**CONSTRUCTIVISM AND ITS CRITICS**

*WORKSHOP AGENDA*

**January 9-10, 2015**

*Social Sciences Building, Room B40 | University of Southern California*

Organized by Mariano Bertucci (Tulane), Jarrod Hayes (Georgia Tech), Patrick James (USC)

Sponsored by USC Center for International Studies

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**Thursday, January 8**

6:00pm-8:00pm

*Dinner* (USC Mckay’s restaurant)

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**Friday, January 9**

9:00am - 10:00am

*Continental Breakfast*

10:00-10:30am

*Welcome and Overview*

Mariano Bertucci, Tulane University
Jarrod Hayes, Georgia Tech University
Patrick James, USC

*Introductory Remarks*

Nicholas Onuf, Florida International University

10:30am - 12:00pm

*Session 1*

Discussant: Doug Becker, USC
STACIE GODDARD, Wellesley College
RONALD KREBS, University of Minnesota
“Constructivism and the Logic of Legitimation”
DAVID BLAGDEN, University of Cambridge
“Realism, Uncertainty, and the Pervasive Security Dilemma: Identity and the False Promise of Transformed International Relations”

12:00pm-2:00pm

*Lunch* (catered, SOS courtyard)

2:00pm-3:30pm

*Session 2*

Discussant: Brian Rathbun, USC
JENNIFER RAMOS, Loyola Marymount University
“Integrating Psychological Insights Into Constructivist Research”
TED HOPP, National University of Singapore
“The False Promise of Liberal Constructivism: Too Much Agency and Change”

3:30pm-3:45pm

*Coffee Break*

3:45pm-5:00pm

*Session 3*

Discussant: Carol Atkinson, USC
DAVID McCOURT, University of California, Davis
“The Practice-Relational Turn and the Future of Constructivism”
AUDIE KLOTZ, Syracuse University
“The Power of Prejudice: Race and Gender Gaps in Constructivist International Relations Scholarship”

5:00pm-6:00pm

*Session 4 -- Brainstorming Session*

6:30pm

*Dinner* (USC University Club restaurant)

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**Saturday, January 10**

8:00am - 9:00am

*Continental Breakfast*

9:00-10:30am

*Session 5*

Discussant: Brent Steele, University of Utah
JORDAN BRANCH, Brown University
“Technology and Constructivism: Interrogating the Material-Ideational Divide”
TOM JAMIESON, University of Southern California
“Securitization Theory: Towards a Replicable Framework for Analysis”

10:30am - 10:45am

*Coffee Break*

10:45am - 12:15pm

*Session 6*

Discussant: Tyler Curley, USC
BRENT STEELE, University of Utah
“Constructivism, Contingency and Modernity”
LAURA SJOBERG, University of Florida
“If Its Everything, Its Nothing: An Outsider’s Argument for Specificity in Constructivisms”

12:15pm-2:00pm

*Lunch* (catered, SOS courtyard)

2:00pm-3:00pm

*Session 7*

Discussant: Jeremie Cornut, University of Waterloo
Mariano Bertucci, Tulane University
Jarrod Hayes, Georgia Tech University
Patrick James, USC
“Debating the Direction of Constructivist Research in International Relations: An Analysis of Leading Journals”

3:00pm-3:15pm

*Coffee Break*

3:15pm-4:30pm

*Brainstorming Session* (refreshments served, including wine and beer)
MARIANO BERTUCCI, Tulane University  
JARROD HAYES, Georgia Tech University  
PATRICK JAMES, University of Southern California  

"Debating the Direction of Constructivist Research in International Relations: An Analysis of Leading Journals"  
This article draws on a new dataset to depict the scope, objectives, and methods of Constructivist research in the field of International Relations (IR) over the past quarter-century. The key findings are that IR Constructivism focuses XXXX, is XXXX and relies on XXXX methods. In light of this assessment, the article emphasizes the need to pay more attention to issues of XXXX.

http://stonecenter.tulane.edu/articles/detail/1631/Mariano-Bertucci  
http://www.inta.gatech.edu/people/faculty/jarrod-hayes  
https://dornsife.usc.edu/cf/faculty-and-staff/faculty.cfm?pid=1008263

DAVID BLAGDEN, University of Cambridge  
"Realism, Uncertainty, and the Pervasive Security Dilemma: Identity and the False Promise of Transformed International Relations"  
Identity matters in international politics. The pursuit of status and the desire to play a particular international-social role can condition states’ foreign and defence policy choices. Culture impacts the way that states interpret security threats, formulate strategy, and – ultimately – fight. Nationalism causes political communities to be constituted as nation-states. Yet despite a recognition of such a role for identity, that does not mean that it offers the promise of a fundamental transformation of international relations – particularly great power relations – away from the competition and periodic conflict predicted by realism. While social role may be an interest of states, it is necessarily subordinate to – rather than constitutive of – survival, security, and prosperity: all of which have a material base. Since states cannot be sure of other states’ intentions, moreover – particularly their future intentions – securing these material interests requires guarding against the threat potentially posed by others, and thus threatening them back.

http://www.polis.cam.ac.uk/Staff_and_Students/dr-david-blagden

JORDAN BRANCH, Brown University  
"Technology and Constructivism: Interrogating the Material-Ideational Divide"  
Constructivism in International Relations has provided a broad array of theoretical and empirical insights into international politics. One theoretical issue that has received particular attention is the relation between ideas and material factors: constructivism initially distinguished itself from other approaches by privileging the ideational, but more recently constructivist scholars have presented a variety of theorizations of the material-ideational intersection. This paper considers
that intersection by focusing on one empirical domain: technology and technological change. Technologies, being themselves simultaneously material and ideational (or social), provide a useful lens for thinking about what constructivism has contributed—and can continue to contribute. This paper thus reviews existing constructivist theories that relate to technology; considers the broader array of arguments and theoretical tools offered by other fields, such as Science and Technology Studies (STS); and highlights theoretical issues and empirical topics where constructivist approaches could be fruitfully applied.

https://vivo.brown.edu/display/jnbranch

TED HOPF, National University of Singapore
"The False Promise of Liberal Constructivism: Too Much Agency and Change"

Constructivist IR theory (CIRT) has made huge contributions in moving the field of IR forward over the last 25 years. Its intersubjectivist ontology has challenged successfully the subjectivist and objectivist alternatives. Making identity the source of interests, rather than a priori assignment and assumptions, has opened up inquiry into the constitution of selves, others, and their social relationships. Foregrounding discursive structures as the sources of these identities shifts our gaze to social reproduction, practices, sayings and doings, rather than individual preferences or material calculations. But it has also left some issues on the table. First, it is far too agential, meaning too much agency is assumed given the social theory upon which CIRT rests. Second, as a consequence of too much agency, there is too much expectation for change, and too much attention to reflective sources of change rather than practical and post-structural ones. Third, while rightly rejecting methodological individualism and a subjectivist ontology, CIRT has wrongly written the findings of social, cognitive, and neurocognitive psychology out of the research program. This has robbed CIRT of the nano/microfoundations that make social constructivism such a compelling approach. Psychology was not ignored by social theorists in the past—from William James to Pierre Bourdieu—and shouldn’t be ignored now. Beyond convincing empirical evidence for why social constructivism is an apt description of how the world works, and how social order is maintained, psychology offers a deep reserve of observable hypotheses about the causal mechanisms that work to produce order....and change in the social world.

http://profile.nus.edu.sg/fass/polhtg/

STACIE GODDARD, Wellesley College
RONALD KREBS, University of Minnesota
“Constructivism and the Logic of Legitimation”

Over the last decade, scholars of international relations have increasingly recognized that legitimacy is central to the theory and practice of world politics. Not surprisingly, constructivists, sensitive to the social fabric of international life, have taken the lead, arguing that global rules and norms inform how states define their interests and play the game of international politics. Here we suggest that constructivists should shift their focus away from the norms and rules that determine what is legitimate action, and focus instead on processes of legitimation—how it is actors publicly justify their actions—as a critical determinant of state behavior and international outcomes. This paper explains why legitimation should be central to constructivist theorizing, under what conditions legitimation matters, and proposes future avenues of research on legitimation and world politics.

http://www.wellesley.edu/politicalscience/facstaff/goddard
http://www.polisci.umn.edu/people/profile.php?UID=rkrebs
TOM JAMIESON, University of Southern California
"Securitization Theory: Towards a Replicable Framework for Analysis"
Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998) triggered a flurry of scholarship into the securitization of political events, which has added much to the understanding of how potential threats transform into security issues. However, much of this work suffers from two crucial limitations. First, much of this scholarship has erroneously assumed that the articulation of the threat in a speech act constitutes securitization, when the criteria proposed by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde were much more stringent. Second, a lack of methodological guidance has led to a multiplicity of definitions and methods, preventing the establishment of a coherent research program in securitization. Accordingly, while it has proved to be a useful analytical concept, the promise of securitization theory has not yet been fulfilled. This paper aims to address this deficit through the introduction of a standardized framework that enables replicable research into the process of securitization.
https://dornsife.usc.edu/poir/students/

AUDIE KLOTZ, Syracuse University
"The Power of Prejudice: Race and Gender Gaps in Constructivist International Relations Scholarship"
Fifteen years ago, Birgit Locher and Elisabeth Prügl (2001) diagnosed a serious gender gap in constructivist international relations, which supplemented Tickner’s (1992) trenchant critiques of more mainstream paradigms. Despite a smattering of superb publications that have straddled this divide, the gap remains. A similar assessment holds for race in constructivist analyses. For example, my work on anti-apartheid activism has been folded into the human rights literature and therefore labeled liberal constructivism. Yet such packaging overlooks critical issues of race and racism. My paper will explore these gaps, and suggest future directions, in two core areas of constructivist research: norm diffusion and state identity.
https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/psc/Klotz,.Audie/

DAVID McCOURT, University of California, Davis
"The Practice-Relational Turn and the Future of Constructivism"
The recent turns to practice(s) and relations in IR have been couched as transcending the isms as the typical way of dividing up the field. Yet the practice-relational turn is a movement springing from within constructivism, not beyond it. This paper explores this state of things, and why it matters. It shows that the appeal of practice(s) and relations stems from frustration with mainstream constructivism. Constructivism became a source of hypotheses on the role of norms, identity in culture in world politics, rather than a space for importing new insights highlighting the socially and historically contextual nature of international politics. This downgraded constructivism’s unique perspective, rendering it a weakened counterpoint to rationalism. From this discussion emerges a more powerful vision of constructivism, one crucially not constrained conceptually or methodologically, and with a clearer stance on the social scientific enterprise.
http://sociology.ucdavis.edu/people/dmccourt

NICHOLAS ONUF, Florida International University
Conference Introductory Remarks
http://pir.fiu.edu/people/faculty-emeritus/nicholas-onuf/
JENNIFER RAMOS, Loyola Marymount University
“Integrating Psychological Insights into Constructivist Research”
Constructivism from within and without, by adherents and by critics, has spanned at least 25 years of debate in international relations. At the heart of it, constructivism is many things to many people. From “moderate” constructivists seeking a middle ground to “radical” post-modern constructivists, constructivism remains largely an approach to understanding international phenomena rather than a particular theory. Across the multiple strands of constructivism, the mechanisms for change are underdeveloped. In light of this, one of the most promising directions to further our understanding for how the socio-political world works is found in the intersection of psychology and constructivism. In this chapter, I explore the value of psychology for constructivist research within the context of international security. Psychological insights such as cognitive dissonance and the role of emotions (e.g. fear and anger) have much to offer with regard to understanding how actions themselves influence the extent to which actors’ beliefs and the normative structure within which they act evolves.
http://bellarmine.lmu.edu/politicalscience/meetthefaculty/jenniferramos/

LAURA SJOBERG, University of Florida
“If Its Everything, Its Nothing: An Outsider’s Argument for Specificity in Constructivisms”
While I am interested both intellectually and normatively in many of the intents and promises of constructivisms in IR, I nonetheless largely find myself steering clear of both the label ‘constructivist’ and research programs that self-identify as a part of ‘constructivist IR.’ This is because I think there are a number of parts of constructivisms in IR that feel muddled, underspecified, and underdeveloped, even thirty years later. My short paper will focus on three: understandings of the notion of ‘social construction,’ the tendency to associate constructivisms with progressive politics, and the tendency to apply overbroad notions of the social and of norms to global politics. In engaging all three of these problems, I make the argument that the politics of having a constructivism in IR is a positive one, but that IR constructivisms often destroy their potential contributions by attempting to ‘have it all.’
http://polisci.ufl.edu/laura-sjoberg/

BRENT STEELE, University of Utah
“Constructivism, Contingency and Modernity”
This paper (co-authored with Oliver Kessler, University of Erfurt) brings together two aspects of constructivism that have lost momentum over the last years: contingency and modernity. The paper starts with a discussion of the use of Modernity in constructivism (with Onuf being the most explicit scholar here). The problem of modernity is defined in terms of a distinction of res extensa and res cogitans, the discovery of the subject as gravity center of our political vocabulary. This translated in IR into the project of the nation state onto which modern concepts of autonomy and rationality were projected. The paper also focuses on different uses of, or levels of emphasis upon, contingency in constructivism. This focus helps to reveal some of the affinity of more recent constructivist works with classical realism - disclosed not only by a common interest in power, but also contingency as a problem of modernity.
http://poli-sci.utah.edu/faculty.php