

INTL 3200: Introduction to International Relations

University of Georgia, Department of International Affairs

Course Instructor Information

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Office hours: Tues., 8:00-9:00am & 11:30am-12:30pm

Course Meeting Information

Fall 2026
Tues/Thurs 9:55-11:15am
115 Candler Hall

Course Description

Global interdependence continues accelerating. As it does, events in one part of the world—for example, earthquakes, wars, terrorist attacks, human rights violations, trade wars, oil price fluctuations, and immigration—increasingly have profound effects on those living in other parts of the globe. This course introduces students to the interdependence underlying international relations, the issues derived from it, and theoretical frameworks and arguments to help make sense of it and its effects. In general, the course has three broad goals: (i) to teach students how to study international relations through a scientific approach, (ii) to introduce students to the myriad topics that fall within the general field of international relations, and (iii) through the first two goals, to prepare students for their upper-division classes.

Students often become international affairs (i.e., political science) majors because they like politics (or current events) and dislike (or prefer to avoid) statistics. This course, I hope, encourages students to rethink any such motivations. We will use contemporary and past events to illustrate processes and patterns; yet the field of international relations moves beyond these events, seeking to *explain*, *analyze*, and *predict*—through both theory and evidence. When we confront any current event, we want to know *why* it happened and *what* it means. In addition, math and international relations converge more than one might think. Much research—and more importantly, many jobs—in the field of international relations require a willingness to engage numbers, data, and statistics. Through the course, we will explore how this works.

Course Objectives

At this conclusion of this course, students will be (better) able to:

- Use a theoretical framework to explain and analyze various interstate interactions (e.g., conflict, cooperation, terrorism, economics, law, human rights practices);
- Define, explain, and apply the key concepts used frequently in international relations courses, including—for example—anarchy, interdependence, interstate conflict, alliances, democratic peace, terrorism, international trade, exchange rates, international law, and human rights;
- Express an informed, analytic opinion (in speech and writing) on several contemporary international relations topics and debates (e.g., the value—or not—of free trade, whether the global order will persist, and so on), using both theoretical arguments and evidence in the process;
- Identify their own areas of interest within the broad field of international relations; and
- Have a greater appreciation for the complexity of international events, as well as a better understanding of how experts see, interpret, and research these events.

Course Reading Material

The required textbook for this course is:

- McFall, Kelly. (2022) *The Needs of Others: Human Rights, International Organizations, and Intervention in Rwanda, 1994*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

All other required readings—behind those found in the textbook listed above—will be distributed in class and/or have files or electronic links available through the course's eLearning Commons (eLC) website (log-in using UGA MyID and SSO at: <https://uga.view.usg.edu>).

For the course to function smoothly, students should complete all assigned reading *before* the class meeting for which it is assigned (see schedule below). If students are not prepared for and contributing to class discussions, the instructor reserves the right to replace part of the participation grade with additional, unannounced quizzes.

Course Requirements:

The requirements for this course, and the percentage that each contributes to the final grade, are:

1. Participation (20%, as divided below)
 - a. In-class contribution (10%): Students will be evaluated on (i) (in-person) attendance, (ii) contributions to class discussions (quality and quantity), and (iii) participation during in-class activities. Each of these is *required*. In other words, attending class, but not joining into our discussions and activities, may still adversely affect a student's participation grade. There is no extra credit for low participation.
 - b. Talking points (10%): To enhance discussion, each student will write 6 talking points during the semester. The top 5 scores on these will each count 2% towards the final course grade (i.e., a total of 10%). The instructor will distribute instructions for how to complete talking points, as well as due dates, in class. Talking points are short (i.e., <200 word) paragraphs in which the student (i) makes an argument, analytical observation, or critique, and then (ii) uses that to raise a question for further discussion. Students must submit talking points to the appropriate eLC discussion board at least 24 hours before the class in which we will discuss the reading. They will also submit a hard-copy of each talking point to the instructor for the purposes of grading/feedback.
2. Quizzes (40%): We will have 10 brief, unannounced in-class quizzes. These will cover the assigned reading for the day on which the quiz occurs. Of these, a student's top 8 scores will each count for 5% of the final course grade.
3. Rwandan intervention simulation (20%, as divided below)
 - a. Participation. This is included in the participation grade discussed above. The instructor will also survey each student's simulation teammates for additional feedback.
 - b. Role-specific assignments (10%): Each student will receive a character role to play in the simulation. These roles have specific written assignments that students must complete during the simulation module. The instructor will give the parameters for these assignments in class. Students should submit these assignments to the instructor in hard-copy form (for grading), in addition to distributing them to other players as their simulation roles require.
 - c. Reflection (10%): Students will write a two-page paper that connects the simulation activity to other course content. The instructor will give the prompt and instructions in class. This assignment is due to the instructor in hard-copy form on October 29.
4. Writing assignments (20% total; 10% each): Students will complete two short writing assignments during the semester.
 - a. Assignment #1 (due in hard-copy form on September 17): This assignment relates to our in-class data exercise. The instructor will distribute this assignment in class. Students will work in teams to complete the assignment, and each team will submit one lab report for grading.
 - b. Assignment #2 (due in hard-copy form on November 17): The instructor will give the assignment prompt and instructions in class. Each student will work alone and submit an individual assignment.

Grade Distribution:

A	93.00-100.00	C	73.00-76.99
A-	90.00-92.99	C-	70.00-72.99
B+	87.00-89.99	D+	67.00-69.99
B	83.00-86.99	D	63.00-66.99
B-	80.00-82.99	D-	60.00-62.99
C+	77.00-79.99	F	Below 60.00

Course Policies:

1. *Disclaimer.* The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.
2. *Respectful Learning Environment.* All participants in the course will treat one another—as well as their ideas and comments—with respect. It is normal to make mistakes with difficult material, as well as to disagree in an academic setting. This disagreement, however, will occur respectfully in our class discussions. Towards the goal of creating a respectful, inclusive classroom environment, students are expected to: (i) use language that does not insult others or their point of view, (ii) keep cell phones *turned off and put away* during our class meetings, and (iii) use laptops for educational purposes *only*. Any student that does not follow these guidelines may be asked to leave the classroom and/or remove the distracting technology (including laptops).
3. *Course Material Copyright/Recording Policy.* The course material—including (but not limited to) all documents provided in the eLC course website, quizzes, graded assignments, handouts, and in-class lectures—are copyrighted. Students may therefore *not* record lectures (audio or video), distribute course materials, or post any content from the course online *without the instructor's express, written permission*. For the sake of student privacy, students may also *not* record our class sessions or meetings (audio or video). Exceptions will be made automatically for those registered with the Accessibility and Testing Office and who, through it, require an accommodation to record course meetings. Any such students, however, agree not to distribute the recordings (including online) *and* to destroy the recordings immediately after the course concludes.
4. *Attendance.* Class attendance is required for this course, particularly because some activities cannot be replicated (e.g., our discussions or in-class labs/exercises).
5. *Missing Class.* Students who are unable to attend a class meeting will not receive credit for participating in that meeting. They are also responsible for obtaining the notes for that meeting from another student. The instructor will not provide slides or notes for missed class meetings.
6. *Assignment Due Dates and Late Penalties.* Assignments are due on the dates given at the *beginning* of the class period for which they are assigned (i.e., assignments are considered late when class begins on the day they are due). Late assignments receive a penalty of one full letter grade (10 percentage points) for the first day, as well as an additional half-letter grade (5 percentage points) for each additional day they are late. After 10 days, students may submit a late assignment for half-credit until the final class meeting (November 19 at 9:55am).
7. *Make-Up/Extension Policy.* Make-up quizzes or assignment extensions *may* be offered, but *only* with the approval of the instructor—generally for documented, emergency situations. The instructor will administer any approved make-up quizzes during the course's regularly scheduled, semester final exam period (Thursday, December 3, 8:00-11:00am).

8. *Assignment Grade Appeal.* If a student believes that they received an inaccurate grade, they may submit a written memo to the instructor, along with the graded assignment in question. The student should explain in detail in the memo why they believe the grade should be different and must submit the memo within two weeks of receiving the graded assignment. The instructor will then read the memo, re-read the assignment, and issue a new grade. The new grade may be lower, equal to, or higher than the original grade and will not be subject to additional appeal under this policy.
9. *Academic Honesty.* UGA Student Honor Code: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at honesty.uga.edu.
10. *Artificial Intelligence Tools.* Students may not use word-mixing or artificial intelligence-based software to generate any part of the assignments required in this course. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in a zero on the assignment in question and/or a failing grade in the course.
11. *Accommodations.* The University of Georgia strives to create an inclusive learning environment. Students that require a potential accommodation (i) must register with the Accessibility and Testing Office on campus (706-542-8719, accessibility.uga.edu), and (ii) should discuss the accommodation with the instructor at the outset of the course.
12. *Exceptions and Modifications to Policies.* Any exceptions or modifications to the above rules (or more broadly, the syllabus) are given at the instructor's discretion, but only with *prior approval* and only under *extenuating* circumstances. Any exception/modification requires appropriate documentation from the student. (Note: Please schedule routine medical visits around the course schedule.)

UGA Well-being Resources:

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community. Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs (706-542-8479, sco.uga.edu). SCO helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program, which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

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
- Accessibility & Testing: accessibility.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting well-being.uga.edu.

Course Schedule

The following pages contain a general plan for the course. Please note: (i) the instructor, if necessary, may announce deviations to the schedule *in class*; (ii) all readings are required unless otherwise noted; (iii) everything listed under a given date should be completed before the start of that date's course meeting; and (iv) an asterisk (*) denotes days where electronic devices will be helpful to have on hand.

I. Course Introduction

- a. What is International Relations (IR)? (August 18)
 - i. Discussion: grand theory, mid-range theory, and the development of IR
 - ii. Skill: Distinguishing between levels of theory, path dependence
 - iii. *Optional*: Thakur and Vale, Chapter 2; Henderson (2013), "Hidden in Plain Sight"; Lake (1996), "Anarchy, Hierarchy, and the Variety of International Relations"

II. Foundational concepts

- a. How do we study IR? (August 20)
 - i. A theoretical framework: interests, institutions, and interactions (III)
 - 1. Discussion: Building blocks of theory
 - 2. Read: Frieden, Lake, & Schultz (FLS), Chapter 2
 - 3. Skill: Analyzing and explaining political behavior theoretically
 - ii. How do we apply a theoretical framework? (August 25)
 - 1. Discussion: Using theory to understand events
 - 2. Read: Bueno de Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics*, Chapter 1
 - 3. Skill: How to apply a theory to increase our understanding
 - iii. Causal arguments (August 27)
 - 1. Discussion: Necessary and sufficient conditions
 - 2. Read: Mahoney & Vanderpoel (2015), "Set Diagrams and Qualitative Research"
 - 3. Skill: Articulating theoretical connections between cause and effect
 - 4. **Due: Talking point #1**
 - iv. Formal models: why war? (September 1)
 - 1. Discussion: Why suboptimal outcomes occur
 - 2. Read: Fearon (1995), "Rationalist Explanations for War"
 - 3. Skill: Reading formal models
 - 4. *Optional Background*: FLS, Chapter 2, pp. 82-87 (appendix on game theory)
 - v. Quantitative research: why war? (September 3)
 - 1. Discussion: Analyzing events with multiple causes
 - 2. Read: Senese & Vasquez (2005), "Assessing the Steps to War"
 - 3. Skill: Interpreting statistical models/coefficients & working with data
 - 4. **Due: Talking point #2**
 - vi. Skill: Working with data (September 8)*
 - 1. Discussion: Running and interpreting descriptive statistics
 - 2. Complete: Writing Assignment #1
 - vii. Qualitative research: why did the most vulnerable remain behind? (September 10)*
 - 1. Discussion: Finding the proper data to evaluate an argument
 - 2. Read: Carpenter (2003), "Women and Children First"

- viii. What have we learned so far? (September 15)
 1. Read: Goertz (2021), “The Semantics of Causal Mechanism Figures”
 2. **Due: Talking point #3**

III. Conflict

- a. What is conflict, and why does it happen? (September 17)
 - i. Discussion: Conflict and conflict trends
 - ii. Read: Lake (2010), “Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory”
 - iii. **Due: Writing Assignment #1**
- b. What tools exist for ending conflict? (September 22)
 - i. Discussion: International conflict management tools
 - ii. Beber et al. (2017), “Peacekeeping, Compliance with International Norms, and Transactional Sex in Monrovia, Liberia”
 - iii. Skill: Identifying policy substitutes
- c. Normative constraints on conflict behavior (September 24)
 - i. Read: Schenoni et al. (2024), “The Saavedra Lamas Peace”
 - ii. *Optional*: Klotz (1995), “Norms Reconstituting Interests”

IV. Rwanda, 1994: A Simulation Exercise

- a. International organizations/law, non-state actors, and Rwanda (September 29)
 - i. Read: McFall, pp. 1-76
- b. Theories of humanitarian intervention (October 1)
 - i. Read: McFall, pp. 76-146
- c. Round 1 (October 6)
 - i. *Optional*: Abbott & Snidal (2000), “Hard and Soft Law in International Governance”
 - ii. **Due October 6-20: Character writing assignments (see role sheet for exact due dates)**
- d. Round 2 (October 8)
 - i. *Optional*: Mearsheimer (1994), “The False Promise of International Institutions”
- e. Round 3 (October 13)
- f. Round 4 (October 15)
- g. Round 5 (October 20)
- h. Postmortem (October 22)
 - i. Watch: *Ghosts of Rwanda*, Frontline/PBS
 - ii. Read: Wood et al. (2009), “Humanitarian Intervention”
 - iii. Complete reflection assignment (**due October 29**)

V. International Political Economy

- a. Is free trade better than restricted trade? (October 27)
 - i. Discussion: Trade and trade restrictions
 - ii. Read: Milner & Kubota (2005), “Why the Move to Free Trade?”, and On Washing Machines (2019), and On the Futility of Trade War with China (2018)

- b. How do monetary relations work? (October 29)
 - i. Discussion: Money supplies, monetary policy, and exchange rates
 - ii. Read: Nelson & Katzenstein (2014), “Uncertainty, Risk, and the Financial Crisis of 2008”
 - iii. **Due: Simulation reflection assignment**
- c. Is development possible, and what progress has the world made? (November 3)
 - i. Discussion: Development
 - ii. Read: Hickel (2016), “The True Extent of Global Poverty and Hunger”
 - iii. *Optional:* Doner & Schneider (2016), “The Middle-Income Trap”
 - iv. **Due: Talking point #4**
- d. Who lends to states in need, and what effect does it have? (November 5)
 - i. Discussion: Foreign aid
 - ii. Read: Dreher & Gassebner (2012), “Do IMF and World Bank Programs Induce Government Crises?”
- e. Is international political economy too “Western”? (November 10)
 - i. Discussion: Underlying influences on international relations
 - ii. Read: Wallerstein (1974), “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System”
 - iii. *Optional:* Singh (2021), “Race, Culture, and Economics”
 - iv. Skill: Briefing
 - v. **Due: Talking point #5**
- VI. Terrorism (November 12)
 - i. Discussion: Why does terrorism happen?
 - ii. Read: Kydd & Walter (2006), “The Strategies of Terrorism”
- VII. Environment (November 17)
 - a. What might the world do about the climate, if anything?
 - i. Discussion: Public goods and bargaining problems
 - ii. Read: Busby (2018), “Why Climate Change Matters More Than Anything Else”, and Falkner (2016), “The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics”
 - iii. **Due: Writing Assignment #2**
- VIII. Debates: are democracies more peaceful, and if so, why? (November 19)
 - i. Discussion: Overlapping concepts
 - ii. Mousseau (2009), “The Social Market Roots of Democratic Peace”
 - iii. Skill: Critique, using data to understand alternative arguments
 - iv. **Due: Talking point #6**
- IX. Course Conclusion: Tying It All Together (November 19)
- X. Other Readings and topics
 - a. Hegemons: Finnemore (2009), McDonald (2015); Interstate relationships: Colaresi et al. (2007), Goertz et al. (2016); Civil war: Walter (1997); Political psychology: Jervis (1968); Transnational advocacy networks: Cheng et al. (2021); Drone Warfare: Horowitz et al. (2016); Cyberwarfare: Lindsay (2013); International law: Helfer and Voeten (2017)