
Seminar
Introduction to International Relations
Summer semester 2023

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Office hours Mondays, 4.15 – 5.30 pm, registration via MyStudy. In the office or via Zoom.

Time and place

Fridays, starting 21 April 2023 2:15 – 3:45 pm Weekly seminar C12.006

Course description

International politics is a key subject of daily news: from the Russian invasion of Ukraine via the strategic rivalry between the United States and China or the international spread of the coronavirus to the diplomatic haggling in large international negotiations, such as regular United Nations climate negotiations. The seminar introduces students to the academic study of international relations, that is, relations between states that reach beyond national borders. We will discuss seminal readings in three main areas: war and peace, functional international cooperation, and international political economy.

While we will occasionally engage contemporary politics, the focus in this course is on learning about typical dynamics and governance structures in international politics, the concepts that scholars have developed to understand them, and academic arguments about the reasons that underlie such dynamics. The course employs a mixture of formats, such as short lectures, group discussions, student presentations, and break-out groups.

Course objectives

At the end of this course, students will

- have learned to identify and summarise key arguments in seminal International Relations texts;

- know and critically examine key concepts in the study of international relations;
- have obtained an overview of key theoretical arguments in three core areas of the discipline.

Course assessment

Students will either write a long essay on an assigned question or complete three shorter assignments that include an oral presentation as well as two short papers on course readings.

The **long essay** encompasses a maximum of 2500 words (excluding cover sheet and bibliography). It is **due by 10 July 2023**. Please upload the essay as a pdf document in the respective folder on *MyStudy* (“*Material*”). Essays that are submitted late will be given a “fail.” Good essays give a clear answer to the question posed and do so based on a clear and coherent structure and a development of the argument that follows a clear red thread. The essay engages at least four academic texts. I will give some advice on essay writing in session 9.

Choose one of the following questions for your essay.

- Which factors best explain the Russian invasion of Ukraine? Consider factors that are located on at least two different levels of analysis.
- In what ways does climate change require international cooperation and why has it been so difficult to make progress in solving the problem?

The **three shorter assignments** include an oral presentation as well as two short papers on course readings (each worth 33 percent of the final grade).

- The *oral presentation* (in groups of 2 students) offers a concise summary of the reading for a particular week and develops two points where the text is unclear or worthy of criticism or has problematic implications. The presentation lasts a maximum of 15 minutes, of which a maximum of 10 minutes is dedicated to the text summary and at least 5 minutes to critical comments. The group presentations begin in session 3.
- The two *short papers*, each of not more than 1000 words in length, summarize and comment on two readings assigned in the syllabus. Two thirds of the text are designated to the summary and one third is dedicated to a critical commentary point. The short papers cannot be on the text of the oral presentation. Short papers are due before the session in which we discuss the reading. Short papers are to be uploaded to a folder entitled “short papers” on *MyStudy* and take the format:

Teaching arrangements

This seminar is designed as a reading and discussion course and therefore requires your active participation. Active participation means that you work through the texts thoroughly in preparation for the respective seminar session and are prepared to share your thoughts and ideas with your fellow students during the session. When preparing the texts, concentrate on the most important arguments and do not lose yourself in unimportant secondary arguments. In the first session we will discuss how you can learn to distinguish between the important and the unimportant.

You can find the reading material for the individual sessions either as a pdf file on MyStudy under “Material” or it is available electronically in the Leuphana library. Didactically, we will employ a mix of small and plenum group discussions, oral presentations and other formats.

Course overview

Session	Date	Topic
Part 1: Introduction		
--	7 April	No session (Easter)
--	14 April	No session (travel)
1	21 April	Introduction and overview Reading political science texts & exercise
2	28 April	1:30 – 3:30 pm, Libeskind auditorium (central building) Award of honorary doctorate to former Latvian President Egils Levits, including lecture and panel discussion on “Die Europäische Union als Rechts- und Wertegemeinschaft” (in German)
Part 2: War & peace		
3	5 May	Security dilemma, balance of power and military alliances
4	12 May	Cultural roots of conflict
5	19 May	Sanctions
Part 3: International cooperation		
6	26 May	Functions of international organizations
7	2 June	Interests and power in international climate policy
8	9 June	Climate change as a difficult cooperation problem
Part 4: International political economy		
9	16 June	International economic order in the post-World War Two era Tips on essay writing <i>Evaluation of the course</i>
10	23 June	<i>Self-study / essay writing (No session)</i>
11	30 June	Development and feminism
12	7 July	Conclusion
	10 July	Long essays due

General reading and useful online material

The best introductory textbook on IR is

- Joseph Grieco, John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno. 2019. *Introduction to International Relations: Perspectives, Connections, and Enduring Questions*. London: Red Globe Press, second edition.

And here you find a very accessible book on International Relations that may be even easier to read than the aforementioned one:

<https://www.e-ir.info/publication/beginners-textbook-international-relations/>

There are some good overviews of International Relations theory. Of these, I recommend the following three (the latest edition is given, but it is not always available in the Leuphana library)

- Dunne, Tim, Milja Kurki und Steve Smith (Eds.) 2020. *International Relations Theories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 5th edition.
- Weber, Cynthia. 2021. *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge, 5th edition.
- Reus-Smit, Christian and Duncan Snidal (Eds.) 2008. *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

I also recommend the following video series, in which you can get to know the thinking and life story of some of the (older) authors in the syllabus in about one-hour conversations. The series introduces you to the people behind the abstract concepts and theories.

- *Conversations with History* (Host: Harry Kreisler) ([YouTube](#))

I also recommend the following video series with short clips on selected topics in the discipline.

- *Understanding International Relations* ([Open University](#))
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhQpDGfX5e7C6FA51YU3VPYN7kWHI1mxQ>

Syllabus

Part 1: Introduction

21 April (session 1)

Introduction and overview; reading political science texts & exercise

In this session I give an overview of the seminar organization and process. Please take a look at the seminar schedule for both the lecture and the accompanying seminar in advance.

In addition, we prepare ourselves to read difficult specialist articles on international relations. What do I have to consider when reading? How do I read effectively? These are some of the questions we want to discuss in this session. It should help you in the course of the seminar to read more effectively and to understand and retain more of the texts you have read. We will conclude the session with an exercise.

Reading:

- Hoover Green, Amelia. 2013. "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps." Available at: https://calgara.github.io/Pol157_Spring2019/howtoread.pdf.

28 April (session 2)

Event in the Libeskind auditorium (in German), 1:30 – 3:30 pm

Award of honorary doctorate to former Latvian President Egils Levits, including lecture and panel discussion on "Die Europäische Union als Rechts- und Wertegemeinschaft"

Part 2: War & Peace

5 May (session 3)

Security dilemma, balance of power and military alliances

The security dilemma is a central concept of the Realist school of International Relations theory. In this session we will learn what it means and where it comes from. From a Realist perspective, states may be able to escape the security dilemma via a power balance between roughly equally strong (groups of) states. When individual states are small and militarily weak, a military alliance is often the only way to improve their security. In this session we will explore the relationship between the security dilemma, military alliances and the concept of balance of power.

Reading:

- Walt, Stephen. 1985. Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power. *International Security* 9(4): 3-43. [eJournal] (Skim the case study starting on p. 34!)

12 May (session 4)

Cultural roots of conflict

In addition to the dynamics of the security dilemma and power imbalances, war can also have cultural causes. This cause of conflict lies in the fact that people have different values and core beliefs, which can lead to violent friction. In this session we will read a modern "classic" of conflict studies. Long before the terrorist attacks on the United States, Huntington grappled with the future of post-Cold War conflicts. He asks whether the conflict between the ideologies of the Cold War is now being replaced by a clash of civilizations.

Reading:

- Huntington, Samuel. 1993. The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs* 72(3): 22-49. [eJournal]

19 May (session 5)

Sanctions

In view of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there is renewed talk of sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy. Sanctions are attempts to change a state's foreign policy through non-military coercion. This often takes place by cutting off the target state from international networks. In this session, we look at the conditions under which economic sanctions are effective.

Reading:

- Peksen, Dursun. 2019. When Do Imposed Economic Sanctions Work? A Critical Review of the Sanctions Effectiveness Literature. *Defence and Peace Economics* 30(6): 635-647. [eJournal]

Part 3: International cooperation

26 May (session 6)

Functions of international organizations

In this session, we explore what is perhaps the most influential theory to explain international cooperation: the functionalist approach. Functionalist approaches explain international cooperation in terms of the positive effects of the functions that cooperation performs for states. According to this approach, states weigh the positive gains of international cooperation that can be promoted by international institutions against the sovereignty costs that arise as a result. Sovereignty costs mean that states have to accept certain restrictions on their national ability to act independently. In this session, we trace this argument through international organizations, the most institutionalized form of international cooperation.

Reading:

- Snidal, Duncan und Kenneth Abbot. 1998. Why States Act through Formal International Organizations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42(1): 3-32. [eJournal]

2 June (session 7)

Interests and power in international climate policy

An alternative understanding of international cooperation focuses on the interests and power resources of the actors involved. In this perspective, a particular cooperative outcome reflects the interests of the most powerful actors. Exactly where the power resources of states lie is a matter of debate: sometimes it is military power; at other times it is economic power; sometimes it is also the relative independence from other states or good alternatives to a certain internationally coordinated policy (attractive outside options). In this session, we trace this argument by reference to international climate policy.

Reading:

- Graham, Erin und Alexander Thompson. 2023. "Overlapping Institutions for Climate Finance: A North-South Perspective." Paper given at the Workshop 'New Research on International Organization Authority', Leuphana University of Lüneburg, 9-10 February.

9 June (session 8)

Climate change as a difficult cooperation problem

Why is the international community struggling to deal effectively with climate change? Many media and commentators suggest that the problem lies in the lack of "political will" on the part of the states involved. In this session we will trace the reasons for the slow progress and look at the nature of the cooperation problems. In doing so, we will notice that climate change consists of several interconnected but inherently different

cooperation problems, each of which requires its own solution. If one is certainly aware of this complexity, one understands better where the “lack of political will” lies in many cases.

Reading:

- Hale, Thomas, David Held und Kevon Young. 2013. *Gridlock: Why Global Cooperation Is Failing When We Need it Most*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapter 4 (**only** pp. 232-37 and 251-272!).

Part 4: International political economy

16 June (session 9)

International economic order after World War Two; tips on essay writing

The three decades after the Second World War are often referred to as the “golden age” of Western welfare states, in which citizens were comprehensively insured against life risks such as unemployment and illness. In this text, Ruggie describes how the desire for economic stability went hand in hand with the liberalization of international economic relations by international regimes - an economic order that Ruggie describes as "embedded liberalism". This phase stands in stark contrast to the period since the 1980s, when globalization and deregulation – i.e. neoliberal ideas – became influential.

In this session, I will also give some advice on how to write good essays.

Reading:

- Ruggie, John G. 1982. International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order. *International Organization* 36(2): 379-415. [eJournal] **Only read to p. 404!**

23 June (session 10)

Self-study and essay writing

There will be no in-class session this week. Use the time to make up on reading from past weeks or work on your essays, short and long.

30 June (session 11)

Development and feminism

Feminism offers an increasingly prominent approach to understanding international politics. In this session, we will try to understand this approach based on the academic discussion about development and development policy. We are particularly concerned

with the feminist and postcolonial criticism of existing development concepts and the practice of development cooperation.

Reading:

- McEwan, Cheryl. 2001. Postcolonialism, feminism and development: intersections and dilemmas. *Progress in Development Studies* 1(2): 93-111.

7 July (session 12)

Conclusion

In this session we want to revisit the seminar and what we have learned. I would like to get your feedback on the seminar, and we can clarify outstanding questions with regard to the long essay.