

## **POLI 2500-09: Introduction to International Relations**

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2026 Draft Syllabus

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The questions of international relations address some of the biggest questions there are. What explains peace and war? When do states cooperate versus seek ways to cheat or attack their adversaries? What are the key factors that explain this (international power equations vs. domestic politics vs. norms?). When do we see international efforts to stop genocide or cooperate on climate change? This course addresses these questions through some of the most prominent research in international relations. In addition to exposing students to IR theory, this course will engage with some of the most important cases of the current moment: Ukraine War, nuclear weapons proliferation in Iran, the war in Gaza, and the fate of international institutions in the era of anti-globalist politics.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Provide students with the necessary theoretical tools to analyze questions in international relations from multiple perspectives.
- Enable students to compare and evaluate the explanatory power of competing theories.
- Assist students in gaining the historical background needed to understand contemporary international events.
- Expose students to foreign policy among rising non-western powers.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

**15% - Class Participation.** Attendance is obligatory. An active role in discussions and in-class by everyone enrolled in the course is expected, as is the completion of the required readings before the session for which they are assigned. Each student is permitted one unexcused absence (i.e. without a written note from a doctor or a dean). There will be a grade penalty for unexcused absences beyond this. As a rule of thumb, each student should participate in class at least once per week.

**5 % - Follow the News.** For this assignment, you will follow the news on a particular foreign policy area (e.g., foreign aid, trade) or on a country's foreign policies over the course of the term. You are welcome to focus on U.S. foreign policy but I encourage you to consider focusing on other countries (China, India, France, Germany, Brazil, Japan, the EU as a whole, Taiwan, Australia, etc.). Based on your reading of the news, I'll ask you to determine a central challenge in this policy area and to interpret what you learned in terms of the broader theories we discuss. You should summarize what you learn and your assessment in a short 3-page response paper.

The paper will identify trends in the news (10 articles or more) and use IR concepts to think about these trends. I will ask what's in the news at the start of class. All students should be prepared to share at least once every couple weeks.

**10% - Response Papers.** Students will write two 2-3 page response papers that engage readings from a class session. Students should choose one session before the midterm and one session after the midterm, but can choose the sessions they wish to write about, subject to availability. For extra credit students may write a third response paper. Response papers are all due before the class session that the readings are based on (e.g., The terrorism response paper is due before we cover terrorism in class). Those who write response papers should be active in class discussion to share your careful thinking on the readings.

**40 % - In-Class Mid-Terms.** Students will be required to write two in-class midterm exams consisting of a short answer section of ID questions (4-5) and an essay section. The first example will cover realism and nuclear weapons. The second midterm will cover realism, liberalism, and constructivism. The essay will ask you to apply one or more broad theories to current events.

**30% - Application of IR Theories to a Case.** Students will be required to write a paper applying two IR theories we discuss in class to a phenomenon in the world (Israel-Gaza War; International Climate Change agreements, Humanitarian interventions; Yemen, NATO foreign aid strategies, civil wars and the role of international actors (e.g., Ethiopia, Yemen), global war on terror, etc.).

## CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

To make sure that we have a hospitable learning environment, I ask students to follow three simple rules:

- 1) Arrive on time
- 2) Cell phones are not permitted in class. Keep them in your bag or pocket.
- 3) Unless you are speaking in groups about readings, close your laptops in class. This will help everyone focus on class discussion.
- 4) Respect your classmates. Debate is welcome but disagree respectfully by engaging ideas rather getting personal.
- 5) Coffee/beverages are fine but food is not permitted in class since it distracts your classmates.

## PLAGIARISM

Academic honesty is expected of all students. Cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Board, and may result in a failing grade for the class, academic probation, or expulsion. Ignorance is not a valid excuse. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to the following actions:

1. Presenting another's work, ideas, expressions or research as if it were one's own;

2. Failing to acknowledge or document a source even if the action is unintended (i.e., plagiarism);  
*Note: Plagiarism includes copying & pasting material from any source (Wikipedia, paper mill, other internet site, book, journal, newspaper, magazine, ChatGPT, etc.) without proper attribution. Plagiarism also includes non-verbatim borrowing of words or ideas through paraphrasing or summarizing another's work(s) without proper attribution.*
3. Fabricating or altering citations
4. Giving or receiving, or attempting to give or receive, unauthorized assistance or information in an assignment or examination;
5. Submitting the same assignment in two or more courses without prior permission of both instructors;
6. Having another person write a paper or sit for an examination (includes online papermills);
7. Using tests or papers from students in prior semesters;
8. Sabotaging the work of another through destroying or preventing work from receiving fair assessment (especially in group projects)

### **Electronic Device Policy**

All electronic devices (such as cell phones, notebooks, calculators, etc.) are not allowed to be out of backpacks or purses during quizzes and exams. Any student who is caught with one of these devices out will have his/her test taken and will be considered in violation of the honor code. I will ask you to not use your phones during class and to only use laptops to take notes or close them.

### **Exam Absences and Make-up Exams**

You are required to be present for all scheduled exams unless you have made previous arrangements with the instructor. The only allowable exception to this policy is a documented medical or other emergency. You should be prepared to provide proof of a medical visit on the day of the exam or a note from the Dean's office. I may arrange a make-up exam for a student who is absent during the final exam, but only if an acceptable excuse is presented to an associate dean in Newcomb-Tulane college before the exam or within 24 hours after the exam. A student whose absence from a final exam is not excused will be given an "F" in the course.

### **READINGS**

All the readings are available online or in required books and can be downloaded from the course's page on Brightspace or at the drop box link provided by the professor. This course requires you to carefully read all assigned readings before class. Generally, 3-4 articles or book chapters are assigned each week. Make sure you not only understand the basic arguments, but give yourself time to think critically about the readings before class so you will be prepared to participate in discussion. I encourage you to complete the reading worksheet at the end of this syllabus for each challenging reading.

NOTE: Changes to the schedule of readings on the syllabus (including TBA readings) may take place. If this happens, I will try to give you at least one week of notice by email and in class. Pay

attention to your emails for any (modest) changes to make sure you have the updated version. Also note that recommended readings will be references in lecture but are not required. Those who want to go farther into the topic of the class are encouraged to read required readings.

The following books are required and ordered at the campus bookstore:

Art, Robert J., Timothy W. Crawford, and Robert Jervis, eds. 2023. *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*. 13th ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.

Betts, Richard K., ed. 2022. *Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on the Causes of War and Peace*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson Longman [older editions may be available as an alternative].

### **8/25: Introduction**

### **8/27: How to Read Social Science + Know Some Basics**

Learning Goal: Understand the basics of social science theories and methods. Know what a hypothesis is, what a theory is, and some different methods in social science.

In-Class Activity: Write a research question and one hypothesis on a note card (provided in the prior class)

Amelia Hoover Green, “How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.”

Gerring, John. 2012. “Mere Description.” *British Journal of Political Science* (pp. 1–15).

### **9/1: NO CLASS. Labor Day Holiday**

## **PART I: FUNDAMENTALS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

### **9/3: Realism**

Learning Goals: Understand realism in the classical and structural forms and how it related to other prominent theories.

Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue in Robert Art, Timothy Crawford, and Kenneth Waltz, *International Politics* (13<sup>th</sup> edition).

Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. Chapter 5 (“Political Structures”).

### **9/8: Security Dilemma and (Mis)Perceptions of Power**

Learning Goals: Understand common types of misperceptions that can lead to conflict including misperceptions about relative power and misperceptions about offensive vs. defensive intentions. Review structural realism.

Assignment: Complete the reading worksheet at the end of this syllabus on Jervis: “Offense, Defense, and the Security Dilemma.”

Jervis, Robert. “Offense, Defense, and the Security Dilemma” in Robert Art, Timothy Crawford, and Kenneth Waltz, *International Politics* (13<sup>th</sup> edition).

### **9/15: Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence**

Learning Goals: Understand the impact of nuclear weapons on deterrence and the risks it creates for high-cost mistakes.

In-Class Activity: Debate whether Iran should be permitted to get the bomb in a class student activity.

Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better,” in Betts, *Conflict After the Cold War*, 451-61.

Sagan, Scott. 1999. “Why Nuclear Spread is Dangerous,” In Robert Art, Timothy Crawford, and Kenneth Waltz, *International Politics* (13<sup>th</sup> edition).

### **9/17: Domestic Politics and Getting the Bomb**

Learning Goals: Understand the role of domestic politics and competing domestic interests on foreign policy.

Assignment: Complete the reading worksheet on Sagan.

Sagan, Scott. 1996-1997. “Why do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” *International Security*, 21(3) 54-86.

Narang, Vipin, and Christopher Clary. 2019. “India’s Counterforce Temptations: Strategic Dilemmas, Domestic Politics, and Nuclear Risks.” *International Security* 43(3): 7–52.

### **9/22: Uni-Polarity**

Learning Goals: Understand how unipolarity (the current system) differs from Bipolar and Multi-polar systems. Consider how and why the global order led by the US persists.

Brooks, Stephen and William Wohlforth. 2002. “American Primacy in Perspective.” *Foreign Affairs* 81(4): 20–33.

Butt, Ahsan I. 2019. "Why Did the United States Invade Iraq in 2003?" *Security Studies* 28 (2) 250-285.

Recommended: Monteiro, Nuno P. "Unrest assured: Why unipolarity is not peaceful." *International Security* 36, no. 3 (2011): 9-40.

## **9/24: Rising Regional Powers**

Learning Goals: Understand Acharya's concept of the multiplex world order and how it differs from unipolarity and multipolarity.

Acharya, Amitav. 2017. "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order." *Ethics & International Affairs* 31(3): 271–285.

Madan, Tanvi. 2021. "India and the Multipolar World." Brookings (4 pages)

Vaishnav, Milan, and Caroline Mallory. 2024. "In India, Foreign Policy Is on the 2024 Ballot." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 23. (5 pages)

## **9/29: In-Class Midterm #1 on Realism and the International System**

### **10/1: Democratic and Autocratic Waves: Regimes and International Contagion**

Learning Goals: Learn about trends in democratization (becoming a democracy), democratic backsliding (becoming less democratic), and autocratization (becoming authoritarian).

Gunitsky, Seva. 2018. "Democratic Waves in Historical Perspective." *Perspectives on Politics* 16 (3) 634-651.

Gunitsky, Seva. 2019. "Great Powers and Autocratic Diffusion." *International Organization* 73(1): 1–30 (Read sections 1 and 2).

### **10/6: Liberal Democratic Peace and Illiberal Democratic Conflict**

Learning Goals: Understand why liberal democracies tend not to fight each other. Learn the logic of why this is the case and critiques of these logics.

Rosato Sebastian. 2003. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory." *American Political Science Review*, 97(4) 585–602.

Mansfield, Edward D and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and War," in Betts, *Conflict After the Cold War*.

### **10/8: Domestic Politics II: Rise of Populism and Foreign Policy Impacts**

Chrysogelos, Angelos. 2020. "Populism and Foreign Policy in Europe: The Foreign Policies of Populist Parties in Power." *Comparative European Politics* 18 (4): 451–472.

Kaufman, Joyce P. "The US perspective on NATO under Trump: lessons of the past and prospects for the future." *International Affairs* 93 (2) 251-266.

### **10/13: International Institutions**

Learning Goals: Understand why we might expect to see cooperation in areas of economics and sometimes in area of security (and realist skepticism on the latter).

Keohane, Robert. "International Institutions" in Robert Art, Timothy Crawford, and Kenneth Waltz, *International Politics* (13<sup>th</sup> edition).

Mearsheimer, John. 1994. "The False Promise of International Institutions. *International Security*." 19(3) 5–49. [Read the introduction and conclusion]

### **10/15: Economic Interdependence**

Learning Goals: Understand the debate on trade and its prospects for peace.

Zakaria, Fareed. 2008. "Does Globalization Promote Peace?" *Foreign Affairs*, 87(1), 113–120.

Rodrik, Dani. 2018. "Populism and the Economics of Globalization." *Journal of International Business Policy* 1 (1–2): 12–33.

Recommended: Irwin, Douglas. 2017 "The False Promise of Protectionism: Why Trump's Trade Policy Is Backfiring." *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 3 (May/June 2017): 45–56.

### **10/20: Constructivism I**

Learning Goals: Understand the core elements of constructivism and how it differs from and complements neo-realism and neo-liberalism.

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," in Robert Art, Timothy Crawford, and Kenneth Waltz, *International Politics* (13<sup>th</sup> edition).

### **10/22: Constructivism II: Norms**

Learning Goals: Understand what norms are and how they spread.

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization*. Vol. 52 (4) 887-917.

### **10/27: Human Rights and International Norms**

Learning Goals: Understand how norms related to human rights spread and the extent to which they are enforced in practice.

Risse, Thomas, Stephen Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1999. *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*. Cambridge University Press — Introduction (Recommended: Chapter 1).

Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., and Kiyoteru Tsutsui. 2005. "Human rights in a globalizing world: The paradox of empty promises." *American journal of sociology* 110 (5) 1373-1411.

## **10/29: In-Class Midterm #2**

## **PART II: SPECIAL TOPICS**

### **11/3: Civil War**

Learning Goals: Learn to read an empirical paper and understand the different explanations for civil wars.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.

Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2006. "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 100 (3) 429-447.

### **11/5: Mass Killing**

Power, Samantha. 2001. "Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States Let the Rwandan Tragedy Happen." *Atlantic Monthly*, 288(2) 84–108.

Beyrer, Chris, and Adeeba Kamarulzaman. 2017. "Ethnic cleansing in Myanmar: the Rohingya crisis and human rights." *The Lancet* 390 (10102) 1570-1573.

### **11/10: Just and Unjust Wars: Gaza, Iraq, and Afghanistan**

Walzer, Michael. 2006. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. 4th ed. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 8, "War Against Civilians," 135–143.

International Crisis Group (ICG). 2023. "Gaza: The Humanitarian and Political Crisis."

### **11/12: The Logic of Terrorism**

Pape, Robert A. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97 (3): 343–361.

Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2009. "How Terrorist Campaigns End." *Foreign Affairs* 88 (4): 19–34.

### **11/17: Was the War on Terror a Success?**

Byman, Daniel. 2015. "Beyond Counterterrorism: Washington's War on Terror Strategy." *Foreign Affairs*.

Kreps, Sarah. 2011. "International Cooperation in the War on Terror." Oxford University Press, Chapter 1.

### **11/19: Case Study: War in Ukraine**

Learning Goals: Apply IR Theories to the War in Ukraine

Smith, Nicholas Ross, and Grant Dawson. 2022. "Mearsheimer, realism, and the Ukraine war." *Analyse & Kritik* 44 (2) 175-200.

We'll have a discussion on the war in Ukraine and what it reveals about power, cooperation, and the defense of international norms.

### **11/24: Misinformation and International Relations**

Lanoszka, Alexander. 2019. "Disinformation in International Politics." *European journal of international security* 4 (2) 227-248.

Erlich, Aaron, and Calvin Garner. 2023. "Is Pro-Kremlin Disinformation Effective? Evidence from Ukraine." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 28 (1) 5-28.

### **11/26: THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS**

### **12/1: Is the International System Changing? The Role of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Beckley, Michael. 2011. "China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure," *International Security* 36 (3)

Mearsheimer, John J. 2021. "The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics," *Foreign Affairs*.

### **12/3: International System Change + Course Conclusion**

Ikenberry, G. J. 2018. "The End of Liberal International Order?" *International Affairs*, 94(1), 7–23.

## Reading Worksheet

*For each book, chapter, or article assigned in this course, you should fill out the following (nongraded) worksheet. Many of these points can be addressed in a sentence or two (e.g. Questions 1 and 2; in some cases, answers will not need even to be full sentences (e.g., Question); and in some cases, the answers may overlap. These worksheets should be retained: they will be useful for future reference.*

1. State the central question that the reading addresses.
2. State the central argument(s) defended in the paper in response to this question.
3. What type of reasoning or evidence is used to support these arguments? If it is an analytical paper, what is the logic that undergirds the argument? If an empirical paper, what type of data is employed? Are there other data sources that you think might be more appropriate?
4. Do you find the claims of the reading convincing? What do you see as the main gaps that need to be filled?
5. Why (if at all) is the reading interesting?
6. Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.)
7. Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable.
8. Considering your answers to the previous questions, write an abstract for the article of no more than 100 words. (Feel free to repeat formulations given in response to earlier questions.)
9. When you have done this for individual readings, take some time to think about the various readings you have been assigned in relation to each other. See if you can write or imagine a summary table for all the readings taken together which compares and contrasts them.