

## International Relations in the 21st Century

UGRA\_016653

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Departments	Department of Society, Politics and Sustainability, Global Governance
Teaching Languages	English
ECTS	4
Teacher responsible	Daniel Hywell Nicholls - <a href="mailto:danielhywell.nicholls@esade.edu">danielhywell.nicholls@esade.edu</a>

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### Course Goals

The aim of the course is to familiarise students with International Relations theories and concepts and to explain contemporary global structures and dynamics through these tools.

### Previous knowledge

Students need an introductory knowledge of International Relations concepts in order to take this course. However, for any student without this background, pre-course readings will be supplied in order for them to take the course.

### Prerequisites

Students should have studied an introductory IR course or be willing to do some prior preparation before the course starts.

### Recommended courses

This course complements courses on international security, geopolitics, global political economy, political theory and institutional theory.

### Teaching methodology

Sessions will include a mix of lecturer focused explanations and in-class challenges and interactive activities. Students are encouraged to actively participate and debate the concepts and topics we deal with in the sessions.

### Description

### Course contribution to program

This course provides students with an awareness and understanding of how structural change at the global level conditions international action and how theoretical and conceptual tools can be used to interpret this. It also stresses the role of both material and ideational factors in determining contemporary processes and outcomes in the international system.

### Short description

This course has been designed to help students understand and interpret contemporary actors, structures and dynamics in the international system.

Whilst certain historical processes will be alluded to, the focus is very much on how we can use the tools and concepts of International Relations to understand current dynamics. Students will look at issues such as US-China rivalry, Russian foreign policy, the role of international organisations, security issues, technology and new forms of authority, new alliance structures and the rise of illiberal governance through the prism of IR theories, as well as through concepts such as legitimacy, cooperation, authority, coercion, public goods, status, sovereignty, political systems, anarchy, power and hegemony.

The course takes in important material factors, such as GDP and military power, but also stresses the importance of socially constructed norms, meanings and identities as key determinants of international action. In this sense, students will analyse key structures – such as US-China rivalry and relations between the Global North and Global South – both in terms of material power and control over the production and diffusion of meanings.

Students will be encouraged to examine processes of change and the interplays between the domestic and international levels of analysis. There will be a strong focus on hierarchical structures in the international system and the shift from a values-based liberal international order towards a more transactional and atomised post-global world.

The course has been structured into 10 thematic sections. For each one of these sections there will be a case-study activity which students have to submit, and this will count towards students' participation grade. Students will also have to make a brief presentation and complete a state-classification exercise as part of their assessment.

## Content

#	Topic
1	Theory Recap Realism (classical, defensive, offensive, neoclassical) Balancing (balance of power, threat, interest), bandwagoning, hedging Liberalism (absolute gains, democracy, trade, institutionalism) - interest-based cooperation Constructivism (identity, change, norms) - empathy-based cooperation Critical approaches (Neo-Gramscianism, critical theory, post-structuralism) States, sovereignty and anarchy Offensive Realism and Russia's foreign policy; defensive realism and the rise of China; neoclassical realism and the US' response; liberal and constructivist interpretations of the EU Concepts of Power Material power Economic statecraft Barnett and Duvall's typology Lukes' typology Soft and sharp power Defining actors in the international system Relational power – structure, agency and relational emergence China's sources of power; land Vs naval power and China's blue water navy; fungible power in Nagorno Karabakh; structural power and EU-Africa relations Hegemonic Vs Imperial Orders Anarchy Vs order Vs hierarchy Authority and legitimacy Consent Vs coercion Legitimizing values Institutions, regimes & orders Polarity and stability Long-cycle theory China – wedging and binding; hegemonic stability theory and the Thucydides Trap; sharp power and delegitimation; Arctic governance Deglobalisation and Transactionalism Borders and spatial control Change and conflict Recentralising authority Public policy, order and anarchy Controlling the Global South – resources, interests and

#	Topic
1	<p>political systems New polarities &amp; new orders; resources and conflict resolution – Rwanda, Ukraine; institutional power and the convergence wager Forms of State and International Relations Autocracy and democracy The state and economic intervention Diasporas Mobilisation capacity Social cohesion, individualism and collectivism Militarism Selectorate theory, patrimonialism and foreign policy Modernization theory and modernity Illiberal modernity in the Persian Gulf; hedging in Asia; China and autocratic diffusion Role and Identity Role-taking, role-making and altercasting Relational structures and roles Perceptions, foreign policy and grand strategy Pessimism Vs optimism Australia's little brother strategy; Wolf-Warrior diplomacy; China and civilisational diversity; Japan and cuteness Post-Colonialism and Non-Western Approaches to IR Tianxia and relationalism in China African IR <a href="https://brill.com/view/journals/aas/22/1-2/article-p3_2.xml">https://brill.com/view/journals/aas/22/1-2/article-p3_2.xml</a> Latin American IR Colonial logics and knowledge production Towards a global IR The EU as a post-colonial or post-modern actor?; Sino-African relations as neoimperialism Concepts of Security Human and comprehensive security Collective security Critical Security Studies – Copenhagen Vs Aberystwyth Sovereignty and security Commodification of security Peacekeeping and peace enforcement Securitization Drone warfare in Ukraine; conflicts in Africa; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Technological Change and New Forms of Relations AI and dependency Technological rivalry and zero-sum relations New forms of warfare Forms of production and the role of the state Tech bros and state preferences Neo-Strangism and technofeudalism Chinese tech exports and authoritarianism; Taiwan's silicon shield; AI and global inequality The Future of IR Rationality and collective action New political units Anarchy and (a) new leviathan(s) Decentred globalism Reterritorialisation The anthropocene Functional cooperation in a zero-sum world; a leaderless world; the role of Europe</p>

## Assessment

Tool	Assessment tool	Category	Weight %
Written and/or oral exams	Exam	Retake and ordinary round	60.00%
In-class analysis and discussion of issues	Participation - this includes participation in sessions and the submission of in-class activities	Retake and ordinary round	20.00%
Individual or team exercises	Two-slide presentation - students are given a 'concept' (authority, democracy, culture, human rights, democracy, populism, religion etc.) and with 2 ppt slides explain why it is relevant to how we understand the contemporary international system.	Retake and ordinary round	10.00%
Individual or team exercises	State-classification exercise	Retake and ordinary round	10.00%

## PROGRAMS

G114-Global Governance Exchange Program (Undergraduates: Law)  
G114 Year 1 (Optative)

G114S-Global Governance Exchange Program (Undergraduates: Law)  
G114S Year 1 (Optative)

GEL19-Bachelor of Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)  
GEL19 Year 3 (Optative)

GEL23-Bachelor of Global Governance, Economics and Legal Order (Undergraduates: Law)  
GEL23 Year 1 (Optative)  
GEL23 Year 3 (Optative)