International Affairs 3200: Introduction to International Relations

School of Public and International Affairs, University of Georgia

Instructor: Dr. William Acosta

Meeting: Sanford Hall 312, 8:40-9:45

Office: Candler Hall 214

Office Hours: MWF 11:00-11:50 & 2:00-2:50

Course Description

The first section of this class focuses on state sovereignty, great-power competition, and the dynamics that can push countries from crisis into war. To explore these themes, we will simulate the July Crisis of 1914, in which political and military leaders across Europe wrestled with alliance obligations, mobilization decisions, and the pressures of nationalism. In the Reacting to the Past game *Europe on the Brink, 1914*, you will assume historical roles, debate strategy, negotiate with rival powers, and confront the limits of diplomacy in a shifting balance-of-power system. This simulation highlights how quickly local disputes can escalate when leaders fear vulnerability, misread intentions, or believe that an adversary's mobilization threatens their sovereignty.

The second part of the class will focus on the role of international organizations in managing conflict, promoting cooperation, and shaping global norms. We will examine why the League of Nations failed to prevent renewed violence in the 1930s and how its shortcomings informed the creation of the United Nations after 1945. To explore the promises and limits of these institutions, we will simulate the All-African People's Congress, where newly independent states debated political futures, negotiated economic priorities, and confronted competing visions

of sovereignty. This exercise will highlight both the potential for collective action and the challenges that arise when diverse states attempt to coordinate policy across regional, ideological, and historical divides.

The third part of the class will examine human rights, genocide, and the dilemmas surrounding humanitarian intervention. We will study how international norms developed after the mid-twentieth century, why some atrocities provoke action while others do not, and how questions of sovereignty complicate efforts to protect vulnerable populations. We will conclude with a simulation of the United Nations decision to send peacekeepers into South Sudan in 2014, where students will weigh the risks of intervention against the consequences of inaction. This exercise emphasizes the difficult balance between respecting state authority and responding to mass human suffering, illuminating the persistent tensions at the heart of global governance.

Course Reading Material

- Moser, John E. (2022) *Europe on the Brink, 2014*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press
- All other required material will be provided via eLearning Commons (eLC).

Be Prepared

For the course to function smoothly, students should complete all assigned readings before the class meeting for which it is assigned (see schedule below).

Course Requirements

1. Participation (30%)
    a. In-class contribution (10%): Students will be evaluated on in person attendance, contribution to class discussion, and participation during in-class activities. Each of these is required. I will take attendance every day. Attendance is critical in this course because missing will adversely affect not only you but also your classmates. Some assignments cannot be made up.
    b. Simulation participation (10%): *Europe on the Brink, 1914* and *Hands off Africa!* have role specific assignments that students must complete during the simulation. Students should submit these assignments via eLC.
    c. Reading quizzes (10%): To ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, I will give 6 unannounced reading quizzes. These will be in class and handwritten and will be turned in during class. These cannot be made up. If you anticipate being absent on any day, please inform me ahead of time.
2. Written Assignments (70%): Over the course of the semester, you must complete three written assignments.
    a. Assignment 1: Analyze your experience in the July Crisis simulation and connect it to the concept of the security dilemma in international politics. Discuss how choices regarding mobilization, alliance commitments, and diplomatic signaling influenced the escalation of tensions, and evaluate whether leaders believed they were acting defensively even as others perceived their behavior as threatening. Use specific moments from the simulation to illustrate how fear, uncertainty, and misperception can limit cooperation and drive conflict. Finally, assess what

lessons modern policymakers can draw from this historical case, particularly in managing crises, avoiding unintended escalation, and understanding how their actions may be interpreted by rival states.

b. Assignment 2: Analyze your experience in the *Hands Off Africa!* simulation and connect it to broader questions of post-colonial state-building and international cooperation. Discuss how newly independent states balanced sovereignty with external pressures, navigated competing visions for economic development, and attempted to build regional institutions despite uneven power dynamics. Draw on specific interactions, debates, and coalition-building efforts you witnessed in the simulation to evaluate the opportunities and obstacles facing newly decolonized governments. Finally, assess what lessons modern policymakers can derive from this experience, particularly regarding the challenges of institution-building, the legacies of imperialism, and the difficulty of sustaining collective action in regions marked by diverse interests and historical grievances.

c. Assignment 3: Analyze your experience in the simulation of the United Nations decision to send peacekeepers to South Sudan and connect it to broader debates about human rights, genocide prevention, and humanitarian intervention. Discuss how states weighed the principles of sovereignty against the moral and legal imperatives to protect civilians, and evaluate the role of political interests, resource constraints, and concerns about mission creep in shaping decision-making. Use specific moments from the simulation to illustrate why international responses to mass atrocities are often slow or inconsistent. Finally, assess what lessons modern policymakers can draw from this case, particularly regarding the

Responsibility to Protect, early warning mechanisms, and the challenges of protecting populations in fragile or conflict-prone states.

Course Guidelines

1. Students are expected to read the assigned course materials before all class meetings and participate actively within in-class discussions and activities.
2. Check eLC regularly for updates on the course.
3. The class will follow a primarily seminar (i.e., discussion) format. I will lecture when necessary.
4. Assignments are due on the dates and times given. Late work will be penalized 10% for each day it is late. After 5 days, the work will be maxed out at 50%.
5. Attendance is required. You are permitted one unexcused absence and one excused absence before it begins to affect your grade. However, much of the work we do in class cannot be made up.
6. If you need extensions, please inform me via email. If you tell me in person I will forget.
7. Be respectful to one another. I will not tolerate students being disrespectful or making others uncomfortable. We will discuss controversial topics in this class. Passion is fine but respect is necessary. Furthermore, only one person speaks at a time. Do not interrupt or speak over each other.
8. This is a digital free space unless I say otherwise. No laptops, tablets, or phones are allowed. Thus, bring hard copies of your talking point for your personal use. Do not work on other coursework in this class. It is disrespectful to both me and your classmates.

9. The University of Georgia prohibits students from recording class sessions or classmates. If you have formal recording accommodation from Accessibility and Testing you can record the class.
10. As a University of Georgia student, you are expected to adhere to the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must comply with the standards outlined in "A Culture of Honesty," which can be found at: UGA Academic Honesty Policy. Ignorance of the academic honesty policy is not an acceptable excuse for violations. If you have questions related to course assignments or the academic honesty policy, please direct them to the instructor. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be referred to Judicial Affairs, as mandated by university policy.
11. Avoid using generative AI. While AI has its uses, particularly in creating reference pages, it creates sloppy work.
12. It is the policy and practice of the University of Georgia to create an inclusive learning environment. Students requiring accommodations should discuss such matters with the me at the outset of the course. Students requesting accommodations must register with the Disability Resource Center on campus (706-542-8719, http://www.drc.uga.edu).
13. UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.
    - Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
    - Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
    - University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu

- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu

14. Any exceptions to or modifications to these rules or the syllabus are given at my discretion.
15. I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as needed.

Schedule

Week 1

- Monday, January 12th: Welcome and introduction to course
- Wednesday, January 14th: Scientific Method & What is a Theory
- Friday, January 16th: How to Read

Week 2: Sovereignty

- Monday, January 19th: MLK Day, No Class
- Wednesday, January 21st: States and Sovereignty
    - Council on Foreign Relations. 2023. "The European Union: The World's Biggest Sovereignty Experiment." CFR Education, Council on Foreign Relations. https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/european-union-worlds-biggest-sovereignty-experiment
- Friday, January 23rd: Modern Challenges of Sovereignty
    - Learning Journey: Sovereignty: https://education.cfr.org/learn/learning-journey/sovereignty-challenges/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-responsibility-to-protect

Week 3: Why We Fight

- Monday, January, 26th: The War Trap: No Assigned Readings
- Wednesday, January 28th: Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49 (3): 379–414.
- Friday, January 30th: Senese, Paul D., and John A. Vasquez. 2005. "Assessing the Steps to War." *British Journal of Political Science* 35(4): 607–33.

Week 4: The Crisis Begins

- Monday, February 2nd: Europe on the Brink, 1914: Gamebook pp. 1-20
- Wednesday, February 4th: Europe on the Brink, 1914: Gamebook pp. 21-64
- Friday, February 6th: Europe on the Brink, 1914: Game Book pp. 65-110
    - Reading Quiz due 11:59

Week 5: Europe on the Brink

- Monday, February 9th: Game Session 1
    - Papers due for Lloyd George, Joffre, Moltke, Conrad, and Sukhomlinov
- Wednesday, February 11th: Game Session 2
    - Papers (speeches due) from Grey, Poincare, Bethmann-Hollweg, Berchtold, and Sazonov (perhaps others).
- Friday, February 13th: Game Session 3: Papers (Speeches) due from Asquith, Viviani, Wilhelm II, Tisza, and Nicholas II (perhaps others)

Week 6: Europe on the Brink

- Monday, February 16th: Game Session 4
- Wednesday, February 18th: What Really Happened

- Friday, February 20th: Graebner, Norman A., and Bennett, Edward M.. 2011. *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy : The Failure of the Wilsonian Vision*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
    - Chapter 3: Versailles: A Study in Arrogance

Week 7: Building a Modern International Order

- Monday, February 23rd: Why did the League of Nations fail?
    - Eloranta, Jari. 2011. "Why Did the League of Nations Fail?" *Cliometrica* 5 (1): 27–52. doi:10.1007/s11698-010-0049-9.
- Wednesday February 26: What is the UN
    - What is the UN General Assembly: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-general-assembly-unga-role
- Friday: February 28th: What is the UN Security Council
    - What is the UNSC?: https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-un-security-council

Week 8: The UN in Action, Korea 1950

- Monday, March 2nd: Introduction to the Korean War
- Wednesday, March 4th: UNSC Korean War
- Friday, March 6th: UNSC Korean War

Week 9: Spring Break: NO Class

Week 10: Cooperation

- Monday, March 16th: Hands off Africa, Prep 1
- Wednesday, March 18th: Hands off Africa, Prep 2
- Friday, March 20th:Session 1— Cocktail Party

Week 11: Hands off Africa!

- Monday March 23rd: Session 2— Opening speeches by Mboya, Nkrumah, and Dubois. Assignment 1 is due for most students
- Wednesday, March 25th: Session 3— Steering Committee Elections and Agenda Setting
- Friday, March 27th: Session 4—Subcommittee Meetings to Draft Specific Language for Resolutions.

Week 12: Hands off Africa!

- Monday, March 30th: Session 5—Subcommittee Meetings
- Wednesday, April 1st: Session 6—Subcommittee Presentations
- Friday, April 3rd: Session 7—Subcommittee Presentations

Week 13: Hands off Africa/Modern Global Governance

- Monday April 6th: Conclusions and Debrief
- Wednesday April 8th: What is International Law
    - https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-international-law
- Friday, April 10: What Are Human Rights

Week 14: Is there a Responsibility to Protect

- Monday, April 13th: What is Genocide
    - https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/genocide
- Wednesday, April 15th: Responsibility to Protect
    - Evans, Gareth, and Mohamed Sahnoun. 2002. “The Responsibility to Protect.” *Foreign Affairs*, October 1, 2002.
- Friday, April 17th: Peacekeeping
    - https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-peacekeeping

Week 15: Intervention in South Sudan

- Monday, April 20th: Humanitarian Corridors and Cease-fires
    - https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/how-do-humanitarian-corridors-cease-fires-and-pauses-address-violence-conflict
- Wednesday, April 22nd: Intervention in South Sudan
- Friday, April 24th: Intervention in South Sudan

Week 16

- Monday, April 27th: Wrap Up
- Tuesday, April 28th: Reading Day