
Political Science 400

Introduction to International Relations

Professor Alex Weisiger

Office: 305 Perelman Center for Political Science and Economics

Email: weisiger@upenn.edu

MW: 1:45-2:45

Classroom: Stiteler B6

Office Hours: Thurs. 1:45-3:45

Teaching Assistants

TBA

Why do great powers like the United States, China, and Russia find it so difficult to build trust and maintain cooperative relations? Why, despite their costs, have wars recurred throughout history? Why has sustained economic prosperity proven so difficult to achieve in much of the world? Why has effective cooperation to prevent climate change proven so elusive? The study of international politics is in many ways (and with important exceptions) the study of failure. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the core concepts that international relations scholars use to understand and explain these failures.

Specifically, over the course of the semester, we will discuss the history of the international political system over the past century, core concepts and theories used in the study of international politics, key topics in both international security (such as the causes of war, alliance politics, and nuclear weapons) and in international political economy (such as international trade, economic development, human rights, and the environment), and current political concerns (such as the war in Ukraine and worsening relations between China and the United States).

By the end of this semester, you should have a deeper understanding of historical and contemporary international affairs. More importantly, however, you should be familiar with the key concepts and arguments that international relations scholars have used to understand international politics. In other words, the goal of this course is to help you develop the ability to argue critically about developments in international politics.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend lectures, complete the assigned readings, and participate regularly in recitations. You are also required to stay informed about current events in international politics, by reading a major news source. I have found the *Economist* particularly useful, as it provides in-depth coverage of parts of the world that are frequently neglected. Other acceptable news sources include the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, or the *Washington Post*.

You should expect that knowledge of major world current events will be necessary to answer midterm and final exam questions.

Your final grade will be a function of your performance in an essential knowledge quiz, recitation, a five-page paper, two in-class midterm exams, and an in-class final exam. ***Assignment due dates below are preliminary, and may change prior to the semester.

Assignment	Due Date	% of Final Grade
Essential Knowledge Quiz	Week of Sept. 11	5%
Paper	September 29	10%
Midterm Exam 1	Oct. 11	20%
Midterm Exam 2	Nov. 13	20%
Final Exam	TBA	30%
Participation in Recitation	Continual	15%

The essential knowledge quiz, which will take place in recitation during the week of September 11, includes geography, basic factual information, and important historical dates. The full list of information for which you are responsible is posted on Canvas (under the Modules tab), as are practice quizzes (under the Quizzes tab). Material covered in the essential knowledge quiz may also appear on subsequent exams.

Your recitation grade is a function of both attendance and participation (with quality of participation mattering more than quantity—in other words, a few insightful comments will matter more than talking a lot without saying much of anything). If you are concerned about being able to participate, I suggest that you take 5-10 minutes after completing the readings to remind yourself of the central arguments the authors make and to think about questions or objections that you have.

Midterm exams will be taken during the normal classroom time on specified dates. The final will take place at the time determined by the registrar, which will be announced during the semester (likely in October). All exams will consist of three parts: 1) a multiple choice section with questions about material from lecture, arguments in specific readings, or current events, 2) a short answer section with questions that ask you to explain an argument from a reading or from lecture, and 3) an essay section that asks you to develop a more general argument in response to a prompt. In the essay, you will be expected to argue for a theoretical position and against at least one other position (as you are required to do in the paper assigned earlier in the semester), to discuss relevant real-world evidence for or against the theories you discuss, and to reference material from the course to support your argument. In both sections 2 and 3 you will have a choice of questions to answer; for section 3 the available questions will be chosen at random from a broader list that will be distributed prior to the exam. To give you a better sense of what to expect, I have posted the exams that students took the last time that I taught this class (under the Modules tab on Canvas, at the bottom of the page).

Paper Assignment

One of the essential skills for a social scientist is the ability to identify and critique the im-

plications of different theories that provide competing explanations for the same phenomena. For the paper, which will be due on September 29, you will be given a choice of competing perspectives on an important general issue in international politics, and will be asked to explain how the authors would apply their theories to explain an important recent event. A critical part of the assignment will be making an argument for the superiority of one of the two perspectives through a critique of the argument that you find less compelling. More specific information about this assignment will be available at the start of the fall semester.

Office Hours

My office hours are held in my office (305 Perelman Center for Political Science and Economics) on Thursdays from 1:45-3:45. I am also happy to meet over Zoom if you would prefer that option. Office hours provide an opportunity for you to ask questions about course material or assignments, but also a forum for more general questions—while the large format of the course limits my ability to get to know all students as well as I would like, I encourage you to drop by.

Regrading Policy

We put a lot of time into evaluating and providing feedback on your work. That said, if comments on your work are unclear or you are uncertain why you received the grade that you did, you should always feel free to ask. When it comes to regrading, most students who request regrades in fact did not merit a higher grade than the one that they initially received. If, however, you sincerely believe that your work deserved a higher grade, there is a set procedure for reevaluating your work. Specifically, no *sooner* than 48 hours after you have received your grade, you may submit a written request for a regrade to your TA in which you clearly and specifically articulate your thoughts as to why you deserve a higher grade. If you remain unsatisfied with the TA's regrade, you may then appeal to the head TA, and ultimately to me. *Bear in mind that at all stages of the review phase your grade may go either up or down, and that if it goes down it will replace the original grade.*

Course Materials

All assigned readings are posted on the course Canvas site (under the Modules tab). You are expected to read all readings listed as required prior to the next recitation after the lecture for which they are assigned. Supplemental readings are not required, and you will not be asked about their contents in exams; they are listed in case you are interested in reading further on a given topic. In many cases, supplemental readings present arguments or findings that I will discuss in lecture.

In addition, you are required to read a major newspaper. Four acceptable options include the Economist, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, or the Washington Post, all of which provide student subscription options that can be reached by clicking on the relevant link. You can also gain online access to all of these publications through the Penn library system by searching for them in Franklin.

The topics, dates, and readings listed below are from fall 2021, and will be updated prior to the semester. I include them in this document to give you a sense of

what sorts of topics and readings you should expect to encounter over the course of the semester.

Course Plan

September 1: **Introduction**

Supplemental

- Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking”

September 6: Labor Day (no class)

Part I: A Quick Review of the Past Century

September 8: **The World Wars and the Era of Wilsonianism**

- Woodrow Wilson, The Fourteen Points
- Barry Eichengreen, “Versailles: The Economic Legacy”
- Lawrence Freedman, “The Rise and Fall of Great Power Wars”

September 13: **The Cold War: Superpower Competition and American Political Order**

- George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”

Supplemental

- Robert Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?”
- Michael J. Mazarr, “The Real History of the Liberal Order”
- Stewart M. Patrick, “Was the Liberal International Order All That?”

September 15: **The Post-Cold War World: Unipolarity and Unrest**

- Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”
- Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”
- John Mearsheimer, “Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War”

Part II: Core Concepts and Theories

September 20: **Power**

- Thucydides, The Melian Dialogue
- Morgenthau, “Six Principles of Political Realism”
- Joseph Nye, “What Is Power, and Why Does It Matter?”
- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp. 1-18

September 22: **Anarchy, Uncertainty, and the Security Dilemma**

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. XIII
- John Mearsheimer, “Anarchy and the Struggle for Power”
- Kelebogile Zvobgo and Meredith Loken, “Why Race Matters in International Relations”

Supplemental

- Henry Farrell, “Dark Leviathan”
- Jonathan Kirshner, “Gone But Not Forgotten: Trump’s Long Shadow and the End of American Credibility”
- Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”
- John Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault”
- David Kang, “Hierarchy and Hegemony in International Politics”

September 27: **Collective Action, Cooperation, and Institutions**

- Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”
- Robert Keohane, “International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?”
- John Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” pp. 5-26

September 29: **Domestic Politics, Leaders, and Democracy**

- Jessica Weeks, “Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict”

Supplemental Readings

- Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games”
- Randolph Siverson and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, “The Selectorate Theory and International Politics”

October 4: **Norms and Ideas**

- Martha Finnemore, “Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention”

Supplemental Readings

- Mark Zacher, “The Territorial Integrity Norm”

October 6: **Social Construction**

- Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It”
- Madison Schramm and Alexandra Stark, “Peacemakers or Iron Ladies? A Cross-National Study of Gender and International Conflict”

Supplemental Readings

- Oded Na’aman, “The Checkpoint”

Part III: Enduring Topics in International Politics

October 11: **Economic Development**

- Kenneth Sokoloff and Henry Engerman, “Institutions, Factors Endowments, and Paths of Development in the New World”
- Daron Acemoglu, “Root Causes: A Historical Approach to Assessing the Role of Institutions in Economic Development”
- William Easterly, “The New Tyranny”

October 13: **Trade**

- Alan S. Blinder, “The Free Trade Paradox: The Bad Politics of a Good Idea”
- Edward Mansfield and Diana Mutz, “Support for Free Trade: Self Interest, Sociotropic Politics, and Out-Group Anxiety”

October 18: **International Finance**

- Stephen Wertheim, “A World Safe for Capital: How Neoliberalism Shaped the International System”

Supplemental Readings

- Benjamin J. Cohen, “The Triad and the Unholy Trinity: Problems of International Monetary Cooperation”

October 20: **International Law and Human Rights**

- Rhona K. M. Smith, “Human Rights in International Law”
- Kathryn Sikkink, “Transnational Politics, International Relations Theory, and Human Rights”

- Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro, “International Law and Its Transformation through the Outlawry of War”

October 25: **The Causes of War**

- James Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War” (do not worry about understanding the math)
- Alexandre Debs and Nuno Monteiro, “Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War” (pp. 1-9, 15-28)
- Ahsan Butt, “Why Did the United States Invade Iraq in 2003?”

October 27: **The Democratic Peace**

- Emmanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace”

Supplemental Readings

- Bruce Russett and John Oneal, “The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefits of Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations”
- Patrick McDonald, “Great Powers, Hierarchy, and Endogenous Regimes: Rethinking the Domestic Causes of Peace”

November 1: **Alliances and the Balance of Power**

- Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 17-21, 27-31

Supplemental Readings

- Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, “An Economic Theory of Alliances”
- Nuno Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics*, ch. 4

November 3: **Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Proliferation**

- Nina Tannenwald, “The Nuclear Taboo: The US and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use”
- Scott D. Sagan and Benjamin A. Valentino, “Revisiting Hiroshima in Iran: What Americans Really Think about Using Nuclear Weapons and Killing Noncombatants”

Supplemental Readings

- Michal Smetana and Carmen Wunderlich, “Forum: Nonuse of Nuclear Weapons in World Politics: Toward the Third Generation of ‘Nuclear Taboo’ Research”

November 8: **Midterm Exam!**

Part IV: Contemporary Problems in International Politics

November 10: **Climate Change**

- William Nordaus, “The Climate Club: How to Fix a Failing Global Effort”
- Michaël Aklin and Matto Mildenerberger, “Prisoners of the Wrong Dilemma: Why Distributive Conflict, Not Collective Action, Characterizes the Politics of Climate Change”

November 15: **Migration and Refugees**

- Michael Teitelbaum, “Europe’s Migration Dilemmas: Unavoidable and Unresolved”
- Idean Salehyan and Kristian Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War”

Supplemental Readings

- Margaret E. Peters, “Trade, Foreign Direct Investment, and Immigration Policymaking in the United States” (pp. 811-823, 839-840)

November 17: **The European Union**

- Simon Bullmer and William Patterson, “Germany and the European Union”
- Sebastian Rosato, “Europe’s Troubles: Power Politics and the State of the European Project”
- Mark Blythe, “The Austerity Delusion: Why a Bad Idea Won over the West”

November 22: **Civil Wars and External Interventions**

- Carter Malkasian, “How the Good War Went Bad”
- Lise Morjé Howard, *Power in Peacekeeping*, pp. 1-17, 27-31.
- Séverinne Auteserre, “The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can’t End Wars”

Supplemental Readings

- James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”

November 24: **No Class (Thanksgiving Schedule)**

November 29: **The Rise of China**

- Yeling Tan, “How the WTO Changed China: The Mixed Legacy of Economic Engagement”
- Jude Blanchette, “Xi’s Gamble: The Race to Consolidate Power and Stave Off Disaster”

- Charles L. Glaser, “Washington Is Avoiding the Tough Questions on Taiwan and China: The Case for Reconsidering U.S. Commitments in East Asia”

December 1: **The Pandemic**

- Tana Johnson, “Ordinary Patterns in an Extraordinary Crisis: How International Relations Makes Sense of the COVID-19 Pandemic”

Supplemental Readings

- David Stasavage, “Democracy, Autocracy, and Emergency Threats: Lessons for COVID-19 from the Last Thousand Years”

December 6: **The Backlash against Globalization**

- Helen Milner, “Is Global Capitalism Compatible with Democracy? Inequality, Insecurity, and Interdependence”

Supplemental Readings

- David H. Autor, David Dorn, Gordon H. Hanson, “The China Shock: Learning from Labor Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade”
- Diana C. Mutz, “Status Threat, Not Economic Hardship, Explains 2016 Presidential Vote”

December 8: **The Future of the Liberal Order**

- G. John Ikenberry, “The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism, Not Less”
- Alexander Cooley and Daniel H. Nexon, “How Hegemony Ends: The Unraveling of American Power”
- Mira Rapp-Hooper and Rebecca Freedman-Lissner, “The Open World: What America Can Achieve after Trump”

Supplemental Readings

- John Mearsheimer, “Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order”

Final exam date: December 15, 3-5pm