APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

OPEN ACCESS TEACHING MATERIAL

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Course idea

The course “Approaches to International Political Economy” introduces key approaches to the study of international political economy or global political economy.

The course is organized into nine sections. The first section provides a general overview of the field of international (or global) political economy laying the foundation for the topics that follow. Each subsequent section examines a distinct theoretical or analytical perspective, offering students a comprehensive understanding of the diverse ways in which international political economy can be studied.

Each section (with the exception of the first) follows a consistent structure:

- An introductory text that outlines the theme and its relevance (READ)
- Three to five video lectures of varying lengths (WATCH)
- A quiz to assess comprehension and retention (ASSESS)
- Reflective assignments that invite students to apply the insights gained to critically analyze contemporary, real-world phenomena (REFLECT)
- Some examples of exercises designed to deepen student learning by grounding it more firmly in academic knowledge production (e.g. literature review exercise, identifying and summarizing academic articles, a research task). (DEEPEN)

To make the most of the course, students are encouraged to engage actively with the materials. When watching the video lectures, we recommend taking notes by hand to enhance focus and retention. After viewing, students should revise their notes and reflect on key concepts before attempting the quiz. Completing the quiz will help consolidate learning and prepare students for the reflective assignments, which require thoughtful application of the theoretical insights to current issues in international / global political economy.

If you incorporate insights gained from this educational resource—for instance, in written work—please cite them in accordance with good academic practice.

How to cite (examples):

[a video] Poutanen, M. (2025). Basics of Marxist IPE: Key concepts of Marxist IPE [Open Educational Resource lecture video]. *Approaches to International Political Economy*. DigiCampus.

[a text] Vaittinen, T. (2025). Feminist International Political Economy / Global Political Economy. *Approaches to International Political Economy* [Open Educational Resource]. DigiCampus. https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=222064

DigiCampus platform and Creative Commons Licence

In addition to this booklet, the open-access materials version of the course is available on the DigiCampus platform. Anyone interested is free to explore and study the materials independently there, but the course cannot be completed for ECTS credits or a certificate via DigiCampus. That said, beyond independent study, the materials may be freely used for non-commercial educational purposes without restriction.

If you are a teacher who would like to use the learning materials in your own course on the DigiCampus platform, it is possible to import (some of) the course content and activities into your own DigiCampus workspace. If you would like to do so, please get in touch with us.

Background

This course material was developed in connection with two research projects funded by the Research Council of Finland during the years 2022–2025 (project no 325976 and project no 350247). The material has been produced by Anni Kangas, Anna Rajala, Timo Uotinen, Mikko Poutanen and Tiina Vaittinen in collaboration with Onni Ahvonen, Tuomo Alhojärvi, Paula Rauhala, and Mikael Wigell.

Get in touch

We would be delighted to hear if you use these materials in your teaching or have any feedback—please feel free to send us an email:

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1. What is International Political Economy?

This section provides a general introduction to International (or Global) Political Economy. It includes two video lectures: The first video explores IPE as a field that examines the interplay of political, societal, and economic dynamics across international, global, and transnational levels. The second video briefly introduces key theoretical perspectives that later sections will examine in more depth.

Watch

Video 1: What is IPE? international political economy or International Political Economy? Part 1 (18 min) (by Anni Kangas)

Video 2: What is IPE? Theoretical perspectives to IPE (12 min) (by Anni Kangas)

Assess

After watching the videos, the students are asked to complete the quiz to review their understanding and proceed to the next part of the course. The quiz is available on the DigiCampus platform and can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=391910

Deepen

Spotting IPE Dynamics through a Commodity Map

The purpose of this deepening exercise is to use a single commodity to reveal how international/global political economy operates as a dynamic system in which politics, power, economic structures, social relations, and cultural meanings interact across multiple scales—such as personal, local, national, regional, global….

Instructions for students

1) Choose a commodity

Pick one globally traded commodity (e.g., coffee, wine, a smartphone, a fast-fashion garment, an EV, a luxury item). This site can be used for inspiration: https://i-peel.org/

2) Sketch the global connections

Think about the stages your chosen commodity passes through—from design to extraction/production, processing, retail/consumption, and finally disposal or reuse.

For each stage, note

- Places involved (countries, regions, or cities).
- Key actors (e.g., workers, firms, brands, suppliers, platforms, states, international organizations, NGOs, standard-setting bodies, consumers).
- Rules and regimes that shape the process (e.g., trade agreements, labor laws, sustainability standards, procurement policies).

3) Identify IPE dynamics across five dimensions:

- *Economy:* How is value created, transferred, and captured (pricing power, ownership, finance, branding, intellectual property, logistics control)?
- *Politics & power:* What kinds of political and power dynamics are at play? Who makes/contests the rules? Who has bargaining power (states, lead firms, industry lobbies, unions, social movements)?
- *Social:* Labor regimes (wages, gendered/ migrant labor, social reproduction), community impacts, household livelihoods.
- *Culture:* How branding, consumer norms, and meanings (e.g., “sustainable,” “luxury,” “fast”) shape demand and legitimize practices.
- *Sustainability:* What kinds of environmental and socio-ecological dynamics are involved? You may consider resource extraction, emissions, energy use, waste, and the implications for climate justice. Who bears the environmental costs, and how are these costs distributed across different scales ? Are sustainability claims (e.g.,

“green,” “ethical,” “circular”) shaping practices—and if so, do they reflect genuine transformation or primarily serve as discursive tools for legitimacy?

4) Make scale explicit
Think about how these dynamics vary by scale and how scales. Here, you may trace scalar shifts such as how global standards reconfigure local practices or how global (platform) business models depend on fragmented local labor arrangements.

5) Try mapping the results of your analysis visually

Produce a one-page map, diagram, infographic—or a collage: You may think about how to use arrows for flows, icons/colors for actors, and various kinds of labels for the IPE dynamics that you have identified (e.g. politics, power, economy, social, culture). **Be creative!**

6) Write a short reflection (400–500 words) to accompany the map/diagram/infographic [teacher tip: adjust the lenght to the overall workload of the course]. You may address questions such as: Which political and power dynamics most structure this chain? Where is value captured? What social relations make the chain possible (e.g., gendered or migrant labor, care work, skill/knowledge)? How do cultural meanings (branding, consumer norms, “sustainability talk,” or “greenwashing”) shape economic outcomes? Does something change when you zoom out from the micro level to the transnational or global scale?

Estimated workload

- Researching the commodity and mapping stages: 3–4 hours
- Creating the visualization: 2–3 hours
- Writing the reflection: 2 hours
  Total: 7–9 hours

Teacher tip: A gallery Walk

- Display student work: Print or display students’ maps/diagrams/infographics/collages around the classroom (or upload them to a shared online board for virtual sessions).
- Set feedback rules: Give each student two sticky notes (or digital equivalents) and ask them to provide constructive feedback (not just “good job”) on at least two maps/diagrams/infographics/collages
- Allow students 20–30 minutes to circulate and review maps. [Adjust depending on the class size].
- Debrief as a group: After the walk, invite students to return to their own maps and read the feedback. Then facilitate a 15–20 minute discussion: What patterns did you notice in peer feedback? Did any comments make you rethink your analysis? How do these maps collectively illustrate IPE as a scale-crossing dynamic interplay of politics, power, economy, society, and culture?

2. Feminist Approaches to IPE/GPE

This section is about feminist International Political Economy. However, it does not even seek to provide an exhaustive elaboration on the wide variety of feminist IPE/GPE scholarship. Such a task would require a course of its own. Instead, the session focuses on the different conceptions of gender in the analysis of International Political Economy or Global Political Economy. You will learn to scrutinize how gender operates as a governing code across societies and political economies, shaping the ways in which things are valued. After this session, you will be equipped with conceptual tools enabling you to advance your own feminist analyses IPE/GPE. The section includes an introductory text and a five-part video lecture. After engaging with these materials, you can take a quiz to assess your understanding and complete a reflective assignment that invites you to analyze gender discourses in political economy.

Read

Feminist International Political Economy / Global Political Economy
By Tiina Vaittinen

This short text outlines how feminist approaches to International Political Economy (IPE) challenge mainstream frameworks by centering gendered power relations, intersectionality, and queer perspectives. It highlights the diversity of feminist theories and emphasizes that any area of IPE can—and should—be interrogated through feminist lenses.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=222064

> [If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the "Access as a guest" tab.]

Watch

Video 1: Introduction to feminist IPE (9 min) (by Tiina Vaittinen)
Video 2: What can feminist IPE study? (8 min) (by Tiina Vaittinen)
Video 3: What is gender? (14 min) (by Tiina Vaittinen)
Video 4: Intersectionality and queering IPE (13 min) (by Tiina Vaittinen)
Video 5: Feminist IPE conclusion (13 min) (by Tiina Vaittinen)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to feminist IPE. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=368591

Reflect

Reflective assignment 1:
Analyzing the "Invest in a Girl" discourse

Watch the video "The girl effect" available on YouTube. Put on a feminist IPE scholar's hat and consider the following: What types of gender discourses does the video mobilize? How is our understanding of gender utilized, and for what economic purposes? NB. A discourse is a structured way of thinking or talking about a particular topic. It encompasses the language, concepts, and ideas used to discuss and understand that topic within a specific context or community. Discourses shape how we perceive and interact with the world around us. You will learn more about this in the section on poststructuralist IPE.

Reflective assignment 2:
Unpaid care work

Read the resolution "Promoting care and support systems for social development" by the UN Economic and Social Council (5 June 2024). The resolution emphasizes the importance of building inclusive, sustainable care and support systems as a foundation for social development, gender equality, and poverty eradication. It calls on Member States to strengthen policies, invest in care infrastructure, and promote decent work for care providers while ensuring universal access to quality care services. Your task is to analyze the issue through the lens of feminist IPE/GPE. Here are some questions to guide your reflection: How does the article illustrate gendered power relations in development or the global economy more broadly? Which forms of labor are made visible or invisible in the dominant economic discourse? How might some of the concepts introduced at the video lecture (such as intersectionality or gender as an analytical category) help reflection on the issue? Are feminist IPE approaches able to offer insights that mainstream IPE overlooks?

Deepen: Writing a Literature Review

Students are provided with a curated list of academic articles related to feminist International Political Economy. They read these articles and write a literature review. The aim of this exercise is to strengthen students' ability to read and synthesize academic research, improve general academic writing skills, and develop familiarity with the literature review as a distinct academic genre.

Articles for the literature review exercise

Lauri, J., & Bäckström, H. (2018). Coffee by women: the ‘duty of ethical enjoyment.’ Cultural Studies, 33(5), 866–887. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2018.1510532

Partzsch, L. (2024). It’s a women’s thing? Narratives in ethical trade campaigns. Globalizations, 21(8), 1539–1555. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2024.2378549

Repo J. (2020) Feminist commodity activism: The new political economy of feminist protest. International Political Sociology 14(2): 215–232 https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olz033

Walters, R. (2021). Varieties of gender wash: towards a framework for critiquing corporate social responsibility in feminist IPE. Review of International Political Economy, 29(5), 1577–1600. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2021.1935295

Ylöstalo, H. & Lamberg, E. (2024). Commodified state feminism: The entanglements of feminist commodity activism and feminist politics in a Nordic welfare state, International Political Sociology, Volume 18, Issue 2, June 2024, olae005, https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olae005

Instructions for students

1) Read the five curated articles

You have been provided with five academic articles related to feminist IPE. Read them carefully, taking notes on: Main arguments, key concepts, and research questions; theoretical frameworks, methodologies (if relevant); key findings and contributions; possible points agreement, disagreement, or debate among the articles.

2) Write a literature review [adjust required word count to the workload of the course]

Your review should:

Provide an introduction that outlines the topic and the overall scope addressed collectively by the articles.

Synthesize: Group ideas by themes, debates, or concepts rather than reviewing each article in isolation.

Identify gaps or tensions: Highlight where the literature converges, diverges, or poses new questions.

Conclude with implications: What does this body of work tell us? Where might future research go?

Remember to follow academic conventions

- Use a consistent citation style (e.g., APA).
- Do not plagiarize and follow the AI protocol of your institution.!
  Use your own words to paraphrase what you learn from the articles. If you use a direct quotation, always enclose it in quotation marks and provide an appropriate citation
- Include a properly formatted reference list at the end, following a consistent academic citation style (e.g., APA, or another standard).

How a Literature Review Differs from an Essay

An essay typically argues a position or answers a specific question using evidence from sources. A literature review does not argue a position or seek to answer a research question. Instead, it maps, synthesizes, and evaluates existing research to show the state of knowledge on a topic. In a literature review, the focus is on relationships between studies (similarities, differences, debates), not just summarizing each article.

Tips for Writing a Strong Literature Review

- Avoid a “one-article-per-paragraph” structure; instead, compare and connect ideas across sources.
- Use signposting language (e.g., “While Author A argues…, Author B challenges this by…”).
- Use topic sentences
- Keep your voice analytical: focus on themes and debates, not just what each author says.

Estimated workload

Reading and note-taking: 15 hours
Writing and editing: 10–12 hours
Total: Approximately 25–27 hours

3. Postcolonial Approaches to International Political Economy

The section entitled "Postcolonial approaches to IPE" has two parts. Part 1 explores Latin American Dependency theory and world-systems theory--interrelated traditions that critique neoclassical economics and modernization theory by analyzing how global capitalism creates and sustains inequalities between core and peripheral regions. While emerging from distinct geopolitical contexts, both offer powerful tools for understanding uneven development, exploitative trade relations, and the structural hierarchies embedded in the global economic system. Part 2 focuses on Global South approaches to International Political Economy and introduces concepts such as racial capitalism and the coloniality of power to analyze global inequalities. Drawing on critical frameworks and thinkers from anti-colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial traditions, it challenges Eurocentric assumptions and calls for a rethinking of IPE through race, gender, and Southern epistemologies.

Read

Dependency and World Systems Theory
By Onni Ahvonen

This text presents Latin American Dependency theory and World-Systems theory as distinct yet deeply interconnected traditions. While noting that both often draw on similar analytical concepts, it highlights their internal diversity, competing tendencies, and overlapping intellectual tools. At the same time, the text underscores that these traditions emerged from different geo-social and historical contexts that shaped their respective orientations: Dependency theory developed amid the political and economic upheavals of mid-20th-century Latin America, whereas world-systems analysis took shape primarily within academic institutions in the global North. Despite these differing epistemic locations, both approaches have been central to challenging neoclassical and modernization theories in the study of international political economy, illuminating how global capitalism continues to generate and sustain structural inequalities between core and peripheral regions.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=222350

[If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the “Access as a guest” tab.]

Watch

Video 1: Latin American dependency theory: An introduction (13 min) (by Onni Ahvonen)

Video 2: World systems theory: An introduction (15 min) (by Onni Ahvonen)

Read

Global South Approaches to International Political Economy
By Onni Ahvonen

This text highlights how engaging with epistemologies rooted in the Global South challenges many of IPE's taken-for-granted assumptions. It discusses how critiques of Eurocentrism, methodological whiteness, and the coloniality of knowledge have opened new avenues for rethinking what counts as valid theory, method, and political imagination within and beyond IPE. The text introduces two conceptual frameworks: racial capitalism and the coloniality of power. They illuminate how global capitalism has been and continues to be structured through racialised and colonial hierarchies and how these perspectives provide tools for reorienting IPE toward a more historically grounded, decolonial understanding of international and global political economy.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=222352

> [If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the "Access as a guest" tab.]

Watch

Video 3: Global South approaches to IPE: An introduction (17 min) (by Onni Ahvonen)

Video 4: Coloniality of power and decolonizing IPE (8 min) (by Onni Ahvonen)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to dependency theory, world-systems theory, and Global South approaches to international political economy. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=368623

Reflect

Reflective assignment 1:
Africa’s relations with the European Union (EU)

The text "Africa's relations with the EU: A reset is possible" by Niall Duggan, Luis Mah, and Toni Haastrup highlights trade and development as the primary foundations for interactions between African countries, the continent's institutions, and the EU. Reflect on the article and the political-economic dynamics it describes, using the text and video lectures on dependency and world-systems theories as well as global south approaches for deeper insight.

Here are some guiding questions to guide your reflection:

- How do Africa–EU summits – as described in the article – reflect core–periphery dynamics in global political economy?
- Do trade agreements such as Economic Partnership Agreements reproduce dependency traps or unequal exchange? Motivate your answer.
- How do the concepts introduced at the video lectures help explain the persistence of hierarchies and/or core-periphery dynamics in Africa–EU relations or global economy more broadly?
- What role does African agency play in challenging or reinforcing these structures?
- Do the theoretical frameworks explored in this section remain useful for understanding Africa–EU relations today? Why or why not?

Remember to use some key concepts from the lectures in your reflection!

Reflective assignment 2:
Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Racial Capitalism

After watching the video "Geographies of racial capitalism with Ruth Wilson Gilmore" (or at least the first eight minutes), reflect on the following questions:

- How could the concept of racial capitalism help you further think about economic inequality on a global scale?
- How does this concept help us understand the racialized dimensions of global economic structures?

- How might Dependency and World-Systems theorists interpret the racial hierarchies embedded in global capitalism?
- Do these frameworks together provide a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary global capitalism than any single theory alone? Why or why not? Remember to motivate your answers.

Reflective assignment 3:
The World of Debt

Read the summary of the UNCTAD (UN trade and development agency) report "A world of debt" (2025). The report highlights structural inequalities in the global financial system. You are invited to further analyze the issue through the lenses of Dependency Theory and/or World-Systems Theory.

Here are some questions that you can use to to guide your reflection:

- How does the text illustrate core–periphery dynamics in the global financial system?
- Does the debt crisis reflect mechanisms of unequal exchange, dependency traps, or terms of trade deterioration? How would Dependency Theory critique the assumption that global financial markets are neutral and efficient?
- How might World-Systems Theory explain the persistence of debt crises as part of systemic cycles of accumulation?
- Do these theories (still) provide useful tools for understanding contemporary global capitalism? Why or why not?

Remember to use some key concepts (e.g., core–periphery, semi-periphery, unequal exchange, dependency, world-system) from the video lectures in your reflection.

Reflective assignment 4:
Situating Countries in the Core-Semiperiphery-Periphery Scheme

Using the core–periphery–semi-periphery framework from World-Systems Theory, situate five countries of your choice within this structure. Choose five countries, preferably from different regions (e.g., one from North America, one from Sub-Saharan Africa, one from East Asia, etc.). For each country, justify its position as core, semi-periphery, or periphery based on some reliable indicators that you can find (e.g., GDP per capita, role in global value chains, technological capacity, trade dependency). Reflect briefly on: What patterns do you notice? Are there any countries that don't fit neatly into one category? Why? You may also compare your classification with the historical position of these countries. What does this tell you about global economic change? Remember to cite your sources and make sure they are reliable.

4. Basics of Marxist International Political Economy

This section focuses on Marxist IPE. After studying these materials, you should have a solid understanding of the key principles of Marxist IPE. You will learn why the creation of surplus value is essential to capitalism and how it relates to the conflict between labor and capital. The learning materials also provide contemporary examples to demonstrate how insights from Marxist international political economy can be applied today. The goal is not to assume that ideas written 150 years ago are directly relevant today, but rather to explore their application. Additionally, you will learn how Karl Marx's ideas, through Marxist political economy, challenged the socio-economic frameworks of his time and understand the crux of his critique. You should also learn where to find additional information on the subject. This section includes an introductory text and a four-part video lecture, accompanied by a reading of a classical text by Karl Marx (Chapter 10 The Working Day from Capital, Vol. 1). After engaging with these materials, you can take a quiz to assess your understanding and complete a reflective assignment where you are invited to apply Marxist ideas to contemporary phenomena. These phenomena have been chosen to provide insights into how issues raised by Marxist political economy are still relevant in contemporary discussions.

Read

Basics of Marxist International Political Economy
By Mikko Poutanen

This text offers a short overview of Karl Marx's life and writings, noting his work across philosophy, history, economics and journalism, including The Communist Manifesto and Capital. It shows how Marx developed a long-term critique of classical political economists, arguing that their accounts did not fully explain how value was created or distributed under capitalism. It also shows how Marx located the creation of value in labour and theorised capitalist exploitation and historical change through the framework of historical materialism. Finally, it shows how Marx connected this critique to a project of transforming society through class struggle.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=368549

> [If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the "Access as a guest" tab.]

Watch (the links take you to YouTube videos)

Video 1: Basics of Marxist IPE: Key concepts of Marxist IPE (14 min) (by Mikko Poutanen)

Before proceeding to Video 2, students are asked to read Karl Marx: Capital, Volume I, Ch. 10: The Working Day

Video 2: Basics of Marxist IPE: The working day (9 min) (by Mikko Poutanen)

Video 3: Basics of Marxist IPE: Global value chains (10 min) (by Mikko Poutanen)

Video 4: Basics of Marxist IPE: Financial crisis (8 min) (by Mikko Poutanen)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to Marxist IPE. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=368262

Reflect

Reflective assignment 1:
Wages and Wall Street

Read the VOX article about American Airlines' decision to raise wages for pilots and flight attendants and the subsequent reaction from Wall Street and then reflect on the case with the help of the insights from the lecture on Marxist political economy. In your reflection, consider the following:

- How does the reaction of Wall Street analysts illustrate the priorities and contradictions of capitalist systems, according to Marxist theory?
- In what ways does Wall Street's response reveal the structural tension between capital and labor in a capitalist economy -- or does it?
- Does this case reflect Marx's idea of the antagonistic relationship between these classes? Can American Airlines' decision be interpreted as a challenge to capitalist norms, or is it better understood as a strategic move within the system?

- What does this case suggest about the sustainability of capitalism in its current form, and does it reveal any contradictions that Marx predicted? What are the strenghts and weaknesses of a Marxist analysis?

  Be sure to identify and apply at least two key concepts from the lecture on Marxist political economy—such as surplus value, class struggle, or capital-labor relations—to interpret the dynamics described in the article.

Reflective assignment 2:
Shortage of Cans

After watching the lectures on Marxist political economy and taking the quiz, read the Bloomberg article about Italy's tomato harvest being threatened by a shortage of steel for cans (pdf just in case). Then, consider how this case illustrates the vulnerabilities and contradictions of global capitalism from a Marxist perspective.

- How does the shortage of steel cans reveal the interdependence of global supply chains and the power relations embedded within them?
- In what ways does this situation reflect Marx's concepts of capital accumulation, the tendency toward crises, and the commodification of nature and labor?
- How might this case demonstrate the uneven development of capitalism across regions, and the role of global hierarchies in determining who bears the costs of disruption?

  Remember to apply concepts from the lecture—such as the circuit of capital, relations of production, or the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value—to interpret the dynamics described in the news article.

Deepen:
Academic article search and analysis

You will identify a scholarly article that applies a specific IPE approach, summarize its key arguments, and present your findings to the class.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Choose appropriate keywords and use academic databases (e.g., your university library's portal, such as Tampere University's Andor, or Google Scholar) to find a peer-reviewed article that applies or develops Marxist International Political Economy

a. Some examples of possible keywords:

Marxist political economy; Marx AND "international political economy"; "class struggle" AND "global economy"; "capital accumulation" AND globalization; "labor exploitation" AND "global value chains"; "surplus value" AND "international trade"; financialization AND "Marxist analysis"; imperialism AND "global capitalism"

AND/OR combine theoretical terms with issue areas, such as: Marxist analysis of climate change; Marxism AND "global supply chains"; Marx AND "migrant labor"; Marxist critique of neoliberalism; Marx AND "feminist political economy"

b. Marxist analyses are often published in academic journals such as *Review of International Political Economy, New Political Economy, Capital & Class, Historical Materialism, Review of Radical Political Economics, Global Political Economy, Globalizations, Competition & Change, Journal of Peasant Studies, Antipode*

2. Critically review the articles that your search yields. It may well be that the first article that you come up with is not a not a good, not to mention the best, one. Read the abstract and skim the content. Make sure the article has been peer-reviewed, and that it has not been published in a "predatory journal". You may check the quality of the publication, for example, from the Finnish Publication Forum portal JUFO.

3. Choose an article and read it carefully and with thought, taking notes on its main argument, key concepts, theoretical framework, research design (how the research was conducted), and findings.

4. Write a 500-word summary of the article [teacher tip: adjust the length of the contribution to the general workload of the course].

The summary should clearly highlight the article's main argument, explain its connection to the theoretical approach (ask yourself: what makes this a piece of Marxist political economy analysis?), and outline the key findings. Include a brief critical reflection on the article's strengths, limitations, or relevance. Follow an established academic citation style, such as APA.

5. **Polish your text** by checking spelling, grammar, and clarity. Once finalized, post your summary to the assigned discussion forum. [Teacher tip: Online Setting: Students post their summaries in the course discussion forum and are required to read and comment on at least two summaries posted by their peers. Encourage constructive feedback focusing on clarity, theoretical application, and critical insight. In-Class Setting: Students prepare a 5-minute presentation to share their article analysis with the class. Presentations should highlight the article's main argument, theoretical approach, and key findings, followed by a brief critical reflection and they should not exceed the allocated time. Or, you can combine both approaches in blended learning: summaries submitted online for peer review, followed by short in-class presentations to deepen discussion.]

Estimated workload

Finding and selecting an article: 1–1.5 hours
Reading and analyzing the article: 2–3 hours
Writing the summary: 2 hours
Preparing and rehearsing the presentation: 1–1.5 hours
Total: 6–8 hours

5. Realist IPE

This section gives an overview of realist IPE – its roots, its main theoretical assumptions and the sort of topics and research questions that realist IPE looks at. After you have studied this section, you will have learned about the mercantilist origins of realist international political economy and classical realist economic thought, with references to key thinkers such as Alexander Hamilton and Friedrich List during the industrial revolution. You will also gain insights into the historical trajectory of economic realism throughout the 20th century. Additionally, you will be familiar with the theoretical assumptions that economic realists make and the analytical framework of economic realism. Contemporary examples will illustrate how economic realist analysis operates and how it can help us comprehend international economic relations. Finally, you will explore 'geoeconomics' as an analytical framework that builds on earlier economic realist thought, recognizing it as the latest development in realist international political economy. This section includes an introductory text and a three-part video lecture. After engaging with these materials, you can take a quiz to assess your understanding and complete a reflective assignment to practice realist or geoeconomic IPE analysis.

Read

Realist International Political Economy
By Mikael Wigell

This text traces the origins of realism as the oldest tradition in International Political Economy (IPE), highlighting its roots in mercantilist thought and its long-standing emphasis on the relationship between economic activity, state power, and security. It argues that realism is experiencing a resurgence as governments increasingly view economic interdependence, trade, and industrial policy through a security lens. The text further claims that developments such as trade wars, sanctions, export controls, and investment screening are particularly well explained by realist IPE, which emphasizes states' efforts to enhance power, autonomy, and resilience in the international economy.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=387874

[If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the “Access as a guest” tab.]

Watch (the links take you to YouTube videos)

Video 1: Realist IPE: Intellectual roots of realism (20 min) (by Mikael Wigell)

Video 2: Realist IPE: Economic realist analysis (23 min) (by Mikael Wigell)

Video 3: Realist IPE: Geoeconomics (14 min) (by Mikael Wigell)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to Realist IPE. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=413357

Reflective assignment 1:
Analysing Europe's Battery Industry

The article "Recharge or regret" discusses the challenges that the European Union's faces in its ambition to lead in green technology and battery production faces as well as the broader structural weaknesses in Europe's battery supply chain. These issues intersect with global geoeconomic competition, particularly with China's dominance and the U.S.'s strategic decoupling efforts. You are invited to read the article and analyse the issue through the lenses of economic realism. Here are some questions to guide your analysis: How does the text illustrate economic realist or geoeconomic considerations? How would geoeconomists critique Europe's current battery strategy? (How) Do the dynamics described in the article illustrate the key dynamics in the geoeconomic landscape, as described in the lecture (weaponization of interdependencies, securitization and protectionism, "balkanization" of global economy)? Does economic realism provide useful tools for understanding the dynamism described in the article? What are its limits? Remember to use key concepts from the lecture (e.g., weaponization, protectionism, (neo)mercantilism, binding strategies) in your reflection.

Reflective assignment 2:
Asia-Pacific and Geoeconomics

The article "Evolving trade diplomacy in Asia amid US tariffs" discusses Asia-Pacific responses to U.S. tariffs focusing on how countries in the region are recalibrating their trade strategies in light of renewed U.S. protectionism. These dynamics intersect with broader geoeconomic trends. You are invited to read the article and analyze the issue through the lens of economic realism and geoeconomics. Here are some questions to guide your reflection: How does the text illustrate economic realist or geoeconomic considerations in the behavior of states like Vietnam, Japan, China, and India? How would geoeconomists interpret the strategies adopted by these countries in response to U.S. tariffs? Do the dynamics described in the article reflect key geoeconomic trends discussed in the lecture, such as the weaponization of interdependencies, protectionism, and the "balkanization" of the global economy? In what ways does geoeconomics differ from traditional geopolitics in terms of tools, logic, and implications for international power politics? Or does it?

6. Poststructuralist IPE

This section is about poststructuralist International Political Economy (IPE). After having studied these materials you will understand how poststructuralist IPE challenges traditional, technocratic views of the economy emphasizing the inherent "messiness" and "turbulence" of political economy. You will grasp how, in poststructuralist IPE, elements excluded from any given economic order are seen to continue to haunt it, demanding recognition and voice. You will learn that poststructuralism, rooted in the continental philosophical tradition, is skeptical of fixed meanings in language and discourse and how it has influence other perspectives to IPE such as postcolonial studies and feminist IPE. This section includes an introductory text and a four-part video lecture. After engaging with these materials, you can take a quiz to assess your understanding and complete a reflective assignment to practice poststructuralist IPE analysis.

Read

Poststructuralist International Political Economy
By Tiina Vaittinen

This text presents poststructuralism as an approach that is suspicious of fixed meanings in language and discourse and emphasizes the centrality of meaning-making to the study of IPE. It argues that economic orders become meaningful by marginalizing, excluding, or silencing alternative economic possibilities. The text introduces deconstruction as a practice of close reading that attends to a text's margins and silences in order to uncover what has been written out and rendered invisible. It stresses that deconstruction is not about destruction but about rearticulating dominant binaries in ways that allow previously excluded perspectives, such as reproductive labour and relations of care, to be recognized. Finally, the text shows how poststructuralist political economy challenges technocratic understandings of the economy by emphasizing that excluded and silenced others continually unsettle and contest established economic orders.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=222347

[If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the "Access as a guest" tab.]

Watch (the links take you to YouTube videos)

Video 1: Poststructuralist IPE: Poststructuralism and the political (6 min)

Video 2: Poststructuralist IPE: Key concepts (13 min)

Video 3: Poststructuralist IPE: Deconstruction (13 min)

Video 4: Poststructuralist IPE: Diverse economies (14 min)

Optional video: Christopher Bolton: Animating Poststructuralism (9 min)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to poststructuralist IPE. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:

https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=368873

Reflective assignment 1:
Identifying discourses in a text

The text "Is the green deal on track" published by *The Parliament* discusses the challenges and pressures facing the European Union's Green Deal, including economic trade-offs, political opposition, and the impact of extreme weather events. It provides an overview of the current state of the Green Deal and the various struggles surrounding it. In this reflective assignment, you are invited to pay attention to what kinds of discourses different stakeholders mobilize in relation to the Green Deal, as narrated by the article. Consider how the debates and struggles around the EU Green Deal illustrate the poststructuralist emphasis on discourse, power, and the contingency of economic and environmental governance. How do competing articulations—such as those of climate urgency, economic competitiveness, and farmers' rights—shape what is considered possible or legitimate policy? In what ways does the Green Deal function as a discursive project that seeks to "fix" meaning around sustainability, and how is this contested by actors invoking alternative logics (e.g., "ideological madness," "industrial decline," or "just transition")? How does the article reveal the role of language in constructing identities (e.g., "farmers," "industry," "environmentalists") and in framing the costs and benefits of climate action? Finally, reflect on how poststructuralist political economy helps us understand the Green Deal not as a neutral technical plan, but as a site of ongoing struggle over meaning, legitimacy, and authority. Remember to use concepts from the lectures in your reflection.

Reflective assignment 2:
Gender equality in garment industry supply chains

Read the article “How to achieve gender equality in global garment supply chains” by International Labour Organization (ILO. The article explores gender inequality in global garment supply chains, highlighting how women workers—despite gaining access to formal employment—face systemic discrimination, wage gaps, and precarious working conditions. It also discusses the structural and cultural factors that sustain these inequalities and calls for more inclusive policies and practices. Read the article and reflect on it through the lens of poststructuralist political economy and deconstruction. These questions may help your reflection: What **binary oppositions** structure the discourse of global supply chains in the article? Which voices, roles, or forms of labor are **marginalized** or **written out** of the narrative? How might a deconstructive reading reconfigure these binaries to reveal the dependence of the dominant term (e.g., “productive labor”) on its silenced counterpart (e.g., “reproductive labor”)? What ethical or political implications arise from recognizing these exclusions in global economic discourse?

7. Post-Marxist IPE

This section discusses post-Marxism, which emerged in the 20th century to reinterpret Marxist theory in light of the Soviet Union’s trajectory and the failure of communist revolutions in Europe. Post-Marxism is conceptually diverse, incorporating structuralist, post-structuralist, and cultural approaches, while retaining core concerns about class, exploitation, and capitalist crises. Influential thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe emphasized concepts like ideology and hegemony, and post-Marxism continues to inform critiques of globalization, welfare states, and persistent capitalist instability. This section includes an introductory text and a three-part video lecture. After engaging with these materials, you can take a quiz to assess your understanding and complete a reflective assignment to practice post-Marxist IPE analysis.

Read

Post-Marxist International Political Economy
By Mikko Poutanen

This text presents post-Marxism as a diverse tradition that emerged in response to the political developments and perceived shortcomings of orthodox Marxism in the twentieth century. The text highlights the conceptual diversity of post-Marxism, including its engagement with questions of ideology, hegemony, culture, discourse, and colonialism, as well as its influence on feminist, postcolonial, and critical social theories. Finally, it shows how post-Marxist approaches remain relevant for understanding contemporary global and international political economy.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=387969

> [If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the “Access as a guest” tab.]

Watch (the links take you to YouTube videos)

Video 1: Post-Marxist IPE: From Marxist to post-Marxist IPE (19 min) (by Mikko Poutanen)

Video 2: Post-Marxist IPE: The neoliberal university (14 min) (by Mikko Poutanen)

Video 3: Post-Marxist IPE: The era of surveillance capitalism (15 min) (by Mikko Poutanen)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to postmarxist IPE. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=407789

Reflective assignment 1:
The political economy of fast fashion

After reviewing the lecture on post-Marxist political economy and taking the quiz, read the artile “The Dark Side of the Fast Fashion Industry” by Odalís Zapata and watch the trailer “The True Cost”. Then prepare a reflection on the political economy of the fast fashion industry. The following questions may guide your analysis: How do concepts such as global value chains or globalization help us understand the dynamics described in the text? Consider how fast fashion relies on global production networks and the outsourcing of labor to low-wage economies. How does this structure reflect power relations between the Global North and the Global South? In what ways does “capitalism as common sense” or the industry’s dependence on consumer culture and rapidly changing trends illustrate the role of discourse in shaping economic practices and identities? Finally, reflect on whether and how post-Marxist approaches offer meaningful strategies for addressing the ethical and ecological challenges posed by fast fashion in a globalized economy. Be sure to incorporate key concepts from the lectures in your analysis.

Reflective assignment 2:
Social democracy's breaking point

After watching the videos and completing the quiz on post-Marxist IPE, read Peter Frase's article "Social Democracy's Breaking Point" in *Jacobin*. Then, prepare a reflection addressing the following: From a post-Marxist perspective, why and how has the social-democratic class compromise become increasingly unsustainable in contemporary capitalism? Consider the historical conditions that enabled this compromise and the structural changes—such as globalization, financialization, and technological transformation—that have undermined it. Post-Marxist theory often emphasizes the role of popular power and democratic governance over economic and technological processes. From this perspective, how might a lack of democratic efficacy contribute to declining political participation? Given the waning levels of voter turnout and party membership in many democracies, is this interpretation convincing? Finally, reflect on whether post-Marxist approaches offer viable strategies for re-democratizing economic governance in today's globalized economy. Remember to incorporate key concepts from the video lectures in your analysis.

8. Classical Liberalism in IPE

This section is about classical liberalism in IPE. Liberal political economy generally advocates a market economy that promotes individual enterprise. The state's role is to support, not hinder, the free interplay of market forces. This section introduces you to classical liberal thinkers like John Locke, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo whose work laid the foundations of liberal IPE by emphasizing property rights, productive labor, and the benefits of free trade through specialization and comparative advantage. Since the 19th century, liberalism rose to ideological pre-eminence, supported by globalization and Western hegemony, and became central to the post-World War II order shaped by the United States. Although (neo)liberal ideas dominated global economic policy throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries, recent crises have cast doubt on this orthodoxy, as reflected in the growing prominence of geoeconomic approaches discussed elsewhere in the course. This section includes an introductory text and a four-part video lecture. After engaging with these materials, you can take a quiz to assess your understanding and complete a reflective assignment to practice classical liberal IPE analysis.

Read

Classical liberalism
By Paula Rauhala

This text presents liberalism as a foundational tradition in International Political Economy (IPE) that emphasizes individual freedom, free markets, and limited government intervention. It traces the development of liberal thought through key thinkers such as John Locke, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo, highlighting their arguments that wealth is created through labour, productive investment, and market exchange rather than state control or mercantilist policies. The text discusses liberalism as a perspective that views open markets, competition, and international free trade as key drivers of economic prosperity and growth, while emphasizing the mutual benefits of economic specialization and trade between states.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=222349

> [If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the "Access as a guest" tab.]

Watch (the links take you to YouTube videos)

Video 1: Classical Liberalism and John Locke (6 min) (by Paula Rauhala)

Video 2: The physiocrats and Francois Quesnay (5 min) (by Paula Rauhala)

Video 3: Adam Smith and IPE (12 min) (by Paula Rauhala)

Video 4: David Ricardo (9 min) (by Paula Rauhala)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to classical liberalism in IPE. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=412364

Reflect

Reflective assignment 1:
China-US trade war

Read the BBC article "Five cards China holds in a trade war with the US" and reflect the issue through the lens of classical liberal international political economy. Here are some questions to guide your reflection: How do the trade war and retaliatory tariffs challenge classical liberal principles such as free trade, comparative advantage, and the benefits of specialization? How might classical liberal thinkers interpret the actions of the U.S. and China in this trade conflict? Does case represented in the article suggest that classical liberal ideas are either insufficient or outdated for explaining or resolving contemporary trade disputes, or what is their strength? Remember to use classical liberal concepts that you learned from the video lecture (e.g., invisible hand, absolute / comparative advantage, feudalism, etc.) in your reflection.

Reflective assignment 2:
Tech supremacy and sovereignty

Read the *Financial Times* article "Can Europe break free of American tech supremacy?" (available for Finnish university students through institutional login). Reflect on the issue of tech supremacy and tech sovereignty through the lens of classical liberal IPE. Here are some questions to guide your reflection: How does the debate over tech supremacy, tech regulation, and digital sovereignty relate to classical liberal principles such as free markets, competition, and limited government? Would Locke, Smith, or Ricardo support Europe's push for greater autonomy from U.S. tech giants? Why or why not? Can you spot any tensions between classical liberal ideals and contemporary economic realities (terms such as monopoly may be useful here). To what extent are classical liberal IPE concepts and ideas suitable to address the challenges posed by global tech? Remember to use classical liberal concepts that you learned from the video lecture (e.g., invisible hand, absolute / comparative advantage, feudalism, etc.) in your reflection.

9. Postcapitalist IPE

This section focuses on postcapitalist International Political Economy. After studying these materials, you will understand the key principles of approaching international political economy from a postcapitalist perspective. You will learn how postcapitalist scholarship challenges capitalocentric discourses of the economy. These are discourses which prioritize capitalist practices, sites, and processes while ignoring others. You will familiarize yourself with and practice the approach of 'reading for difference', an alternative to capitalocentric prioritizations. This approach makes the heterogeneity of all practices that sustain people's livelihoods more visible and, thus, more real. Additionally, since the goal of economic representations is to change their subject matter—to perform economies rather than simply represent them—you will also learn about how reading for difference leads to another methodological building block of postcapitalist approaches called community economy. This section includes an introductory text and a five-part video lecture. After engaging with these materials, you can take a quiz to assess your understanding and complete a reflective assignment to practice postcapitalist IPE analysis.

Read

Postcapitalist International Political Economy
By Tuomo Alhojärvi

This text presents postcapitalist IPE as an approach that, drawing on the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham, challenges a variety of capitalocentric understandings of the economy, i.e. approaches that treat capitalism as the dominant economic system. It discusses how postcapitalist IPE highlights the importance of diverse economic practices and introduces "reading for difference" as an alternative to capitalocentric ways of understanding the economy. The text further discusses postcapitalist politics as an approach that begins in the present by recognizing and strengthening existing economic alternatives that can support more sustainable, just, and caring ways of living.

The text can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/page/view.php?id=222353

> [If you prefer not to register on the DigiCampus platform, you can also access the text by clicking the "Access as a guest" tab.]

Watch (the links take you to YouTube videos)

Video 1: Gibson-Graham and postcapitalism (5 min) (by Tuomo Alhojärvi)

Video 2: From capitalism to capitalocentrism (6 min) (by Tuomo Alhojärvi)

Video 3: Diverse Economies (17 min) (by Tuomo Alhojärvi)

Video 4: Community economies (7 min) (by Tuomo Alhojärvi)

Video 5: Commons and commoning? (16 min) (by Tuomo Alhojärvi)

Assess

This quiz contains questions related to postcapitalist approaches to IPE. It can be completed independently by students to assess their learning or used, for example, in flipped-learning settings to stimulate discussion.

The quiz can be accessed through this link:
https://digicampus.fi/mod/quiz/view.php?id=369033

Reflect

Reflective assignment 1:
What counts as 'economy'?

Think about what counts as 'economy' in usual definitions of IPE. Whose economies are deemed worthy of academic interest or policy intervention? Whose work, savings, investments, spaces, resources are treated as legitimate? Who is missing and omitted – and how is this structured in gendered, racialized, ethicized, and/or ability-based terms so that prioritizations of certain economies as the cost of others have differential effects on different people?

Reflective assignment 2:
Reading for difference

Take an economic topic or case of your choice – perhaps a topic you've encountered in IPE. Try to read it for difference, thinking not only about what is missing from the (capitalocentric) picture but also how what is prioritized is actually intertwined and interdependent with other economies. How could you represent the heterogeneous landscape of livelihoods that is arguably always more complex and more particular to contextual matters than any representation can capture?

Reflective assignment 3:
What do you want IPE to work for?

What is it that you want IPE to work for? If you're interested in critically understanding and analysing the present, then how could that critical commitment also be used to explore alternative possibilities? Can this methodological combination of critique of capitalocentrism, reading for difference and collective negotiation offer pathways ahead for your specific IPE concerns?