UCONN
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

POLS 1402
Introduction to International Relations

Online,
Asynchronous

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Office Hours, By Appointment

Description

This is an introductory course to the study of international relations. It will be organized around critical questions that shape the dominant lines of inquiry in the field. Among other, we will explore: why do states go to war? Under what conditions do governments restrict international commerce? How does capital mobility constrain national economic policy? What is the role of international organizations such as the IMF and the United Nations in altering national interests and state action? What role do nonstate actors, such as multinational corporations and transnational activists, play in world politics?

One important goal of the course is for students to continually reflect on the core questions that animate the field of international relations. These include:

- Why is there no world government?
- How do we understand politics in the absence of government?
- What are its consequences for conflict and cooperation?
- What are its consequences for markets and economic behavior?
- Is world government possible?

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to do the following upon completing this course:

1. Explain the major debates over international politics.
2. Apply insights from these debates to contemporary policy issues.
3. Differentiate how major theories account for international politics.
4. Demonstrate knowledge and analytical ability that will be foundational in more specialized and/or advanced courses.

Modality:

The course is fully asynchronous, which means there are no required live class meetings; instead, you will work through daily modules on your own schedule. Each module includes short lectures and assigned readings delivered through the Revel platform, all accessible via HuskyCT. You are responsible for keeping up with the posted modules, completing quizzes and activities by their deadlines, and regularly checking HuskyCT for announcements and updates.

Common Curriculum

UConn's Common Curriculum strives to prepare students for 21st-century challenges by combining coursework across disciplines to expand their worldviews, enhance their range of skills, and develop into critical, creative, emotionally intelligent, and interdisciplinary thinkers. The Curriculum is designed to help

students learn to be versatile in a rapidly changing world; combine knowledge in innovative ways; apply learning strategies to new contexts, including their major; see local and global patterns and the interconnectedness of intellectual work; and appreciate how we need each other to tackle today's challenges.

The University defined a student learning objective(s) (i.e. what a student should know, be able to do, or attitudes/beliefs they should possess by the end of the course) for each Topic of Inquiry in the Common Curriculum. Each Common Curriculum course aligns to one or more of those objectives. The course's student learning objective(s) align to the Common Curriculum objective(s) and course assessments (e.g. assignments, exams/quizzes).

Topics of Inquiry	Common Curriculum objective	Course student learning objective(s) (LO)	Corresponding Assessment(s)
3: Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice	Objective 3.3: Students will able to discuss the foundations of social inclusion and democracy and the actions that can create and maintain them within national and/or global contexts	LO1, LO2, LO3	Discussion, Quizzes, Exams, Essays
	Objective 3.4: Students will be able to recognize and critically investigate the various socio-political forces that have historically and currently excluded individuals from societies across the globe, the structures of various kinds of oppression(racism, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, etc.), the different levels on which they occur, and the forces that create, maintain, and perpetuate them.	LO1, LO2, LO3	Discussion, Quizzes, Exams, Essays

TOI-5: Individual Values and Social Institutions	Objective 5: Using theories and methods of social scientific or humanistic inquiry, students will be able to critically examine how institutions and values are justified and/or how they relate to political, social, economic, or familial institutions.	LO1, LO2, LO3	Discussion, Quizzes, Exams, Essays

Course Materials

Readings are an essential part of this course. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings for their corresponding module. There will be one required textbook that is available through the bookstore:

- McDonald, Patrick J., Terrence L. Chapman, and Robert Moser. 2020. *An Introduction to International Relations: Opening the Global System*. Pearson. **(Hereafter: OGS)**

Time Commitment

You should expect to dedicate 10 or more hours a week to this course. This expectation is based on the various course activities, assignments, and assessments and the University of Connecticut's policy regarding credit hours. More information related to hours per week per credit can be accessed at the Online Student website.

Assignments

Module Assessment	30%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Analytical Essay	20%
(EC: Causal Diagram)	(5%)

Module Assessment (30%) – Your engagement during each modules will be assessed through short quizzes on the Revel platform. These quizzes are designed to help you regularly check your understanding and stay on top of the reading. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped at the end of the semester to allow for an off day or technical issue.

Midterm Exam (25%): The midterm consists of 40 questions completed online in 75 minutes and is open-book. It covers material from Classes 1–7, including lectures, readings, and key concepts discussed in class. You should use your notes and readings to prepare in advance rather than relying solely on looking things up during the exam.

Final Exam (25%): The final exam also consists of 40 questions completed online in 75 minutes and is open-book. It covers material from Classes 8–14 and will focus on how the different parts of the course fit together. Like the midterm, success will depend on consistent engagement throughout the semester, not last-minute searching during the exam.

Analytical Essay (20%): The analytical essay is a 5–6 page, double-spaced paper due at the end of the semester. In it, you will evaluate three major sources of international order—power, institutions and rules, and norms and ideas—and argue which one matters most for understanding international relations. Your grade will be based on the clarity of your argument, the quality of your evidence, and the organization and writing of your essay.

Extra Credit: Causal Diagram (5%): You may earn up to 5% extra credit toward your final grade by creating an annotated diagram that applies the three major sources of international order—power, institutions/rules, and norms/ideas—to a current conflict. Your diagram should clearly label key actors, relationships, and mechanisms, with brief annotations explaining how each source of order operates in your chosen case. Extra credit will be awarded based on creativity, accuracy, and how effectively you connect course concepts to the real-world conflict.

Late or Missed Assignments

Policy regarding academic make-up assignments is another context where UConn works to promote inclusivity and equity. Make-up assignments are provided to accommodate "practice or otherwise observe a sincerely held religious practice or belief," or, a university-sanctioned activity (e.g. official responsibilities of student-athletes). Please contact me via email to coordinate an accommodation no later than the third week of class, or one week before, if the conflict occurs during the first three weeks of class.

Being absent from class or other educational assignment does not excuse a student from keeping up with information shared or expectations set during the missed class(es). Students are responsible for reviewing the syllabus and class slides to acquire information provided during missed class(es). For instance, if you are reading this, send me an email with your favorite meme, Tiktok, or social media post for 1% extra credit.

Feedback and Grades

This class will follow the standard university grade scale Grade scale, e.g. A = 100 - 93, A- = 92.9 - 90, B+ = 89.9 – 87, etc.

The best option for discussing course material and assignments is to email me. I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades in a timely manner. In general, I will do my best to respond to all student questions within 24 hours, and return course assignment within a week. Please keep in mind that I will not respond to emails after 5 PM or anytime on the weekends.

In the event that a student wishes to dispute their grade on an assignment, the following procedure may be used. First, students must wait at least 48 hours after the assignment has been handed back. Second, students can email me to set up an appointment. This email should include a separate, typed summary of why they believe the grade is unfair. After meeting in person to discuss the assignment, I will then reevaluate the grade. However, revised grades may be higher or lower than the original, and this new grade will be final.

To keep track of your performance in the course, refer to My Grades in HuskyCT.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to act in accordance with the Student Conduct Code as well as the Guidelines for Academic Integrity at the University of Connecticut. I expect students to take this course seriously and to behave in a mature, appropriate manner during class. Students are allowed to use laptops and tablets for notetaking only. It is very obvious when students are distracted by other activities, and if students are caught repeatedly abusing this privilege then they will lose the ability to use their devices in class.

If you use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly, Bing, Open Assistant), you must disclose this clearly (via a footnote, endnote, acknowledgment, etc.). Note which tool(s) you used, how you used them, and what work you did yourself. Failure to disclose counts as cheating. Your writing must remain in your own voice, and you are responsible for the accuracy, quality, and appropriateness of all submitted work, since AI can generate vague or incorrect content.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities.

Course Schedule

Class 1

OGS, Module 1 - Introduction to International Relations
OGS, Module 2 - The International System

Class 2:

OGS, Module 3 - Thinking Theoretically About International Relations
OGS, Module 4 - Rationalist Approaches in International Relations

Class 3:

OGS, Module 5 - Social and Psychological Approaches to International Relations
OGS, Module 7 - War in IR

Class 4:

OGS, Module 8 - Explaining the Outbreak of War, Part I
OGS, Module 9 - Explaining the Outbreak of War, Part II

Class 5:

OGS, Module 11 – Alliances and Military Power
OGS, Module 12 - Civil War and International Relations

Class 6:

OGS, Module 13 – Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Deterrence
OGS, Module 14 – Threats to Nuclear Deterrence

Class 7:

OGS Module 15 – Terrorism and Counterterrorism
Midterm Exam

Class 8:

OGS Module 18 – Domestic Politics and International Relations
OGS, Module 19 – Democracy in International Relations

Class 9:

OGS, Module 20 – Great Power Politics
OGS, Module 21 – Global Governance

Class 10:

OGS, Module 22 – International Law
OGS, Module 23 – International Norms

Class 11:

OGS, Module 25 – Global Civil Society and Transnational Actors
OGS, Module 26 – Global Economic Integration

Class 12:

OGS, Module 27 – The International Politics of Trade Policy
OGS, Module 28 – The International Politics of Exchange Rates

Class 13:

OGS, Module 29 – The International Politics of Capital Flows
OGS, Module 30 – International Organizations in the Global Economy

Class 13:

OGS, Module 33 – Environmental Politics
Final Exam

Important Due Dates

ITEM / ASSESSMENT	RELEASE DATE	DUE DATE
Module 1 – Introduction	Dec 25	Dec 28
Module 2 – The International System	Dec 25	Dec 28
Module 3 – Thinking Theoretically About Ir	Dec 26	Dec 29
Module 4 – Rationalist Approaches	Dec 26	Dec 29
Module 5 – Social & Psychological Approaches	Dec 27	Dec 30
Module 7 – War In Ir	Dec 27	Dec 30
Module 8 – The Origins of War, Part 1	Dec 28	Dec 31
Module 9 – The Origins of War, Part 2	Dec 28	Dec 31
Module 11 – Military Power and Security Politics	Jan 1	Jan 4
Module 12 – Civil War and International Relations	Jan 1	Jan 4
Module 13 – Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Deterrence	Jan 2	Jan 5
Module 14 – Threats To Nuclear Deterrence	Jan 2	Jan 5
Module 15 – Terrorism and Counterterrorism	Jan 3	Jan 6
Midterm Exam	Jan 3	Jan 6
Module 18 – Domestic Politics and International Relations	Jan 4	Jan 7
Module 19 – Democracy In International Relations	Jan 4	Jan 7
Module 20 – Great Power Politics	Jan 5	Jan 8
Module 21 – Global Governance	Jan 5	Jan 8
Module 22 – International Law	Jan 8	Jan 11
Module 23 – International Norms	Jan 8	Jan 11
Module 25 – Global Civil Society and Transnational Actors	Jan 9	Jan 12
Module 26 – Global Economic Integration	Jan 9	Jan 12
Module 27 – Trade Policy	Jan 10	Jan 13
Module 28 – The International Politics of Exchange Rates	Jan 10	Jan 13
Module 29 – The International Politics of Capital Flows	Jan 11	Jan 14
Module 30 – IOs in the Global Economy	Jan 11	Jan 14
Module 33 – Environmental Politics	Jan 12	Jan 15
Final Exam	Jan 12	Jan 15
Extra Credit: Causal Diagram	—	Jan 16
Analytical Essay	—	Jan 17