

PS0500: International Relations

231 Lawrence Hall, Tue. & Thurs., 12-3.15 pm

Summer 2025

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Office Hours: Tue. & Thurs., 11 am - 12 pm or by appointment

Course Website: canvas.pitt.edu

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to key theories and concepts in international relations (IR), focusing on the various frameworks used to analyze the behavior of states, international institutions, and non-state actors in the global arena. The course explores both classical and contemporary theories, offering students the tools to critically evaluate and apply different approaches to understanding international issues such as war, trade, human rights, and global governance. By examining these theories, students will gain insight into how power, interests, and institutions shape world politics.

The course is structured into four main parts. The first section covers foundational IR theories, including realism, liberalism, and constructivism. The second section is devoted to understanding international conflict and cooperation, including international and civil wars and the impact of domestic and international politics on conflict. The third section explores international political economy, institutions, and global governance. The final section examines contemporary challenges in world politics, such as globalization, environmental issues, and the role of international organizations in managing global conflicts.

By the end of this course, students will have a thorough understanding of the main theoretical approaches in IR and their application to real-world political events and trends. Students will be capable of analyzing and comparing different theories, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and applying them to contemporary inter-

national issues. Through a combination of readings, class discussions, and research assignments, students will develop critical thinking and analytical skills essential for careers in international relations, diplomacy, and global policy analysis.

Required Text

Jeffrey Frieden, David Lake, Kenneth Schultz. *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions*. 2019. New York: W. W. Norton Company. (Hereafter, FLS)

In addition to the assigned chapters of FLS, you should also read the international affairs section of a major news outlet, such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, or the Economist on a daily basis.

Assignments and Grading

1. Participation (15%)

Regular attendance is required and will directly impact your participation grade. You are expected to attend every class, arrive on time, and come prepared, having completed all assigned readings. Active and thoughtful participation in discussions is a key part of this course.

You are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. More than three total absences (excused or unexcused) will result in a failing grade for the course. Please communicate in advance if you must miss a class for a valid reason.

2. In-class Quizzes (40%)

At the end of each class, there will be a short quiz, in the form of multiple choice questions or a short essay to test student's basic knowledge on the material of that day. Quizzes will be conducted in class. There will be 10 quizzes in total, the lowest two grades will be dropped automatically.

3. Term Paper (15%)

In this assignment, students will analyze a significant foreign policy issue and propose a solution. The paper must include an introduction stating the chosen question and explaining its significance, a background section outlining the historical context and events leading up to the current situation, an analysis

section where students apply concepts covered in class to examine the issue, and finally, a conclusion summarizing existing expert opinions on potential solutions. Students should indicate which solution they find most compelling or propose an original alternative if they disagree with existing perspectives. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be provided separately.

The paper is due June 15 and will be submitted via Canvas. Students are expected to write a 5-page paper respecting the following formatting specifications: A4, Times New Roman, 12 pt, 1.5 space, 2.5 cm from top, left, right and bottom margins.

4. **Final Exam (30%)**

The final exam will be an in-class exam. Students will answer several short answers and one long answer question.

Grading Scale

A+: 97-100, A: 94-96, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76, C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 63-66, D-: 60-62, F: 0-59.

Course Policies

1. **Make-Ups and Late Assignments:** Make-up assignments, quizzes, or exams will only be allowed in cases of documented illness, family or personal emergencies, or university-sponsored travel. In such cases, students must contact the instructor before the scheduled due date and provide appropriate documentation. Late submissions without an approved excuse will be penalized one letter grade per day, including weekends and holidays. Extensions will not be granted retroactively.
2. **Academic Integrity and Generative AI Use:** Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty, as outlined in the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or any form of dishonest conduct will not be tolerated and will be reported in accordance with university procedures.

The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Google Gemini, etc.) is not permitted for any graded assignments unless explicitly allowed by the instructor. Unauthorized use of AI tools will be treated as a violation of the

academic integrity policy. If you are unsure whether a particular use is acceptable, please consult the instructor in advance.

3. **Special Accommodations:** If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS) at 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 or drsrecep@pitt.edu. DRS will verify your condition, determine reasonable accommodations, and notify the instructor. Students are encouraged to begin this process early in the semester.
4. **Statement on Classroom Recording:** To promote an open and respectful learning environment, recording of lectures, discussions, or classroom activities is not permitted without explicit permission from the instructor. This policy is intended to foster the free exchange of ideas and protect the privacy of all participants.
5. **Communication and Email:** Students are responsible for checking their university email regularly, as important announcements, updates, and assignment reminders will be communicated through this channel. Failure to check email will not be accepted as an excuse for missed information or deadlines.
6. **Attendance and Participation:** Regular attendance and meaningful participation are essential components of this course. Students are expected to arrive on time, complete all assigned readings before class, and contribute constructively to discussions. You are permitted one unexcused absence during the semester. Students with more than three total absences (excused or unexcused) will receive a failing grade for the course. Please notify the instructor as early as possible if you anticipate missing a class.
7. **Syllabus Change Policy** This syllabus is subject to change with advanced notice if we move slower than I anticipate. In this case, I will shift the due dates for the assignments to give you more time. Make sure you check your university email during the semester regularly as stated above.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

This course values and respects the diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences that each student brings to our learning community. As we explore international relations, conflict, political economy and other dynamics of global politics, we will critically engage with multiple viewpoints and challenge assumptions in a respectful and inclusive manner. I am committed to creating an equitable classroom

where all students have the opportunity to succeed, participate, and feel heard. I encourage open discussions that acknowledge structural inequalities, historical narratives, and the voices of marginalized communities in global politics. If there are ways I can better support your learning experience, I welcome your input and am dedicated to fostering a space where everyone can thrive.

Course Schedule

Week 1

May 15: Change and Continuity in International History

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 1

Week 2

May 20: Interests, Interactions, and Institutions

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 2

May 22: Why do states fight with each other?: The Bargaining Model of War

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 3

Week 3

May 27: Domestic Politics and War

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 4

May 29: International Institutions and War: Alliances, The UN & Humanitarian Intervention

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 5

Week 4

June 3: Civil Wars and Terrorism

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 6

June 5: International Trade

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 7

Week 5

June 10: International Financial Relations, International Monetary Relations & Development

- Required reading: FLS, Chapters 8-10

June 12: International Law

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 11
- Foreign Policy Memo due June 15
- No quiz

Week 6

June 17: Human Rights

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 12

June 19: International Environmental Politics

- Required reading: FLS, Chapter 13

Week 7

June 24: Final exam