



Course plan

B2.513 - International Relations System and Theories

Credits: 4.0

Subject coordinator

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Course instructors

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Presentation

Description

The course **International Relations System and Theories** is intended to provide students with a strong command of the main conceptual and theoretical tools of the Discipline of International Relations (IR). After completing the course, students will be able to understand and analyze the forces driving current international issues.

The course is based on an understanding of the **international system** composed by a series of **actors**, among which Nation-States are the most relevant, whose relations generate a specific configuration or **structure** of power, thereby producing a network of **interactions** -conflictive or cooperative- that take place according to certain rules.

The course is divided into three activity-centered units. The first unit will be dedicated to introducing the main **concepts** needed for the study of IR. What do we understand as actors in international relations? Why do scholars affirm the international system is anarchical? In addition, we will review the main theoretical **paradigms** with which the discipline explains the interactions that occur within the system. Besides the three major paradigms, **Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism**, we will also discuss other theories of world politics, such as post-colonialism or poststructuralism.

The second unit of our course will revolve around the main underlying **structures and processes** in contemporary world politics. We will begin this unit by deepening our understanding of the **international system** and by introducing a methodological tool that has enjoyed a wide acceptance by the IR scholarly community over decades: the **level-of-analysis approach**. Next, we will examine some of the most important structures and processes in today's international politics, including among others, **war and conflict, international and global security, regionalism, and race in world politics**.

The third unit will be dedicated to analyzing some of the most **pressing international issues** in **contemporary world politics**, i.e. problems such as such as poverty, human rights, or environmental degradation, which appear frequently in the news headlines and that directly or indirectly affect each one of us. In this unit, we will **critically analyze** some of these issues keeping in mind the processes of fragmentation and unification that simultaneously characterize our world.

The course as part of the programme as a whole

The Master's Degree in International Affairs and Diplomacy (UOC, UNITAR) is designed for diplomats and government officials involved in international affairs, as well as those persons involved in international relations or seeking a career in this field.

The course **International Relations System and Theories** will provide the students with a solid command of the theoretical and analytical tools with which the IR **Discipline** analyzes world politics. After completing this course, students will be able to critically engage with the academic literature in the IR field and analyze and discuss international issues with observance of the strictest academic standards and methods.

Professional fields it is linked to

- National bodies (such as government ministries and departments, civil services, think-tanks, and policy advisory groups)
- Embassies and consulates
- International organizations (such as the UN, UN agencies, EU departments)
- Campaign groups, aid agencies and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- Companies operating on an international level
- Journalists and other media professionals
- Banking, financial services and corporate consultancy
- University lecturers

Prior knowledge

No prior knowledge is required, although some notions of International Relations theories might be useful.

Objectives and competencies

The course **International Relations System** and Theories aims to help students:

- Develop the ability to present persuasive arguments on topics related to international affairs and public diplomacy with observance of academic standards and methods.
- Understand the descriptive, explanatory and predictive aims of International Relations (IR) scholarship, and to develop the capacity to engage critically with IR literature and its analysis of world politics.
- Gain a command of the main theoretical and analytical tools in the IR Discipline.
- Develop independent research and analytical skills.

Content

Unit 1: Concepts and theories of International Relations

1.1. Basic concepts and theories of International Relations (IR).

1.2. The study of the main paradigms in the IR discipline: Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism.

1.3. Alternative theoretical accounts of world politics.

CAT 1

Unit 2: Structures and Processes

2.1. Analytical tools: the levels-of-analysis approach.

2.2. Structures and processes in contemporary world politics.

CAT 2

Compulsory readings

- Holsti, K.J., *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, Introduction, (excerpt) pp. 16-20.
- Castillo Iglesias, J., "International Relations Systems and Theories"
- From the book Baylis, J., Smith, S., Owens, P. (edition 2014 and 2019) *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*:
 - War and world politics. Chapter 14, pp. 215-228
 - Regionalism in international affairs. Chapter 26, pp. 401-416. (edition 2019)
 - Transnational actors and international organizations in global politics. Chapter 21, pp. 320-340.

Unit 3: International issues in contemporary world politics

3.1. In-depth analysis of one international issue of relevance in the contemporary world.

CAT

- Humanitarian intervention in world politics. Chapter 32, pp. 514-529

-International and global security. Chapter 15, pp. 229-242 (edition 2019)

Unit 4: Synthesis

CAT 4

All materials used in the course

Resources

View the learning resources used in the subject

Material	Suport
International relations system and theories	Audiobook
International relations system and theories	ePub
International relations system and theories	Mobipocket
International relations system and theories	Videobook
International relations system and theories	HTML5

View the bibliography titles available in the library

- Alden, Chris (2016). Foreign policy analysis : new approaches [Recurs electrònic] / Chris Alden and Amnon Aran. New York : Routledge, 2016
ISBN: 9781315442464
- (0). Basic texts in international relations : the evolution of ideas about international society / selected and introduced by Evan Luard. New York : St. Martin's Press, 1992
ISBN: 0312065116
- Edelstein, David M., autor (0). Over the horizon : time, uncertainty, and the rise of great powers / David M. Edelstein. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, may 2018
ISBN: 9781501707568
- (0). Foreign policy (Theories, actors, cases);Foreign policy : theories, actors, cases / edited by Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, Tim Dunne. Oxford : Oxford University Press, [2016];©2016
ISBN: 9780198708902
- Nahlawi, Yasmine, autor (0). The responsibility to protect in Libya and Syria : mass atrocities, human protection, and international law / Yasmine Nahlawi. London New York, NY : Routledge, 2019
ISBN: 9780429461101
- (0). Routledge handbook of international political sociology / edited by Xavier Guillaume and Pinar Bilgin. London New York : Routledge, taylor & Francis Group, december 2016
ISBN: 9781315446479

- (0). The Globalization of world politics : an introduction to international relations / [edited by] John Baylis, Steve Smith, Patricia Owens. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2020
ISBN: 9780198825548
- (0). The Oxford handbook of international relations / edited by Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal. Oxford New York : Oxford University Press, 2010
ISBN: 9780199585588
- Weber, Cynthia, autor (0). International relations theory : a critical introduction / Cynthia Weber. London New York : Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, november 2013
ISBN: 9781134700448

Support tools and learning resources

Holsti, K.J. (1995). International Politics: A Framework for Analysis. Prentice-Hall International. (pages from Introduction).

Jackson, Robert H & Sørensen, Georg, (2013). Introduction to international relations : theories and approaches (5th edition). Oxford Oxford University Press. (pp. 256-269).

Bibliography and information sources

Here are some bibliographic references that can be useful complementary materials for this course:

Books:

- Baylis, J.; Smith, S. (eds.) (2017). The Globalization of World Politics. An Introduction to International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, C. (2009). Understanding international relations. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cox, R. (1987). Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Evans, G., Newnham, J. (1998). The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations. Penguin Books.
- Gilpin, R. (1981). War and change in World Politics. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldstein, Joshua S., and Jon C. Pevehouse. (2017). International Relations. Pearson.
- Griffiths, M. (2013). Encyclopedia of International Relations and Global Politics. Routledge.
- Griffiths, M. (1999). Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations. London: Routledge.
- Griffiths, M.; O'Callaghan, T. (2013). International Relations: The Key Concepts. London: Routledge.
- Groom, A. J. R.; Light, M. (eds.) (2010). International Relations: A Handbook of Current Theory. London: Pinter.
- Holsti, K.J., (1995). International Politics: A Framework for Analysis. Prentice-Hall.
- Jackson, Robert H & Sørensen, Georg, (2013). Introduction to international relations: theories and approaches (5th edition). Oxford University Press.
- Keohane, R. (1984). After hegemony. Cooperation and discord in the world political economy. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Keohane, R. (1986). Neorealism and its critics. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Keohane, R. O. (2002). Power and governance in a partially globalized world. Routledge.
- Keohane, R.; Nye, J. (eds.) (1972). Transnational relations and world politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Keohane, R.; Nye, J. (1977). Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition. Boston: Little Brown.
- Kegley Jr., C. W.; Wittkopf, E. R. (2016). World Politics. Trend and Transformation (8. ed.). Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's
- Krasner, S. (1983). International Regimes. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Linklater, A. (ed.) (2000). *International Relations. Critical Concepts in Political Science* (5 vol.). London: Routledge.
- Little, R.; Smith, M. (eds.) (2005). *Perspectives on World Politics* (2.ed.). London: Routledge.
- Mitrany, D. (1943). *A Working Peace System*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Nye, J.S. (2004). *Power in the global information age : from realism to globalization*. Routledge.
- Russett, B.; Starr, H. (2009). *International Politics. The Menu for choice* (9th ed.). New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Strange, S. (1988). *States and markets*. London: Pinter.
- Viotti, P. R.; Kauppi, M. V. (1999). *International Relations Theory. Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond* (3th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Waltz, K. (1959). *Man, the state, and war. A theoretical analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Whigt, M. (1991). *International Theory. The three traditions*. London: Leicester University Press.

Academic journals:

- American Journal of International Law
- Asia Pacific Review Asian Security
- Asian Journal of Political Science
- Australian Journal of International Affairs
- British Journal of Politics and International Relations
- Cambridge Review of International Affairs
- China Quarterly
- Chinese Journal of International Law
- Contemporary Southeast Asia
- European Journal of International Law
- European Journal of International Relations
- European Union Politics
- Europe-Asia Studies
- Foreign Affairs
- Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)
- Georgetown Journal of International Law
- Global Change, Peace & Security (Routledge)
- Harvard Asia Pacific Review International
- Harvard International Law Journal I
- International Studies Perspectives (ISP)
- International Organization
- International Political Sociology
- International Relations of the Asia-Pacific
- International Security
- International Studies Quarterly
- International Studies Review (ISR)
- International Theory
- Japan Forum
- Japanese Journal of Political Science
- Journal of Southeast Asian Studies
- The Journal of Asian Studies
- Journal of Contemporary China
- Journal of European Integration
- Journal of International and Area Studies
- Journal of Peace Research
- Journal of Strategic Studies
- Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
- Latin American Politics and Society
- Peace Review a Journal of Social Justice
- Perspectives on Politics
- Regional Studies

- Review of International Studies
- Security Studies
- Southeast Asian Affairs
- Stanford Journal of Interantional Law
- Taiwan Journal of Democracy
- Terrorism and Political Violence
- The China Quarterly
- The Chinese Journal of International Politics
- The Hague Journal of Diplomacy
- The International Journal of Asian Studies
- The National Interest
- The Pacific Review (Routlege)
- The Review of Politics
- The Washington Quarterly
- World Politics

Podcasts:

- Center for Strategic and International Studies
- Georgetown University
- American University - International Relations Theory
- UCLA International Institute Podcast

Other resources:

- Foreign Policy online: <http://foreignpolicy.com/>
 - e-International Relations (student-friendly resource pool, by D. Little): <http://www.e-ir.info/>
 - University of California-Berkeley's website "Conversations with History", hosts interviews with leading IR theory scholars, such as Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, Stephen Krasner and Robert Keohane: <https://conversations.berkeley.edu>
 - Theory Talks.org has a number or interviews with other prominent IR Scholars, including Barry Buzan: <http://www.theory-talks.org/>
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