

Foundations:

Forgotten History of the International Relations
Discipline

The mythical IR lineage:



Credits for these images can be found on page 13.

Thucydides (History of the Peloponnesian War ~400BC)

E.H. Carr (The Twenty Years' Crisis 1939)

Hans Morganthau (Politics Among Nations, 1948)

Kenneth Waltz (Theory of International Politics 1979)

Robert Keohane (After Hegemony 1984)

Alexander Wendt (Social Theory of International Politics 1999)

The mythical IR lineage:



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Thucydides (Realism)

E.H. Carr (Realism)

Hans Morganthau (Realism)

Kenneth Waltz (Realism)

Robert Keohane (Liberalism)

Alexander Wendt (Constructivism)

The mythical IR lineage:



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Thucydides (Realism)

E.H. Carr (Realism)

Hans Morganthau (Realism)

Kenneth Waltz (Realism)

Robert Keohane (Liberalism) \rightsquigarrow Beth Simmons \rightsquigarrow me \rightsquigarrow you|

Alexander Wendt (Constructivism)

Why does this get reproduced?

Scholars want a lineage connection to a noble, ancient tradition.

Scholars wanted to differentiate themselves from other disciplines.

We aren't taught any better.

We reproduce syllabi for the IR classes that we were taught.

Vitalis, page 5:

Every year thousands of undergraduates across the United States sign up for a class titled “Introduction to International Relations.” In the first week or two they learn that three broad rival theoretical traditions vie for explanatory primacy among specialists. The first (and it is always first) among unequals is “realism.” The second is “liberalism” or “liberal internationalism.” The third is “constructivism” (thirty years ago it was “neo-Marxism”), a kind of residual category that consists of various persuasions of critics on the discipline’s margins, the serious consideration of which is honored more in the breach than in the observance.

Vitalis, Robert. *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations*. Cornell University Press, 2015. © Cornell University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

What is being forgotten?

Vitalis, page 1:

In the first decades of the twentieth century in the United States, international relations meant race relations. This sentence is bound to strike many readers as both strange and wrong, just as it once did me. The problem of empire or imperialism, sometimes referred to as “race subjection,” was what preoccupied the first self-identified professors of international relations. They wrestled with the prospect that a race war might lead to the end of the world hegemony of whites, a future that appeared to many to be in the offing. The scholars had also identified the epicenter of the global biological threat in the three square miles or so at the northern end of Manhattan borough known as Harlem.

Vitalis, Robert. *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations*. Cornell University Press, 2015. © Cornell University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Vitalis, page 1:

Each of these claims at first presentation seems false because 100 years later, a new common sense has taken hold. Today, professors teach that international relations is the scientific study of the interaction among “states” (or “countries” to the uninitiated), with other, lesser “actors” trailing behind. They also speak more abstractly about study of the “state system.”¹ Students interested in race relations look elsewhere in course catalogs and to other experts and departments.² So too do those wanting to learn about empires,

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Two myths:

The US was never (much) of an imperial power.

That the discipline of IR was never really focused on imperialism

This is false:

White scholars prior to WWII were very concerned about “race relations.”

Foreign Affairs was originally the *Journal of Race Development* (1911-1919)

Black scholars were concerned with imperialism and racism

Tate and Hull reading is an example: US empire and nuclear testing

The Howard School:



Credits for these images can be found on page 15.

W.E.B Du Bois - PhD Harvard 1895, Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism, cofounder of NAACP

Alain Locke - PhD Harvard 1918, Rhodes Scholar, challenged 'race development theory'

Ralph Bunche - PhD Harvard 1934, APSA president, onetime radical Marxist, Nobel Prize (UN mediation work in Palestine)

Rayford Logan - PhD Harvard 1936, Pan-Africanist, work on US occupation of Haiti

Merze Tate - PhD Radcliffe 1941, first black woman IR PhD, *The Disarmament Illusion*

Merze Tate

Effects of Nuclear Explosions on Pacific Islanders

MERZE TATE AND DORIS M. HULL

Merze Tate, an earlier contributor to these pages, is professor of history in Howard University. Doris M. Hull is serial librarian at Howard and a candidate for the doctorate in history at the American University.

Credits for images on pages 2 and 3

Thucydides

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E.H. Carr

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Robert Keohane

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Beth Simmons

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W.E.B Du Bois

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Alain Locke

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Ralph Bunche

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Rayford Logan

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Merze Tate

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