John Ruggie

- PhD UC Berkeley 1974
- First teaching job at Berkeley, then UC San Diego, Columbia, and Harvard
- Senior Adviser for Strategic Planning to Secretary General Kofi Annan, 1997-2001
- Adviser to Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on human rights since 2005
Constructivism

- Alternative to both realism and neoliberal institutionalism
- “… not only are identities and interests of actors socially constructed, but also…they must share the stage with a whole host of other ideational factors…”
- Roots in Durkheim and Weber

Ruggie, p. 857
Emile Durkheim

• “...sought to demonstrate how a variety of social outcomes, ranging from social cooperation to individual feelings of anomie and differential suicide rates were influenced by the different interpersonal bonds of social order that are embodied within the reference groups to which individuals belong...”
Social Facts

- Linguistic practices, religious beliefs, moral norms, and similar ideational factors
- Once constituted as social facts, they influence subsequent social behavior
- Example: lower rates of suicide among Catholics as opposed to Protestants
Max Weber

• Searched for alternatives to the subjectivism of the German Historical School and the positivism of the Austrian Theoretical School (marginal utility theory)

• Wanted social science to be scientific but thought it differed fundamentally from the natural sciences
Weber on Meaning and Significance

• Natural science searches for universally valid laws.
• Social science attempts to uncover “the meaning of specific actions” and to demonstrate “their social significance.”
Three Goals of *Verstehen* (Understanding)

- To discern a direct or empathetic understanding of whatever act is being performed, from the vantage point of the actor
- To devise an explanatory understanding of that act
- To unify these individualized experiences into a broader set of objectively valid truth statements.
The Use of Ideal Types

• “purely ideal limiting concept with which the real situation or action is compared and surveyed for the explication of certain of its significant components.”

• For example, traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal forms of authority in Weber’s own work.
Waltzian Realism and Neoliberal Institutionalism

- Both assume that identities and interests of nation-states are exogenous and given (instead of endogenous and socially constructed)
- For realists, ideas (e.g., nationalism) may be a source of conflict but otherwise have little causal impact
- Neo-realists allow minor role for ideas
Consider the Causal Impact of:

- The European ideas of Jean Monnet
- American exceptionalism
- Nazi views on race
- Mao’s idea of cultural revolution
Key Concern of Constructivists

• “what happens before the neo-utilitarian model kicks in”

• For example, role of ideas in:
  – Decolonization
  – End of Apartheid in South Africa
  – Growing role of human rights in intl. politics
  – Multilateralism
Epistemic Communities

• Role of shared beliefs among experts and/or policy making communities
• Particularly important in environmental politics
• For example, in changing perceptions of interests in connection with ozone politics and more recently climate change
Kathryn Sikkink’s work on Advocacy Networks (NGOs)

- Role of NGOs and other types of advocacy networks in international politics
- Challenge to the hegemony of inter-governmentalism in international affairs and a check on the power of other non-governmental actors such as MNCs
Constructivist Explanations

- Tend to rely on identifying “constitutive rules” which are “noncausal, explanatory accounts.”
- Use of “narrative explanatory forms” that are non-positivist or post positivistic.
Variants of Constructivism

- Sociological
- Feminist
- Jurisprudential
- Genealogical
- Strictly interpretive

Three underlying philosophies:
- Neo-classical
- Postmodernist
- Naturalistic

Ruggie, p. 880
Ruggie on Works like Katzenstein’s *The Culture of National Security*

- “The first instinct of the willing constructivist is to incorporate norms, identities, and meanings into the study of international relations with minimum disruption to the field’s prevailing epistemological stance, on which hopes for analytical rigor and cumulative knowledge are believed to rest.”
- Ruggie argues that this is not really possible.
Wayne Sandholtz

- PhD UC Berkeley 1989
- Main adviser: Ernst B. Haas
- Currently teaching at UC Irvine
- [Web site]
Dynamics of Institutional Change: 3 Levels

- Macro level: the rule system or institutional environment
- Micro level: the domain of action and decision making by individual actors
- Meso level: structures that people create in order to coordinate rule systems
Rule Systems or Institutions

• “enable actors to conceive, pursue, and express their interests and desires, but also to co-ordinate those desires with other individuals”

• some are highly formal, specific, and authoritative; others are informal, general and not so authoritative

• Governance is “the process through which rules systems are adapted to the needs and purposes of those who live under them”
Example of the GATT

- Focus on dispute resolution
- Dyadic vs. triadic forums: panel system implemented
- Legalization of dispute resolution proceeded rapidly after 1971 Nixon shock
- When GATT merged into the WTO, dispute resolution became compulsory
Example of Humanitarian Intervention

• Is humanitarian intervention a violation of sovereignty rules?
• Rules provide context for action, specific acts trigger disputes, disputes provoke discourse, discourse results in rule modification
• In this case, the UN Security Council is the main institutional context
Main criticism of “neo-rationalism”

• “…fails to provide a convincing account of why and how normative discourse and legal institutions develop a ‘life of their own’”

Sandholtz, p. 270