

Introduction to International Relations & Global Studies

United Nations University

Autumn 2017

Location: 6F lecture room

Lecturer: Dr. Robert Lindner

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course provides students with a general introduction to the discipline of international relations and to major themes in world politics. It is highly recommended as a foundation course for other graduate seminars dealing with specific issue areas in IR such as *Sustainable Energy: Governance & Policy* (Dr. Lindner) or *Environmental Politics and Climate Change* (Dr. Vaughter). It will first explore the historical development of the contemporary international system and the main actors and institutions shaping today's global developments. Students will then be introduced to the main theoretical explanations for state behavior in the study of IR and the methodologies and levels of analysis commonly used to explain foreign policy decision-making. In the second part of the course, students will consider some of the key aspects of contemporary international relations, such as the role of institutions and non-state actors, globalization and global governance, international political economy, justice and human rights, or global environment. The assignments and the structure of the sessions are designed to foster critical thinking and the ability for informed academic debate. During the entire length of the course, students are encouraged to apply the acquired theoretical knowledge to real life news events in class discussions.

Course Objectives and Learning Goals

By the end of the course, students should have a basic knowledge of the theoretical concepts, major themes, and analytical tools in the study of international relations. They should also be able to better understand state behavior and the relationship between the main actors and institutions in contemporary world politics. Specifically, students should be able to:

- Understand the main theories and perspectives to international relations and identify the differences and similarities between these theoretical approaches.
- Explain key terms commonly used in the study of IR, such as "security dilemma", "democratic peace", "globalization" or "global commons".
- Develop an appreciation of the fact that political actors in international relations may respond to a given global challenge based on very different worldviews and values.
- See beyond the news headlines and appreciate the complexities behind the foreign policy decisions of states and understand how and why cooperation or conflict occurs in world politics.
- Understand under what conditions multilateral cooperation can be effective and how non-state actors can influence the actions of states and international institutions.

Another objective of the course is to practice the student's writing and presentation skills. Short presentations about selected course readings will be assigned in the first session and all students will have to write an analytical essay focusing on a current international issue in the end of the semester. The topic will be chosen by the lecturer at the end of the course and the essay will require the students to analyze the problem from a theoretical and practical point of view, to recognize the different perspectives of relevant actors and to identify potential responses to the problem.

Requirements and Grading Policy

All students are expected to complete the required readings before each class. The course requirements also include active class participation, short presentations, a mid-term exam and a final analytical essay:

- Active class participation (10%)
- Short presentation (20%)
- Mid-term exam (30%)
- Final essay (40%)

Class Participation

The course requires students to attend all classes, to arrive on time, to complete the readings and to participate actively in class discussions. At the discretion of the lecturer, frequent late arrivals or absences may result in a lower grade. Please note that the first session is of particular importance and cannot be missed. Students are also strongly encouraged to regularly follow the news to keep up with international developments, as these events will be reflected in the class discussions.

Short Presentation:

In order to encourage a critical engagement with the literature, to practice students' presentation skills and to stimulate class discussion, each student will be assigned a 5-minute oral presentation about one of the selected course readings. The presentation will be held at the beginning of the session and should summarize the main arguments of the text and develop one or two discussion questions that relate to the readings. Students will be given the opportunity to choose a certain topic and presentation date from a list provided by the lecturer in the introductory session.

Mid-term Exam

This exam will cover the content of the required readings and lectures from the first part of the course. It will consist of a multiple choice test and a few short answer questions. The mid-term exam will be in class on 19 December and no textbooks, notes, etc. are allowed in the classroom on the exam day. The due date of the exam is non-negotiable. Only students with legitimate excuses, such as extreme circumstances or unforeseeable personal emergencies, will be allowed to take a make-up exam. The situation has to be brought to the attention of the lecturer in a timely fashion and has to be properly documented.

Final Essay

For the final take-home essay, the lecturer will choose a current issue in international relations that students have to assess with reference to the theoretical and analytical approaches presented

in the course readings. The topic and additional instructions will be handed out in the session on 9 January and the drafts must be submitted via email in word-format by noon on 28 February. The lecturer will comment on the essays using the “track changes” function and return them via email. Each student is expected to write a paper of 9- 10 pages in length (approximately 3500- 4000 words), double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. The papers must have a title, proper introduction and conclusion sections and all material used to support the student’s argument must be clearly cited.

Course Readings

Each week has a series of required readings that have to be completed prior to the class. The average reading load per week is 40~60 pages. Readings should be completed by the dates they are assigned, and students are expected to actively contribute to class discussions based on the material provided. The lecturer reserves the right to update the reading list throughout the course and will alert students to the changes in class. The texts will also form part of the mid-term exam and sufficient knowledge of the arguments in the material should be demonstrated in the final essay. The textbooks used in the course are available at the UNU library and relevant chapters can be copied at the designated copy machines. Additional required readings will be uploaded to moodle.

- Art, R. J., & Jervis, R. (2015). *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues* (12th ed.). Pearson.
- Baylis, J., Smith, S., & Owen, P. (2013). *Introduction to Global Politics*. Oxford.
- Haas, P. M., & Hird, J. A. (Eds.) (2013). *Controversies in Globalization: Contending Approaches in International Relations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.
- Masker, J. (2012). *Introduction to Global Politics. A Reader*. Oxford.
- Reus-Smit, C.R., & Snidal, D. (Eds.) (2013). *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. Oxford University Press.

Course Outline

1. Introduction
2. The historical development of the contemporary international system

Theory and Analysis in IR

3. Core theories I.
4. Core theories II.
5. Alternative approaches to the study of IR
6. Post-cold war thinking on IR
7. Methodologies and levels of analysis

Processes and Issues of the International System

8. Globalization and global governance
9. International organizations and non-state actors
10. International political economy: Global trade, finance and development
11. Global security architecture: Non-proliferation, global arms trade & military expenditures

Challenges to Sustainable Development

12. Human security: Fragile states, migration and international terrorism
13. Democracy and human rights
14. Global inequality and human development
15. Environmental degradation