

Inside the IVORY TOWER

Professors of international relations shape future policy debates and mold the next generation of leaders. So who are these dons of diplomacy, and what do they believe? | **By Susan Peterson, Michael J. Tierney, and Daniel Maliniak**

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood,” said British economist John Maynard Keynes. “Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air,” he continued, “are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.”

“Academic scribblers” have enormous potential to shape the worldviews of tomorrow’s leaders. In the case of American scholars of international relations, they are almost certainly framing foreign-policy debates and training the future policymakers of

the world’s only superpower. If you doubt the connection, just consider the current Bush administration. The political philosopher Leo Strauss and other political scientists at the University of Chicago are often credited with shaping the thinking of the “neo-conservatives” who serve in the top rungs of the administration. Yet academics inhabit a rarefied world about which many people, including some policymakers, know little. In the most comprehensive survey of its kind, we unlock the door to the academy, examining what these scholars write and think about international politics, and what they are teaching tomorrow’s leaders.

For our survey, we attempted to contact all political scientists who research or teach international relations at 1,157 four-year colleges and universities in the United States. These schools included all national research universities, masters-granting institutions,

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and liberal arts colleges identified by *U.S. News and World Report*, as well as seven military colleges. In the end, 1,084 scholars, or roughly 47 percent of all American scholars of international relations, participated. These respondents included many of the most renowned and influential scholars in the field.

The picture of the discipline that emerges is a complex one. Some stereotypes are strengthened. Sixty-nine percent of international relations professors, for example, describe themselves as liberal; a scant 13 percent see themselves as conservative. They overwhelmingly opposed the U.S. war in Iraq, almost unanimously believe that the United States is less respected in the world because of it, and they think that this loss of respect poses a significant problem for U.S. foreign policy. Seventy-seven percent of them support free trade, and only 10 percent believe the United States should beef up its military budget.

Other stereotypes, however, are stripped away. International relations scholars are not locked in their ivory towers. In fact, many of them moonlight in important parts of the foreign-policy making apparatus, serving as consultants to the U.S. government (25 percent), nongovernmental organizations (15 percent), think tanks (14 percent), the private sector (11 percent), and international organizations (9 percent). And professors are more engaged in practical questions than popular myth would have it: Forty-five percent conduct research designed, at least in part, to have specific policy applications.

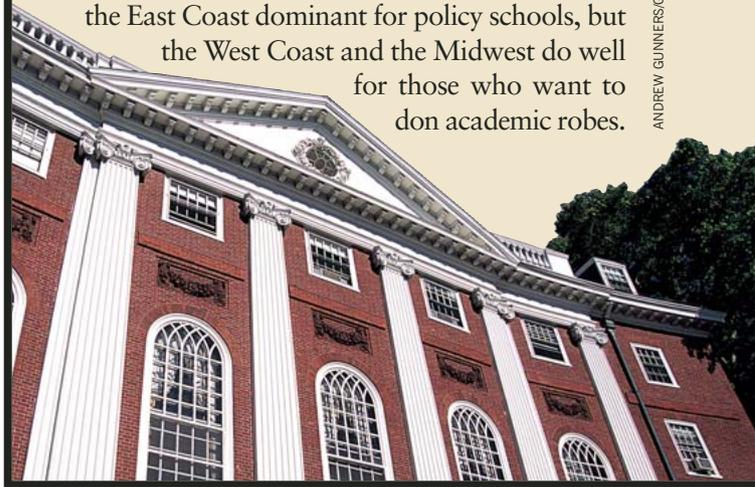
Like much of the political and business world, the field of international relations remains dominated by men: No women rank among the top 25 scholars with the greatest impact on the discipline over the past 20 years. And, despite their purportedly global outlook, American scholars are a

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relatively insular group who primarily assign American authors to their students. This insularity might be explained by the fact that a handful of schools churn out a disproportionate number of scholars.

Higher Learning

Where's the best place to study international relations? The answer depends in part on the career you have in mind. Aspiring academics typically need a Ph.D. from a top-notch political science department. For scholarly pursuits, Harvard easily leads the field; it was the only institution named by a majority of respondents. For those who want to walk the corridors of power—not study them—Johns Hopkins and Georgetown University win the most praise. Armed with a masters degree in international relations from a top policy school, students are likely to head off for jobs in government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or international business. Proximity to political circles keeps the East Coast dominant for policy schools, but the West Coast and the Midwest do well for those who want to don academic robes.



ANDREW GUNNERS/BETTY IMAGES

International relations faculty are trained at a wide range of institutions, but 25 percent received their doctorates from one of six schools—Columbia; Harvard; the University of California, Berkeley; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; the University of Michigan; or Stanford.

The international relations field today is surprisingly young: Half of the professors who teach at U.S. colleges received their Ph.D.s in the past 12 years. Even more surprising is how young scholars change the focus of their teaching over time. Early on, when young faculty are fresh out of graduate school, they focus their teaching on theoretical questions and scholarly debates. But, as their careers progress, professors

Top 20 Ph.D. Programs*

Rank	School	Percent
1	Harvard University	75
2	Columbia University	48
3	Stanford University	47
4	Princeton University	43
5	University of Chicago	36
6	Yale University	29
7	University of Michigan	28
8	University of California, Berkeley	27
9	University of California, San Diego	16
10	Cornell University	12
11	Mass. Institute of Technology	11
12	Duke University	10
13	Johns Hopkins University	9
14	Georgetown University	8
15	Ohio State University	7
16	University of Minnesota	7
17	University of California, Los Angeles	6
18	New York University	6
19	University of Rochester	4
20	Tufts University	3

Top 20 Masters Programs*

Rank	School	Percent
1	Johns Hopkins University	65
2	Georgetown University	62
3	Harvard University	47
4	Tufts University	45
5	Columbia University	45
6	Princeton University	39
7	George Washington University	26
8	American University	16
9	Syracuse University	7
10	University of California, San Diego	5
10	University of Denver	5
12	Yale University	5
13	University of Chicago	4
14	University of Pittsburgh	4
15	University of Maryland	3
16	Mass. Institute of Technology	2
16	Stanford University	2
18	University of Kentucky	2
19	New York University	2
19	University of Southern California	2

*Percentage of respondents listing institution as among the five best. When possible, tie scores were broken by total votes tallied.

are inclined to teach their students more about real-world policy debates and less about scholarly arguments. The image of the ancient, tenured professor reading from decades-old notes needs to be revised.

When professors do reach for the theoretical toolbox, they frequently pull out the classics, notably realism, with its focus on states and power, and liberalism, with its emphasis on economic interdependence and international institutions. Beyond these two schools of thought, however, some interesting results appear. Constructivism, which highlights the power of ideology and beliefs in international politics, is the hot new thing in academic research; more than 80 percent of scholars report that it is on the rise. Nevertheless, it gets little airtime in introductory classes. Marxism, on the other hand, may be on history's ash heap, but it still

finds its way onto the reading list. Indeed, nearly 14 percent of introductory course material is still devoted to Marxist ideas.

Students today may look for broad exposure to regional issues, but the professors teaching them often have little regional expertise. Forty-four percent of professors surveyed spend a significant amount of time discussing the Middle East in their introductory classes, but only 7 percent have an expertise in the region. Professors are convinced that East Asia will be the most strategically important region 20 years from now, but only 9 percent say they have a research expertise in that part of the world. Instead, American professors tend to be specialists in international security, international political economy, and U.S. foreign policy. Students seeking insight into the world's current and future hotspots will have to go beyond International Relations 101.

Leading Lights

They're not exactly household names. Very few of these scholars have served in senior policy positions. Exceptions include Joseph Nye, who served in the Carter and Clinton administrations, Stephen Krasner, who works in the current Bush administration, and John Ruggie and Michael Doyle, both of whom served at the United Nations. The ideas of a few scholars, such as Samuel Huntington (clash of civilizations), Michael Doyle (the democratic peace), and Francis Fukuyama (the end of history), have entered the public discourse. Outside of the limelight, other scholars have championed schools of thought or offered the type of provocative analysis that shapes how others think about the world. For example, Princeton's Robert Keohane, who tops the charts, has spent nearly three decades as the leading spokesman for liberalism, the most influential paradigm among the current generation of scholars.

One thing that stands out about these high achievers, though, is how similar they are: Nearly all are white men older than 50. That result is even more striking as almost a third of the field's scholars are women and half the respondents received their Ph.D.s in the past 12 years. Odds are, it won't be a men's club for much longer. When respondents were asked who is currently doing the most interesting research, four women, led by Martha Finnemore at George Washington University and Kathryn Sikkink at the University of Minnesota, scored highly.

The Most Influential Scholars*

Rank	School	Percent
1	Robert Keohane	56
2	Kenneth Waltz	41
3	Alexander Wendt	33
4	Samuel Huntington	21
5	John Mearsheimer	18
6	Joseph Nye	17
7	Robert Jervis	15
8	Bruce Bueno de Mesquita	14
9	Bruce Russett	11
10	Robert Gilpin	10
11	Peter Katzenstein	9
12	Stephen Krasner	9
13	James Rosenau	8
14	John Ruggie	7
15	Michael Doyle	6
16	James Fearon	5
17	Immanuel Wallerstein	4
18	Robert Cox	4
19	Hans Morgenthau	4
20	Francis Fukuyama	3
21	J. David Singer	3
22	Stephen Walt	3
23	Jack Snyder	2
23	Robert Axelrod	2
23	Stanley Hoffmann	2

*Respondents listed four scholars who have had the greatest impact over the past 20 years. Percentages have been rounded.

Home Schooling

The subject may be international relations, but the readings are overwhelmingly American. Almost half of the scholars surveyed report that 10 percent or less of the material in their introductory courses is written by non-Americans, with a full 10 percent of professors responding that they do not assign any authors from outside the United States. Only 5 percent of instructors give non-Americans equal billing on their syllabuses. What

accounts for such apparent scholarly provincialism? Those inclined to less charitable explanations may conclude that American scholars of international relations are not immune from academic parochialism. To be fair, however, Americans have authored most of the field's textbooks, and nine of the top 10 rated journals in the field are published in the United States. The United States has, after all, been the most powerful and active state in the international system for the past 60 years. Its behavior is going to eat up a lot of any curriculum.

Geography Test

Scholars, like generals, may be too busy studying the last war. The Soviet Union disintegrated nearly 15 years ago, but plenty of tenured professors got their training during the Cold War, when Kremlin-watching was a national sport. When asked what region was most strategically important to the United States today, a resounding 58 percent answered the Middle East and North Africa. Yet, only

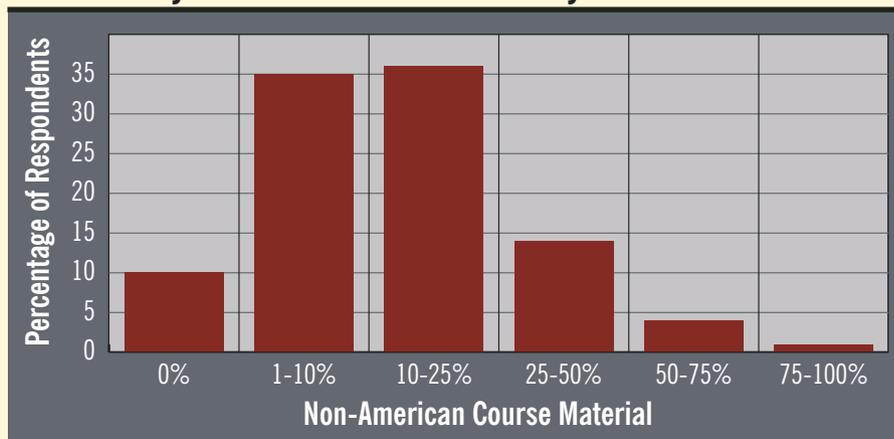
7 percent of U.S. international relations scholars specialize in the region. This gap may explain why the American intelligence community is still advertising for Arabic speakers.

In thinking about the future, students of international politics would do well to brush up on their Chinese. Sixty percent of scholars believe that East Asia will be of the greatest strategic importance to the United States in 20 years. If students begin studying Mandarin now, perhaps in two decades, the faculty's regional expertise will reflect emerging strategic reality.

Faculty Expertise and Strategic Outlook

Region	Principal Area of Research	Greatest U.S. Strategic Importance Now	Greatest U.S. Strategic Importance in 20 Years
United States	14%	--	--
Canada and Western Europe	13%	18%	9%
Latin America	9%	2%	2%
Sub-Saharan Africa	6%	1%	2%
Former Soviet Union/ Eastern Europe	8%	3%	4%
Middle East/North Africa	7%	58%	19%
East Asia (including China)	9%	16%	60%
South Asia (including Afghanistan)	2%	2%	2%
Southeast Asia	2%	0.2%	1%

Introductory Course Material Written by Non-Americans

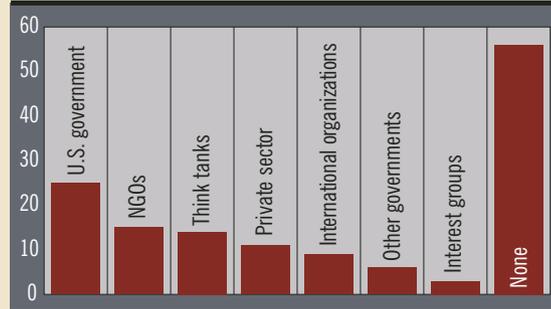


Hired Minds

When international relations scholars peddle their services, the U.S. government is often ready to buy. Twenty-five percent of the professors surveyed are paid consultants to Uncle Sam. But putting them on the payroll certainly hasn't bought the government any affection—scholars remain firmly opposed to current U.S. policy on a range of

issues. True, scholars who work for the government are generally more supportive of U.S. policy than their peers, but compared to the general public, they are also far more skeptical, whatever their political stripe. NGOs, think tanks, international organizations, and the private sector have also sought advice from international relations professors. Fifty-six percent of scholars, however, do no outside work, which may hint at the abstract quality of much contemporary international relations

Professors Working For:



Town and Gown

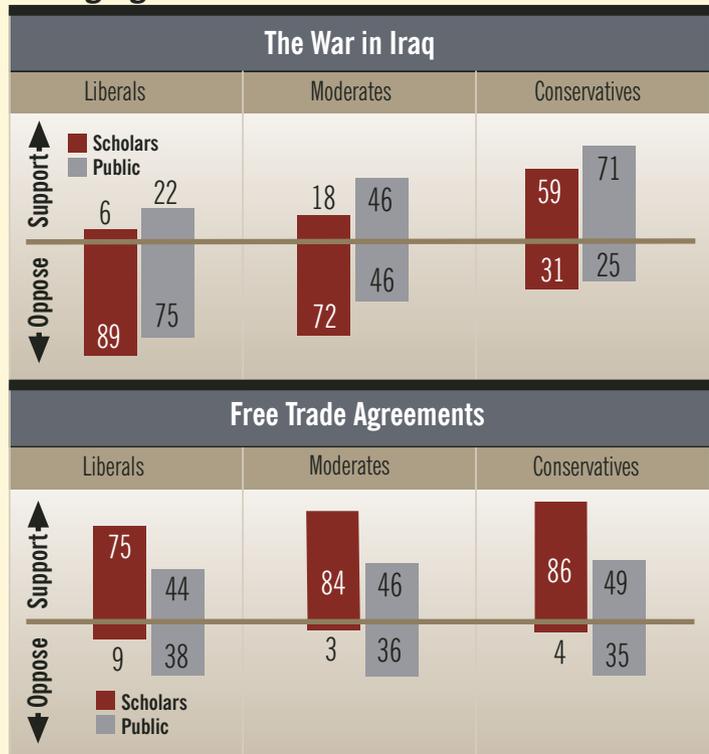
The American public has only recently soured on the war in Iraq, but the great majority of international relations scholars have always opposed it. A comparison of scholarly opinion with U.S. public opinion (as reported by a Pew poll in August 2004) reveals huge gaps between the professors and the people. Nearly 80 percent of scholars opposed the U.S. decision to go to war. More than 87 percent of these scholars believe that the war in Iraq has harmed or will harm U.S. security. These numbers contrast dramatically with the beliefs of likely voters, where roughly half believed the war in Iraq was the “right choice.”

When it comes to trade, professors again move in lock step. An overwhelming majority think free trade arrangements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization are good for the United States—something that still sharply divides the American public.

Conservatives have long complained that liberals have a stranglehold on the academy, and this survey

provides some powerful support for that position. Only 13 percent of scholars identified themselves as right of center, while 69 percent claimed to be left of center. But political orientation doesn't explain everything. Conservative scholars supported the war in much lower proportions than conservative America. **FP**

Diverging Political Views





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