

Political Science 1003
Introduction to International Politics
Department of Political Science
George Washington University

Fall 2022
Time: Tuesdays, 6:10PM – 8:40PM
Room: Bell Hall 108
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:00PM – 6:00PM
Office Location: Monroe 410

Professor: Jonathan Pinckney
Email: jpinckney@gwu.edu

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Description

Almost every aspect of our lives is not just touched but radically transformed by political interactions of global scope. This course helps students make sense of those global political interactions through introducing them to the history, core concepts, and major contemporary challenges of international relations. It focuses on key enduring questions that scholars and theorists of international relations have been considering for centuries: why does war occur? Why do some nations prosper economically while others struggle? What forms of international society are most conducive to human flourishing? Through readings, discussion, engaged exercises, and joint reflection the course seeks to equip students to meaningfully join the rich tradition of scholarship that has sought to better understand these questions as a key part of engaged citizenship.

Objectives and Outcomes

The goal of this course is to give students a solid foundation in the context, core concepts, key issues, and contemporary challenges in international relations. Students who complete the course should have a strong understanding of how today's international system came about, be conversant with the analytical tools and theoretical traditions used to understand it, and be able to effectively and insightfully apply their own analysis and critical thinking to the international system through research and analysis.

Average Minimum Amount of Independent Learning

Students are expected to put in an average of 5 hours of independent learning per week on average throughout the semester. This includes reading, taking notes, studying for exams, working on writing assignments, and answering online discussion questions. Note that this is an average, not a minimum or maximum. In some weeks you may spend less than this (for instance if you do not have an assignment due), in some weeks you may spend significantly more.

Required Texts

University textbook costs are a travesty, and deeply unfair to students who do not come from economically privileged backgrounds. Costly textbooks have been shown to be a barrier to education

among historically marginalized college students, making reducing textbook costs a social justice issue.¹ In recognition of this fact, there is no required textbook for this class. All the required readings are either available on Blackboard or elsewhere online. You should complete the reading before the class period where it is listed on the schedule to be prepared to discuss it during that class time.

All required readings are indicated as required on the class schedule below. Most weeks also have additional recommended readings that will deepen your understanding of the topics under discussion.

I will add additional readings or change readings for future class sessions as the semester goes on. When I do so, I will give you at least one week's notice, change the version of the syllabus on Blackboard, and inform the entire class either in a class session or over e-mail.

Class Format

If you were to take an educated person from the Middle Ages and put them in the 21st century, it's likely that the only thing that would be completely familiar to them would be a standard university lecture. In other words, it's an old-fashioned and often not very helpful format. While lectures are sometimes necessary, they are far from the best way to encourage and retain learning. Thus, while I will give short lectures in each class session, much of our class time will be spent on other, more interactive exercises.

- *Current events discussion:* As a branch of political science, International Relations is deeply concerned with the important events in contemporary politics. To that end, a portion of class discussion will typically be devoted to current events, and led by students themselves (See the Current Events Discussion assignment below). I expect students to keep up with major news sources to participate in these discussions. Recommended sources (all of which are either freely available online or through the GWU library) are *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Vox*. The "world" section of Google News is also a good aggregator of relevant international stories.
- *In-Class Exercises:* Large portions of several of our class sessions will be used for small group discussion and other in-class exercises. For example, I might present you with a scenario from current events and ask small groups of you to come up with various policy responses. We will also use various games and simulations to analyze important concepts.
- *Online Reflective Responses:* After each class session I will post a question based on the day's readings and discussion on Blackboard. I encourage students who feel less comfortable or find it difficult to participate in in-class discussion to offer comments and thoughts here.

Because IR concerns major political issues of the day, many of the conversations we have in class may be particularly emotional for students. I encourage lively debate, but demand that all students treat one another with dignity and respect. Critique ideas, not people. Disrespecting other students will not be tolerated, and students who engage in it may be asked to leave the class.

Class Schedule

Part 1: Background and Core Concepts

1. August 30: Introduction: What is international politics?
 - a. **No Required Reading**
2. September 6: Where did the current international system come from?

¹ J. Jacob Jenkins et al., "Textbook Broke: Textbook Affordability as a Social Justice Issue," *Journal of Interactive Media Education* 1, no. 3 (2020): 1–13.

Required Reading:

- Erik Ringmar “History of International Relations: A Non-European Perspective:” Chapter 1 “Introduction,” Chapter 6 “Africa,” and Chapter 8: “European Expansion.”

Recommended Reading

- i. Andreas Osiander “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth”
- ii. Barry Buzan and Richard Little. “World History and the Development of non-Western International Relations Theory.” In *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia*. Edited by Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan.
- iii. Britannica entries on World War I, World War II, and The Cold War (available through GWU library)

3. September 13: Anarchy and Hierarchy

Required Reading:

- Jack Donnelly: “Elements of the Structures of International Systems” (pages 609-622)
- Helen Milner: “The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique.”

Recommended Reading

- The rest of the Donnelly article
- Alexander Wendt: “Anarchy is What States Make of It”
- David Lake: “Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics.”

4. September 20: Power

Required Reading:

- Joseph Nye: “Hard, Soft, and Smart Power.”

Recommended Reading

- Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall. “Power in International Politics.”

5. September 27: Levels of Analysis

Required Reading:

- Carmen Gebhard. “One World, Many Actors: Levels of Analysis in International Relations.” Pages 32-45 in Stephen McGlinchey “International Relations.”
- Kenneth Waltz. “Man, The State, and War: Introduction.”

Recommended Reading

6. October 4: Gender, Race, and Class

a. Required Reading:

- i. Cynthia Enloe: “Gender Makes the World Go Round: Where Are the Women?” in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*
- ii. Kelebogile Zvobgo and Meredith Loken: “Why Race Matters in International Relations.”
- iii. W. E. B. DuBois. “The African Roots of War”
- iv. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. “The Communist Manifesto.” (read from page 27 until the end of Chapter II: Proletarians and Communists)

b. Recommended Reading:

- i. Carol Cohn: “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals.”
- ii. Sankaran Krishna. “Race, Amnesia, and the Education of International Relations.”

- iii. Robert Vitalis. “The Graceful and Generous Liberal Gesture: Making Racism Invisible in American International Relations.”

Part 2: Major Questions

7. October 11: Why do we wage war?

Required Reading

- Christopher Blattman: “Why We Fight: Introduction”

Recommended Reading

- James Fearon: “Rationalist Explanations for War.”

8. October 18: How has international conflict changed? (Terrorism, Civil War, State Fragility)

October 25: **Fall Break: No Class**

9. November 1: How does international trade and finance work?

10. November 8: Why do we have international institutions?

Part 3: Contemporary Challenges

11. November 15: Transnational Authoritarianism

Required Reading

- Anne Applebaum: “The Bad Guys Are Winning”
- Alexander Cooley and Daniel H. Nexon. “The Real Crisis of Global Order: Illiberalism on the Rise.”

Recommended Reading

- Anna Luhrmann and Staffan I.Lindberg: “A Third Wave of Autocratization is Here: What is New About It?”
- Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig: “The Long Arm of the Strongman: How China and Russia Use Sharp Power to Threaten Democracies.”

12. November 22: Existential Risk – Nuclear Weapons, Climate Change, and AI

13. November 29: Student-selected topics 1

14. December 6: Student-selected topics 2 and final wrap-up

Quote: “Basically we could not have peace, or an atmosphere in which peace could grow, unless we recognized the rights of individual human beings... their importance, their dignity... and agreed that was the basic thing that had to be accepted throughout the world.” – Eleanor Roosevelt

Assignments and Evaluation

1. **Attendance:** You are required to attend class. You are allowed to have up to 2 unexcused absences with no penalty. For each additional absence you will lose 2% of your total final grade. Any student with six unexcused absences (over a third of the class) or more will automatically fail. Any exceptions to this rule for religious reasons, sports team schedules, family emergencies, etc... must be approved by me before the class session that will be missed.
2. **Participation (20% of final grade):** I expect you to participate actively in class. A significant portion of our class time will be used for discussion and other interactive activities, as described in the class format session. I will evaluate your participation grade based on genuine engagement with the topics based on having completed the readings and spent a reasonable amount of time attempting

to understand them. Not knowing all the answers is fine as long as you can demonstrate that you have made a significant effort to understand.

3. **Current Events Discussions (15% of final grade):** At the beginning of the semester, students will select three class sessions before which they will prepare a 300-500 word bullet point summary of a current event relevant to international relations. This summary will be due on Blackboard no later than midnight on the day prior to that class session. At the beginning of each class (or after a mid-class break) we will split into small groups and students will present their current event to the other members of their group. Note that to ensure that all class sessions have good discussion, there will be a limited number of slots for each class session, which will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. You will be graded both on how well the bullet points fulfill the rubric laid out on Blackboard and on how actively you facilitate discussion in class.
4. **Background and Core Concepts Exam (20% of final grade):** At the end of Week 6 all students will be required to complete a short-answer format exam on Blackboard covering the material from the readings, lectures, and discussions up to that point. The exam is open-book, and can be taken any time from **October 7th to October 9th**. The exam will be timed - students will have one hour from the time they begin the exam to complete it, and the exam cannot be re-taken. The exam must be taken by yourself. Taking the exam with other students in the class or sharing question prompts with other students will constitute cheating. See the plagiarism and cheating policy below for more details. You will be graded based on how well you are able to creatively apply the course material to answering the questions, not just on whether your answers include correct information.

There's increasing research that students benefit from having forms of evaluation that match their skills and personality. To that end, for both the major topics and final major assignment you have two options. Students will select their preferred option on the first day of class.

5. **Major Topics Assignment (20% of final grade).**
 - a. Major Questions Option 1 Argument Evaluation Paper: Students will write a 1500-2000 word paper focused on one of the four topics from this section of the course. The paper should examine at least two conflicting perspectives on some question relate to the topic, evaluate the arguments behind those perspectives, and propose ways in which one could conduct research to definitively determine which of the two is closer to the truth. Students may turn in the paper up to two weeks after the class session covering their selected topic. For example, if a student chooses to write about the causes of war, their paper would be due no later than the beginning of class on October 25th. If they chose to write about international institutions, their paper would be due no later than the beginning of class on November 22nd. You will be graded based on how well your paper achieves the goals laid out in the assignment rubric on Blackboard.
 - b. Major Questions Option 2 Open-Book Exam: Students will complete a short-answer format exam on Blackboard covering the material from the readings, lectures, and discussions from weeks 7 through 10. The exam is open-book, and can be taken any time from **November 4th to November 6th**. The exam will be timed - students will have one hour from the time they begin the exam to complete it, and the exam cannot be re-taken. The exam must be taken by yourself. Taking the exam together with other students in the class or sharing question prompts with other students will constitute cheating. See the plagiarism and cheating policy below for more details. You will be graded based on how well you are able to creatively apply the course material to answering the questions, not just on whether your answers include correct information.
6. **Final Assignment (25% of final grade).**
 - a. Final Option 1: Crisis Negotiation Simulation: Students selecting this option will participate in a simulation of a crisis negotiation between government leaders during our final exam period

between December 14th and December 22nd. Students selecting this option will be assigned roles in the simulation and given details of the scenario during the class session on November 29th. Each student in the simulation will also turn in a 250-500 word document summarizing their role in the simulation and the interests and strategy that they will pursue. This document must be turned in on Blackboard before the simulation. Students will be graded based on how well they apply the tools of IR analysis to the situation, their level of knowledge of their role, and their level of activity and engagement during the simulation.²

- b. **Final Option 2 Analytical Paper:** Students will write a 1500-2500 word analytical paper on a topic of their choosing relevant to international relations. An analytical paper is a paper that tries to explain why something happened the way that it did or is the way that it is, making an argument with evidence to support your explanation. A paper could, for instance, try to explain a specific historical event such as World War II; a current world political problem, like nuclear weapons, an interesting empirical phenomenon, such as “Why do democratic countries tend not to go to war with each other?” Or even a fictional phenomenon such as: “Why is war so common in *Game of Thrones*?” Outstanding papers will focus on a single, strong argument and weave in the tools and theories of International Relations. Students choosing this option must turn in a 500 word summary of their topic and the argument they wish to advance, with at least three sources no later than **Thursday, November 17th**. The summary should be turned in on Blackboard. This summary will be graded. It will count as 10% of your final paper grade. Students who do not turn in a summary by this date will be unable to receive a grade higher than 90 (A-) on the final paper. The paper itself will be due no later than the end of our class’s scheduled final exam period. I will add this final exam period to the syllabus as soon as it has been announced by the registrar’s office.

Grading Scale and Policies

I do not grade on a curve. Each student’s work will be evaluated independently. It is possible for every student in the class to get an A. However, getting such high marks will require hard work. Here is how grades should be interpreted, as well as how a letter grade translates to a 0-100 numeric scale.

A (94 and higher) = The student performed far beyond my expectations, displaying a grasp of the analytical and empirical material as well as creativity or insight beyond the material.

A- (93-90) = I was impressed by the student’s performance. The student has strong analytical, theoretical, and empirical skills.

B+ (89-87) = The student met all my expectations in the course.

B (86-84) = The student met most expectations, but demonstrated weakness in either analytical or empirical skills.

B- (83-80) = The student demonstrated weakness in analytical and empirical skills, but clearly attempted to prepare for assignments.

C (79-70) = The student demonstrated disregard for the course requirements.

² This option will only be feasible if selected by at least 30-40% of the students in the class. If fewer than 10 students choose this option then all students will write the final paper.

D (69-60) = The student demonstrated negligence or disrespect in their assignments.

F (Below 60) = The student violated a class policy, did not attend class, or did not perform to a level that I knew they were attending.

If a student wishes to dispute their grade on an assignment they must contact me within 48 hours of receiving their grade and set an appointment to discuss it. At this appointment they must bring a typed summary of the reasons why they believe the grade is unfair. I will then reevaluate the assignment based on these reasons. All revised grades are final, and they may be lower than the original grade.

All assignments must be turned in by the due date on the syllabus. An assignment turned in late at all will receive an automatic half-letter grade point deduction. Assignments turned in more than three days late may receive heavier penalties, at my discretion.

Tips on Reading and Writing

All written assignments should be turned in on Blackboard. I have no preferences regarding font, margin-size, etc... (within reason). However, you should make your submissions double-spaced to make my comments easier. I give all guidelines on appropriate paper length in terms of words, not pages.

Clear and professional writing can be a challenge, particularly for those first entering college, however, it is one of the most useful life skills you can get from your higher education. To that end, I evaluate written assignments both on content and the clarity and style of the writing. Written work should be clear and not have grammatical and spelling errors.

All your written work should advance an argument, with an introduction presenting the key points of your argument, a body giving evidence in support of your argument, and a conclusion drawing the connections between the evidence presented and the key points from the introduction.

If you wish to improve your writing, I am happy to help you think through how to do so. GWU's Writing Center (which opens on Monday, September 12th) also provides free, one-on-one sessions where you can learn how to improve your writing. You can find more information at <https://writingcenter.gwu.edu/>.

Students may find completing all the reading for this class challenging. There are a few tricks that you can use to make the reading load easier and ensure that you are prepared to discuss the readings in class.

1. Always read the introductions and conclusions of articles carefully. These will typically have the most important points for you to remember.
2. Always ask yourself: "what are the one or two main things the author is trying to say in this piece?" It can often be helpful to write this down and have it with you to refer to in class.
3. If necessary, skim the central parts of articles, particularly if the introduction gives you a clear sense of the core argument. If, after skimming, you're not sure what the article was about, you may need to re-read in a little more depth.

Accommodations for Disability

Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact **Disability Support Services Program** located in Suite 102 of Rome Hall: 801 22nd St. NW, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations, and bring the letter you receive from DSS to me. Their phone number is 202-994-8250. Information is also available online at <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Cheating (“using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids, etc...”), plagiarism (“misrepresenting words, ideas, or a sequence of ideas as original or one’s own, etc...”), and fabrication (“falsifying any data, information, or citation in an academic exercise”) are serious academic offenses and violate GWU’s code of academic integrity. Penalties for these offenses will be determined following the procedures laid out in the code of academic integrity. Possible penalties range from a failing grade for the assignment, for the course, or in suspension or expulsion from the university. Refer to the GWU code of academic integrity for further detail: <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>

Religious Observances

In accordance with University policy, students should notify me during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on the day(s) of religious observance. Please consult [the university policy on religious holiday observance](#) for further information.

Policy on Student Questions

I am always happy to answer student questions during office hours or over e-mail. However, keep in mind that most questions you may have (about assignments, policies, etc...) can be answered by simply taking a close look at the syllabus. Every student should read the entire syllabus carefully at the beginning of the class and before sending me a question. When you have finished reading the syllabus for the first time, send me an e-mail containing the quote that is written on the syllabus immediately after the class schedule and a picture of the person who said it.