Syllabus Information: Year 1: The Taught Element

Course Requirements

The M.St. takes place over two years running from September of year one to July of year two. During the first year, all students will be required to undertake a core course in International Relations Theory and Security and also choose six from a range of option modules which are likely to include the following. The final list will be circulated to successful applicants prior to the commencement of the course.

The options are likely to include:

- The Cold War
- International Relations Southern Asia
- International Relations of the Modern Middle East
- Issues in International Law
- International Relations of Africa
- The geopolitics of Energy Security
- International Political Economy
- Democratisation
- International Migration and Development
- China in the International System
- European Integration
- US Presidents and Foreign Policy

The taught elements of the syllabus are offered during the first year and are assessed by a written examination of the core course in June and assessed essays (or examination) for each option module which are submitted after the residential session in which the module is taught. Sessions will be offered in essay writing and examination techniques and an opportunity given to write a practice essay and to write essays under examination conditions.

Students completing the first year successfully will then spend their second year researching and writing a 25,000 word dissertation on a subject of their choice, with the approval of the Degree Committee. Dissertation work will be individually supervised and will be assessed by two examiners.

A candidate must pass both the Year 1 subject examinations and the Year 2 dissertation examination in order to be awarded the M.St. In some circumstances, exceptional performance in one component may compensate for marginal failure in the other.

The dissertation is a very substantial element of the M.St., and the examination process and criteria for assessment of the dissertation are rather more stringent than on many Master’s programmes. In particular, there is a requirement for originality, which must be met either by research using primary sources (documents, interviews, official publications or the like) or else by developing an original approach to an existing debate or literature. This all supports the general aim of the dissertation, which is to develop advanced skills of research and expression. It is important to begin thinking about the dissertation during year one and to start researching it as soon as possible.

By the end of the course participants will have developed a critical view the contribution made by International Relations as a whole and of some of its related disciplines, to social
science more broadly conceived and to practice. They will have become familiar with some of the main themes of contemporary analysis in their respective fields of study. In addition, they will have tested their ability to produce a piece of advanced scholarship in conformity with the scientific method, research techniques, standards of argument and accepted style of presentation of an academic discipline.