

Introduction to International Relations

Time:

Location:

Office hours: 10-12:30 T/TH, 1-3 W

Office: Lindaman 203

Schedule a meeting with me on [Calendly](#)

Instructor: Dr. Bi Zhao

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Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to the study of international relations (IR). We will explore **key theories, concepts, and historical events** in the study of IR. In addition, we will also evaluate the relevance of IR and the application of IR theories and concepts in many current issues. For example, **Does COVID19 undermine international cooperation? How might a Biden administration bring changes to US foreign policy?** Last but not least, we will consider how **religion and faith** shape world politics, both in history and today.

Together, we will employ two frameworks to understand fundamental concepts in IR and the empirical cases throughout the course. First, to fully understand IR theories and concepts, I encourage you to think about the **origin, evolution, and application** of each. Second, for each historical event, we will examine the **interests** involved, the relevant **institutions**, and the **interactions** among political actors.

The overarching goal is to provide you with the understanding of the core knowledge in IR, and the skills to effectively and creatively communicate about contemporary international affairs as well as its surrounding academic and political debates.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

This course seeks to help you to:

- learn about the fundamental **knowledge** in international relations;
We begin by familiarizing ourselves with the major theories in IR and how they help us understand the world. Then, we will examine theories designed to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about international politics: Why do states go to war? What induces international cooperation? What are the prospects for change in the international system?
- exercise **communication and writing skills** ;
To effectively communicate your understanding and opinion about contemporary political events

is a crucial ability in our current society. In this course, you'll have the opportunity to engage in weekly discussions with your fellow classmates. Moreover, you'll learn how to write a literature review, an essential component of academic research.

- **evaluate current international affairs** through theoretical frameworks;
We will discuss current events in each learning module. It is important to develop an awareness of what is going on in the world and a balanced view to analyze the events. We will apply "interests, interactions, and institutions" as a general framework to all the events we discuss. Students will be able to identify the key actors and their primary interests, the mode of interaction among them, and the rules that governing their interactions.

Textbook, Readings, and other course materials

Textbook(required):

Frieden, Jeffry, David A Lake, and Kenneth A Schultz, eds. 2018. *World Politics*. 4th edition. W.W.Norton: New York.

The textbook will be referred to as **FLS** in the syllabus or on Blackboard.

How should I focus my attention on the readings? It is easy to get lost when reading a long chapter of the textbook. But course readings are an important part of our learning experience. Your goal in reading is not to memorize all of the details of the chapter or article, but instead to be able to do the following:

1. **Identify and define key concepts and terms:** what new concepts, theories, and phenomena are important to know in order to understand this chapter/reading?
2. **Articulate the main question(s) and the argument the author makes:** what is this chapter/reading about? What is the topic? What is the puzzle the author trying to explain?
3. **Describe the evidence the author uses:** what real world examples does the author use to support the argument(s)? Is it convincing?
4. **Be critical:** Interrogate the logic-what are the assumptions the author makes? Are the assumptions problematic? Are there real world events or phenomena that the theory/argument fail to explain?

Note: I will try my very best to provide study guides for the chapter readings from the textbook. You will find the guides primarily based on the questions above. For other reading materials such as journal articles, news articles, etc., I will not provide study guides. But in the same way, you should be thinking about the questions I listed above as you read and process the content.

In addition to the textbook, I will post other course materials-journal articles, news reports, analyses, opinion pieces, and video and audio materials-on Blackboard.

You are also expected to keep up with news around the world in order to participate in weekly discussions. Here are a few resources:

- [National Public Radio](#)

- [The New York Times](#)
- [BBC World News](#)
- [UN News](#)

Finally, if you are a podcast fan like I am, here are a few I would recommend to track news around the world-some of them come with in-depth analysis and good comments too.

- [The Intelligence from *The Economists*](#)
- [Worldly from *Vox Media*](#)
- [UN News podcast](#)

How to succeed in this course

1. Class attendance and active participation are crucial to learning. I expect students to attend each class session. Please alert me via email if you are ill and are not able to come to class in-person. Please communicate with me at your earliest convenience. We will discuss alternative assignment for you to make up for the time missed. I trust that you will not abuse this flexibility.
2. **Speak up when questions or challenges arise.** If you need extra help, or if you need more time with something, or if you feel like you are behind or not understanding everything, **do not suffer in silence!** Talk to me and I will work with you. I am ready to help.

I want you to learn lots of things from this class, but I primarily want you to stay healthy, balanced, and grounded during this semester.
3. Getting into a learning routine as quickly as possible. The course is set up with the goal to help all of us adapt to a weekly routine, with the same set of components you can expect to find on Blackboard every week. **Please check the Blackboard course page for tasks and deadlines at the start of every week.** I will also send reminders of deadlines, especially during the first few weeks. The sooner you get into a routine, the easier you'll find yourself navigating the semester.
4. Engage and interact with your peers, instructor, and TA. Learning is always faster and easier when you do it together with others. Find your peeps, study together, and help each other out. Do not be afraid to reach out to me or the TA with questions. **There are no stupid questions in this class.**

Assessments and grading policy

- **Attendance and participation, 10%.** Class attendance will be graded both by the percentage of classes attended and the degree of active participation during class. The basic attendance grade will be the percentage of classes a student attends (not counting exams): for example, a student who comes to 28 out of 30 classes would get a grade of 93%, or an A. This

percentage will then be adjusted upwards by as much as 10% based on active, constructive class participation. For this system, there are no excused or unexcused absences, except for students with documented reasons requiring them to miss class for official extra-curricular activities.

What is class participation? Participation does not simply mean talking a lot in class, although joining in discussion is strongly encouraged. Participation also involves coming to class prepared (having done the reading), thinking and listening carefully, and contributing to an open classroom environment where thought and discussion are possible. In addition, students are welcome and encouraged to visit the instructor individually during office hours or by appointment.

- **Quizzes, 10%.** There will be **four** quizzes throughout the semester, covering *only the reading material for that day*. On most quiz days, we will take the quiz at the beginning of class. The dates of the quizzes will *not* be announced in advance. Quizzes are designed to provide a quick evaluation of how well you keep up with readings and understand the contents. Each quiz is worth 10 points. The average of the four quiz scores will be calculated into the final score.
If you know that you will miss class because of a school-sponsored activity or a doctor-excused medical condition, then you may make up the quiz. You must tell me in advance about your excused absence (other than a medical emergency) and I will arrange a time to complete the quiz. If you are too late (if we have already finished the quiz) or miss class, you may not make up the quiz.
- **Homework assignments, 15%.** There will be 4-5 homework assignments throughout the semester. The assignments take various formats. You will be asked to watch a movie or documentary and write a response. Others will ask you to play a game or explore some online resources. Each assignment is 15 points. The *average* of all assignment points will be calculated into the final score. See Blackboard for detailed instructions for each assignment.
- **Quotebook, 20%.** In this assignment, you will choose and read about a particular international issue or challenge. (Examples include climate change, humanitarian crisis, trade disputes, etc. Make sure you choose something YOU are interested in.) The end product will be your reflections on a set of quotes, chosen carefully and drawn from various types of reliable sources. The purpose is to give you an opportunity during the course to do some in-depth reading, exploring the policies and development around a particular issue, and reflecting on the issue and the responses from the international community. Instruction will be provided on Blackboard.
- **Midterm and final exams, 45%.** There will be one midterm exam and one final exam. The exams will include multiple choice and essay questions.
- **Missed or late work.** Late work will be penalized by one letter grade for each day after the deadline. For example, an A- for a homework assignment turned in one day late will become a B-. Late work would only be accepted without grade-penalty if the student has a university-accepted excuse or is sick/in quarantine. Again, please alert me via email at your earliest convenience about late submission.
- **Final grades:**

A	B	C	D	F
A+=97-100	B+=87-89.99	C+=77-79.99	D=60-69.99	F=below 60
A=93-96.99	B=83-86.99	C=73-76.99		
A-=90-92.99	B-=80-82.99	C-=70-72.99		

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Please note that I take extremely seriously the university's policy on the need for academic honesty in all your work. **Please READ CAREFULLY the university's policy on academic honesty (see next page and available in the Whitworth Catalog and the Student Handbook).**

How is plagiarism checked for this class?

1. During the first two weeks of the class, I will conduct plagiarism checks on the assignments each one of you turns in. I will provide a plagiarism score and feed-backs if necessary. If the overall risk is shown as *high* (meaning overall text matching with existing sources exceeds 40%), you will receive a warning, then you will rewrite and resubmit it. If your overall risk is medium (meaning the text matching is between 15 and 40%), you are required to review your writing and references, but rewrite-and-resubmit is optional. I can also help you think through the steps of your research and writing together, to avoid plagiarism.
2. Plagiarism scores. I will use a number of different procedures to evaluate plagiarism. This includes using the SafeAssign function in Blackboard to check for plagiarism. SafeAssign provides an overall risk score and specific matching scores for blocks of texts that the software identifies as matching existing sources. More information on how to interpret the scores can be found [here](#).
3. After the first two assignments, I will run random checks on the assignments and exams for the rest of the semester. If plagiarism is found or if "high risk" is reported by SafeAssign, there will be no more warnings. The assignment will be failed and written reports will be submitted to political science department chair and Whitworth academic affairs office. (For detailed consequences, see next page or the Student Handbook.)

Space below reserved for University policy on Academic Honesty

Schedule and weekly topics

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. **Remember, all materials for each week are on Blackboard. Please make sure you check Bb regularly and keep yourself updated.**

Week 01, 09/05 - 09/09: Introduction and course overview

Week 02, 09/12 - 09/16: Why study IR and major IR theories

- Read: FLS, page xxiv-xxxvi.
- Watch: [Steve Pinker's TED talk about how the world is getting better](#). Think about how he paints a picture different from the textbook (xxv-xxvi).
- Watch this [video](#) by Dr. Paul Poast on his interpretation of COVID-19's impact on IR.
- Read this [Council on Foreign Relations' article](#) about President Joe Biden's first foreign policy moves.
- Read "[With Putin, Biden Should Channel His Inner Realist](#)" from Foreign Affairs. PDF also attached on Bb.

Week 03, 09/19 - 09/23: World history from an IR perspective

- Reread FLS xxviii-xxix, the section of "The Framework: Interests, Interactions, and Institutions." Pay attention to what each of these items means in international relations.
- Read Chapter 1 of FLS, "What Shaped Our World? A Historical Introduction."
- [Assignment 1: Black Panther and IR theories](#). See instructions on Bb.

Week 04, 09/26 - 09/30: War and conflict [1]: the bargaining model

- Read FLS pages 45-51 on political actors and interests.
- Then, read FLS pages 88-103 on why states fight wars. Try your best to understand the bargaining model of war. It can be a little technical. I found drawing out the graph myself helps. It is okay not to get it the first time you read about it!
- Finally, read FLS pages 202-205 and 206-207, the parts that cover NATO.

Week 05, 10/03 - 10/07: War and conflict [2]: incomplete information, credibility, and more

- Read FLS 103-130 (the three scenarios that may lead to war: incomplete information, commitment problems, and issue indivisibility).
- [Assignment 2: Putin's Way](#). See instructions on Bb.

Week 06, 10/10 - 10/14: Domestic politics of war and democratic peace

- Read FLS 138-165.
- Read FLS 168-183 on the topic of Democratic Peace.
- Watch NYT's [Is something wrong with democracy?](#)

Week 07, 10/17 - 10/21: International trade [1]

- Read FLS 294-306.
- [Assignment 3: Where does your stuff come from?](#) See instructions on Bb.

Week 08, 10/24 - 10/28: Midterm review; *Midterm exam*

Week 09, 10/31 - 11/04: International trade [2]

- Read FLS page 304-308. Think: If trade is mutually beneficial, why there are so many trade restrictions like tariffs and quotas?
- Read this [Foreign Policy article](#) about the US-China trade war.
- Read FLS pp 318-330.
- Listen to this [podcast from NPR](#) on the Tuna-Dolphin dispute brought to the WTO, a trade dispute between the US and Mexico. Here is a [follow-up story](#).

Week 10, 11/07 - 11/11: Global economic development and disparity

- Read FLS Chap 10, 424-450.
- Listen to this [podcast](#) from NPR's Planet Money about the Washington Consensus.
- [Assignment 4: Dollar Street-The rich and the poor of the world.](#) See instructions on Bb.

Week 11, 11/14 - 11/18: International institutions [1]: The United Nations

- Read FLS 68-78, 205-214.
- Watch this short [video](#) about the United Nations.

Week 12, 11/21 - 11/25: Thanksgiving break, no classes

Week 13, 11/28 - 12/02: International institutions [2]: UN General Assembly and UN Peacekeeping

- Read FLS 214-231.
- Read this [article](#) from Foreign Affairs about the UN Peacekeeping.

Week 14, 12/05 - 12/09: New issues in international relations: Environmental governance and human rights protection

- Read FLS 543-545, the section talks about the "Tragedy of Commons".
- Before class, play this [game](#) online. You, as a rancher, are to figure out how many cows to put on your farm in order to maximize your profit. You may need to play a few rounds to figure out. Record the optimal number. On Thursday we will play it together as a class.

Week 15, 12/12 - 12/16: *Final exam, 12/16, 10:30a-12:30p*

Space reserved for university policies