

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES)

REALISM

2nd lesson

EFOP-3.6.2-16-2017-00007

SZÉCHENYI 



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LEARNING GUIDE

- Lesson length: **7** slides
- Content:
 - About Realism
 - Origins
 - Essential Realism



- Recommended minimum duration for review: 30 minutes
- Suggested minimum time for learning: 2 hours
- The learning of the curriculum is aided by a course book and self-assessment questions.
- Recommended minimum duration of this full lesson: 2 hours 10 minutes

ABOUT REALISM



- Realism has been the dominant theory of world politics since the beginning of academic International Relations.
- It has often been referred to as a 'timeless wisdom'
- Outside of the academy, Realism has a much longer history.

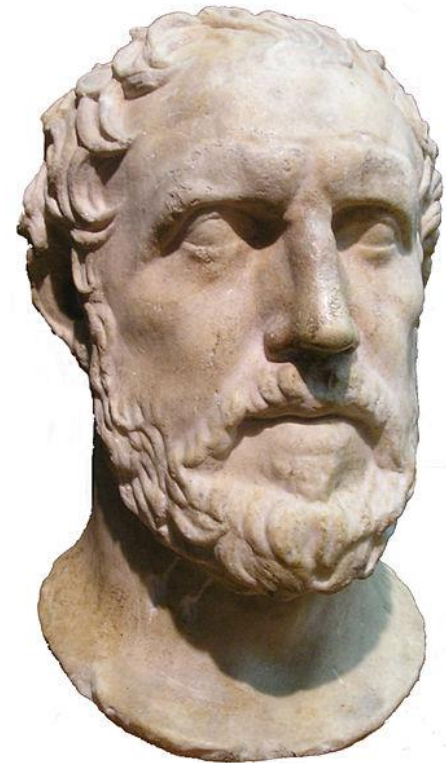
ABOUT REALISM



- Scepticism about the capacity of human reason to deliver moral progress resonates through the work of classical political theorists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau.
- So this kind of 'realism' can be a much broader interpretation than the kind of realism used in IR.
- It's not about 'being real' as an ontological position in opposition to those things or people that are 'unreal'.

ORIGINS

- In 'The Melian Dialogue', one of the episodes of The Peloponnesian War, Thucydides uses the words of the Athenians to highlight the realist view of a number of key concepts such as self-interest, alliances, balance of power, capabilities, and insecurity. The people of Melos respond in Idealist verse, appealing to justice, fairness, luck, the gods, and in the final instance, to common interests.



ESSENTIAL REALISM

- The question whether it is legitimate to speak of a coherent tradition of political realism touches upon an important debate conducted by historians of ideas.
- Most classical realists did not consider themselves to be adherents of a particular tradition, for this reason Realism, like all other traditions, is something of an invention.

ESSENTIAL REALISM

- **Statism** is the centrepiece of Realism. This involves two claims.
 - First, for the theorist, the state is the pre-eminent actor and all other actors in world politics are of lesser significance.
 - Second, state ‘sovereignty’ signifies the existence of an independent political community, one which has juridical authority over its territory.

ESSENTIAL REALISM

- **Survival:** The primary objective of all states is survival; this is the supreme national interest to which all political leaders must adhere.
- *All other goals such as economic prosperity are secondary (or 'low politics').*
- In order to preserve the security of their state, leaders must adopt an ethical code which judges actions according to the outcome rather than in terms of a judgement about whether the individual act is right or wrong.

ESSENTIAL REALISM

- **Self-help:** No other state can be relied upon to guarantee your survival.
- In international politics, the structure of the system does not permit friendship, trust, and honour; only a perennial condition of uncertainty generated by the absence of a global government.

ABOUT THIS LESSON

The images used in the curriculum can be found online and are freely accessible.

The curriculum is for educational purposes only.

Compulsory and recommended literature sources for the given course were used as sources for the lesson.

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