, Not Specific Directions
   A. People from the same perspective do always agree. The same general beliefs might be applied in ways that lead to different answers to questions or positions on policy questions.
   B. People from different perspectives do not always disagree. Different assumptions can sometimes lead to the same answer or policy, though for different reasons.
International Relations: Perspectives and Controversies, K.L. Shimko
Lecture Outline: Chapter 3 – Power Politics

I. Introduction
   A. Language of power pervades discussions of international relations (peace through strength example)
   B. The meaning of “power politics”
   C. Are there alternatives to this vision of international relations?

II. The Logic of Power Politics
   A. From anarchy to power politics
      1. Anarchy
      2. Insecurity
      3. Self-help
      4. Security Dilemma
   B. How do power politics play out?
      1. Balance of power theory: without knowing intentions, nations assume power is a threat and balance against it. They also sometimes assume balance best preserves peace.
         a. Problems of defining and measuring power (e.g., Was there a balance of imbalance of power during the Cold War?)
         b. Inconsistent use of terminology
         c. Hard to account for cases where nations aligned with, not against, the more powerful state
      2. Balance of threat theory: nations make judgments about intentions and balance against nations that appear to pose the greatest threat. This appears to better account for alignments after World War II.
      3. Preponderance or hegemonic stability theory: nations align on the basis of interests (though actual alliance may require specific and immediate threats). Peace is best preserved by imbalance of power in favor of status quo states.
   C. The common vision of power politics

III. Alternatives to Power Politics
   A. World Government
      1. Theoretically would solve the problem
      2. Problem of implementation/creation
   B. Collective Security
      1. Elements of collective security
         a. Collective security recognizes importance of power and deterrence
         b. Replaces national power with a community of power
         c. Not world government, no global military force
         d. Agreement not to use force to settle disputes
         e. Agreement to join other nations opposing nations that do use force
2. Historical experience: League of Nations  
   a. Historically specific problems (U.S. non-entry)  
   b. But failure may be better seen as result of problems inherent in any collective  
      security system  
3. Problems of collective security  
   a. Identification of "aggressor" not always clear  
   b. Status quo bias—problem of peaceful change  
   c. Expectation that nations will use force when national interests are not at stake  
      (or even against national interests) unrealistic  
C. Anarchy without power politics  
   1. Example of security communities: nations whose experience allows them to coexist  
      with a reasonable expectation of nonviolence  
   2. Social construction of power politics: anarchy leads to power politics only if  
      statesmen think that it must. The consequences of anarchy are not automatic;  
      anarchy is what states make of it.  

IV. Conclusion  
   A. The ending of major conflicts (World War II, Cold War) often prompts thinking about  
      creating a new international order  
   B. The question is, what are the limits of feasible change?