International Relations: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Instructor: G. John Ikenberry
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June 27-July 17, 2023 (All in-person class)

This course is a broad introduction to the politics of international relations. It seeks to acquaint students with the major theories, concepts, and debates about world politics. It will begin by looking at the great theoretical debates in the field – particularly between the realist and liberal schools of thought. The topics will include: the nature of the international system and states; the rise and transformation of the international order over the centuries; the origins and consequences of war; international institutions and the problems of cooperation; the interaction of domestic politics and international politics; the role of ideas and norms about sovereignty; the rise of transnational challenges; the changing character of American hegemony; the rise of China; and the future of international politics.

At the heart of this course is a grand debate over the “problem of order” in world politics. This is a debate over rival visions of world politics. How is order created and maintained in a world of sovereign states? Who commands and who benefits? Do we live in an international of laws that govern the behavior of states and peoples, or are we at least on the road to such an order? Or is all this a sham, and the reality is that we live in a state of international anarchy, where the rules are set by those with the power to make them, and states abide by them only when it is in their interest to do so? Is it a world of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Morgenthau, or a world of Kant and Wilson? Or is it something in between? This course will explore these grand questions through a focus on theory, history, and current global policy problems.

Each session will be divided into two parts. The first part will be a lecture, presented by the instructor. In the second half of the session, we will have break-out groups and student presentations. The course requirements are: First, students are expected to do the reading and attend class. Second, each student will write a paper for the class – 10 pages, double spaced. Finally, beginning in the second week, we will divide the class into “working groups” who will meet periodically during week two and week three. These groups will be assigned a “global issue” that they will explore and, on the last day of class, will give a short report to the full class.

We will have one book ordered:

**INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (*Full In-Person Class*)**

**Session One: June 27: Can the World be Governed?**


**THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Session Two. June 28: Realism**


Optional: Want to Learn More?


**Session Three. June 29: Liberalism**

Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs.”
https://www.jstor.org/stable/2265298


**Debate: Is the World Getting More Peaceful?**


**Debate: China’s Challenge to Western Liberalism**


**Session Four: June 30: Institutions and International Order**


**Student Assignment**
Select an international organization (for example: IMF, World Bank, IEA, WHO, etc.) and write a one paragraph description of its origins and goals. Why was it established, by whom, and what does it do?

Session Five: July 3: Global Civil Society and Human Rights

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, “Transnational Activist Networks in International and Regional Politics.” [https://courses.washington.edu/pbaf531/KeckSikkink.pdf](https://courses.washington.edu/pbaf531/KeckSikkink.pdf)


Session Six: July 4: Politics of the World Economy


Student groups will be selected. We will reserve time at the end of the class for their first break-out meeting.

Session Seven: July 5: China, Rising States, and International Order


Optional: What to Learn More?


Readings on the “China Dream.” Maps - Reading the China Dream


HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Session Eight: July 6: The 19th Century: Great Britain, Empire, and the Balance of Power

Henry Kissinger, World Order, Chapter Two, “The European Balance of Power System.”


Session Nine: July 7: America: Two Tries at Building World Order

G. John Ikenberry, A World Safe for Democracy, Chapters Four and Five.

Woodrow Wilson, “Fourteen Points,” delivered to Joint Session of Congress, January 8, 1918. https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/President_Wilson%27s_Fourteen_Points

Session Ten: July 10: The Rise and Fall of the Cold War

G. John Ikenberry, A World Safe for Democracy, Chapter Five


The breakout groups will meet in the last part of the class period.

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES:

Session Eleven: July 11: Climate Change and International Cooperation


The Long View: Global Environmental Crisis


Session Twelve: July 12: The Rise of China and International Order

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-12-09/xi-jinpings-new-world-order

https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202111/10/WS618afb05a310cdd39bc74540.html

Debate: Is Conflict between China and the U.S. Inevitable”

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-10-19/inevitable-rivalry-cold-war

Responses to Mearsheimer:


Session Thirteen: July 13: The North Korea Crisis

40 Maps to explain the crisis

Session Fourteen: July 14: The 21st Century Struggle for the World


Debate: The Impact of COVID-19 on World Politics


**Debate: The Impact of Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine on World Politics**

Barry Posen: [Hypotheses on the implications of the Ukraine-Russia war — Defense Priorities](https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/the-rebirth-of-the-liberal-world-order/)


Session Fifteen: July 17: Final Thoughts from the Professor and Group Reports!