

Domestic Politics and International Relations

INTL 4225 · Undergraduate Course · Fall 2026

Instructor: Alan van Beek
Office: TBD
Email: TBD
Office Hours: TBD

Meeting Days: Tuesdays & Thursdays
Meeting Time: TBD
Location: TBD

COURSE PREREQUISITES

INTL 3200 or INTL 3300.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Short (CAPA): The relationships between domestic political competition and international behavior. The sources of foreign policy and the international sources of domestic political structures and change.

Full: What does domestic politics have to do with international relations? Why does it matter that a country is a democracy or an autocracy, that its leader faces an election next fall, or that its citizens are worried about their jobs? This course argues that these “inside” factors are central to understanding how states behave on the world stage—and that international events, in turn, reach back and reshape politics at home.

The course is organized around two core questions: (1) *How does domestic politics shape a state’s foreign policy and international behavior?* and (2) *How do international forces—from trade and globalization to war and international institutions—reshape domestic politics?*

We begin by introducing the two-level game framework. Part I examines how public preferences, national identity, economic interests, and political institutions influence what states do abroad. Part II reverses the causal arrow, asking how the international environment reshapes domestic welfare, political coalitions, and regime type. The course concludes with an applied simulation exercise and a policy paper.

Note: This syllabus is a living document and is likely to change over the course of the semester in response to, among other things, student needs and current events. Changes will be announced well in advance and are not expected to affect the grading scheme.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this course you will learn:

- To identify the primary actors, institutions, and societal forces responsible for shaping foreign policy in democracies and non-democracies
- To recognize the sources of these actors’ political interests, and thus to analyze the potential motives underlying their policy preferences

- To use evidence to evaluate theories and arguments about how each of these actors matter and about how they interact with each other
- More generally, to evaluate the persuasiveness of empirical claims using evidence
- To become a more informed consumer of news media and foreign policy debates

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Perusall Reading Participation (20%)

All assigned readings are available through **Perusall** (access code distributed on the first day of class). You must complete all readings *before* each class session and annotate them on Perusall. Annotations should be substantive: ask genuine questions, make connections to other readings or to current events, flag points of confusion. Simple highlights or one-word reactions receive little credit. You must submit at least one annotation per assigned text to receive full credit for that week. Perusall scores are aggregated at the end of the semester.

Class and Simulation Participation (15%)

Active, prepared participation is expected in every class session. Students who have clearly read the material and contribute meaningfully to discussion will receive full marks. The simulation exercise (Week 14) is a required component of this grade; students who do not participate in the simulation cannot receive full marks for this component. Unexcused absences undermine the ability to participate and will reduce this component of the grade accordingly.

Midterm Examination (30%)

The midterm examination takes place during the **Thursday session of Week 8 (October 8)**. The Tuesday session that week (October 6) is a review session. A review sheet will be made available one week before the examination. The exam will test students' mastery of concepts, theories, and readings from Weeks 1–7 and may include short-answer and essay components.

Policy Paper (35%)

The policy paper replaces the final class session. Rather than meeting on **Tuesday, December 1**, the course topic will be disclosed at the normally scheduled class time. Students will then have **24 hours** to submit a short (750–1,250 word) policy essay. Full guidelines will be made available on the first day of class. In brief: you will be asked to advise the government of a country of your choice on an issue disclosed on December 1, drawing on at least three readings from the course. The paper counts for one-third of its grade on issue summary and two-thirds on analysis and policy recommendation.

Opportunities for extra credit will be made available over the course of the semester. More details will be provided during the first week of class.

Grade Summary

Component	Weight
Perusall Reading Participation	20%
Class and Simulation Participation	15%
Midterm Examination (Thu. Oct. 8)	30%
Policy Paper (topic disclosed Dec. 1)	35%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

A	93–100%	B	83–86%	C	73–76%
A-	90–92%	B-	80–82%	C-	70–72%
B+	87–89%	C+	77–79%	D	60–69%
				F	<60%

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

You are expected to attend every class. Unexcused absences undermine the ability to participate and will reduce the participation component of the grade accordingly. If you must miss a class, notify the instructor in advance.

Late Submissions

The policy paper has a hard 24-hour deadline from the time the topic is disclosed. Because the paper is submitted during the final examination period, no extensions will be granted except in cases of documented medical emergency. All extensions require prior approval.

Academic Integrity

Work submitted for this course must be your own. Plagiarism—presenting someone else’s words or ideas as your own without attribution—and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported and handled in accordance with university policy. When in doubt, cite.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

AI writing assistants (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude) may be used for brainstorming, proofreading, or organizational purposes. All submitted work must, however, reflect the student’s own analysis, argumentation, and intellectual contribution. When submitting your work, you are engaging your personal responsibility to ensure that the final product is your own. Accordingly, any failing (e.g., plagiarism, incoherence, factual errors, or hallucinations) in the final product will be attributed to you as the author and penalized accordingly.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Students requiring academic accommodations should contact the instructor within the first two weeks of class and provide documentation from the university’s disability resources office. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate documented needs.

UGA STATEMENTS

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. Every course syllabus should include the instructor’s expectations related to academic honesty.

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 at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care Outreach 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 and Testing: accessibility.uga.edu

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

UGA Syllabus as General Plan

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Each week lists two required scholarly readings and one supplementary resource (a video essay or policy brief). All materials should be completed **before** Tuesday’s class and annotated on Perusall. There is no class on **November 27** (Thanksgiving). The policy paper topic is disclosed on **December 1** (no regular class session).*

Introduction

Week 1 (Aug. 18 & 20)**Introduction and the Two-Level Game**

What does it mean to say that domestic politics and international relations are linked? We introduce the two-level game as the course's central organizing metaphor.

- Putnam, Robert D. (1988). "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization* 42(3): 427–460.
- Gourevitch, Peter. (1978). "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics." *International Organization* 32(4): 881–912.

Part I: How Domestic Politics Shapes International Relations

Week 2 (Aug. 25 & 27)**Public Opinion and Foreign Policy**

Do ordinary citizens have coherent views on foreign policy? How do governments respond—or not—to public preferences in decisions about war, trade, and alliance?

- Tomz, Michael R. and Jessica L.P. Weeks. (2013). "Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 107(4): 849–865.
- Flores-Macías, Gustavo A. and Sarah E. Kreps. (2013). "Political Parties at War: A Study of American Party Politics During World War II." *American Political Science Review* 107(4): 833–848.

Week 3 (Sep. 1 & 3)**Identity, Nationalism, and Foreign Policy**

How does national identity shape foreign policy? When does nationalism lead to conflict, and when does it constrain it?

- Mansfield, Edward D. and Jack Snyder. (1995). "Democratization and the Danger of War." *International Security* 20(1): 5–38.
- Narang, Vipin and Rebecca M. Nelson. (2009). "Who Are These Belligerent Democratizers? Re-assessing the Impact of Democratization on War." *International Organization* 63(2): 357–379.

Week 4 (Sep. 8 & 10)**Economic Interests and Trade Preferences**

Who gains and who loses from international trade? How do factor endowments and individual economic interests translate into political demands for protection or openness?

- Mansfield, Edward D. and Diana C. Mutz. (2009). "Support for Free Trade: Self-Interest, Sociotropic Politics, and Out-Group Anxiety." *International Organization* 63(3): 425–457.
- Milner, Helen V. and Keiko Kubota. (2005). "Why the Move to Free Trade? Democracy and Trade Policy in the Developing World." *International Organization* 59(1): 107–143.

Part I-B: Domestic Institutions and Foreign Policy

Week 5 (Sep. 15 & 17)**The Democratic Peace**

Democracies almost never fight each other—but why? We examine normative and institutional explanations for one of the most robust empirical findings in international relations.

- Doyle, Michael W. (1983). "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12(3): 205–235.
- Maoz, Zeev and Bruce Russett. (1993). "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986." *American Political Science Review* 87(3): 624–638.

Week 6 (Sep. 22 & 24)**Audience Costs, Credibility, and Political Survival**

Leaders who back down from public commitments face punishment at home. How does this domestic constraint affect crisis bargaining and signaling? Do autocratic leaders face the same pressures?

- Fearon, James D. (1994). "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88(3): 577–592.
- Weeks, Jessica L.P. (2008). "Autocratic Audience Costs: Legitimacy and Signaling in International Crises." *International Organization* 62(1): 35–64.

Week 7 (Sep. 29 & Oct. 1)**Executives, Legislatures, and International Agreements**

When the executive negotiates internationally, how does legislative oversight change what is achievable? How does divided government affect trade liberalization and international cooperation?

- Mansfield, Edward D., Helen V. Milner, and B. Peter Rosendorff. (2002). "Why Democracies Cooperate More: Electoral Control and International Trade Agreements." *International Organization* 56(3): 477–513.
- Lohmann, Susanne and Sharyn O'Halloran. (1994). "Divided Government and U.S. Trade Policy: Theory and Evidence." *International Organization* 48(4): 595–632.

Week 8 (Oct. 6 & 8)**Midterm Week**

- ▷ **Tuesday, October 6:** Review session. A review sheet covering Weeks 1–7 will be distributed one week in advance. Come with questions.
- ▷ **Thursday, October 8: Midterm Examination.** Closed book. The exam covers all readings and lectures from Weeks 1–7.

No new readings this week.

Part II: How International Relations Shapes Domestic Politics

Week 9 (Oct. 13 & 15)**Globalization and Domestic Redistribution**

Globalization creates winners and losers. How does economic integration reshape the welfare state, redistribute income, and reconfigure domestic political coalitions?

- Ruggie, John Gerard. (1982). "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order." *International Organization* 36(2): 379–415.
- Rudra, Nita. (2002). "Globalization and the Decline of the Welfare State in Less-Developed Countries." *International Organization* 56(2): 411–445.

Week 10 (Oct. 20 & 22)**International Institutions and Domestic Change**

Do international organizations promote democracy, spread liberal norms, and change domestic behavior? Do all countries respond to international pressures in the same way?

- Simmons, Beth A. and Zachary Elkins. (2004). "The Globalization of Liberalization: Policy Diffusion in the International Political Economy." *American Political Science Review* 98(1): 171–189.
- Acharya, Amitav. (2004). "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism." *International Organization* 58(2): 239–275.

Week 11 (Oct. 27 & 29)**War, Conflict, and Domestic Political Change**

War is not only a product of domestic politics—it also reshapes it. How does participation in conflict affect regime stability, leadership survival, and the prospects for democratization?

- Walter, Barbara F. (2004). "Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 371–388.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared. (2008). "Income and Democracy." *American Economic Review* 98(3): 808–842.

Week 12 (Nov. 3 & 5)**Economic Coercion: Sanctions and Foreign Aid**

When states want to change each other's behavior without using military force, they reach for economic tools. Under what conditions do sanctions and foreign aid actually work?

- Pape, Robert A. (1997). "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work." *International Security* 22(2): 90–136.
- Peksen, Dursun. (2009). "Better or Worse? The Effect of Economic Sanctions on Human Rights." *Journal of Peace Research* 46(1): 59–77.

Week 13 (Nov. 10 & 12)**Transnational Advocacy and Norm Diffusion**

Human rights norms, environmental standards, and anti-corruption expectations now cross borders through networks of activists, NGOs, and international organizations. How do these transnational pressures change domestic politics?

- Finnemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink. (1998). "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52(4): 887–917.
- Hafner-Burton, Emilie M. and Kiyoteru Tsutsui. (2005). "Human Rights in a Globalizing World: The Paradox of Empty Promises." *American Journal of Sociology* 110(5): 1373–1411.

Applied Session and Conclusion

Week 14 (Nov. 17 & 19)**Simulation**

This week is devoted to an in-class simulation. Details—including the scenario, roles, and any preparatory materials—will be distributed in advance. The simulation is a required component of the participation grade.

Week 15 (Nov. 24)**Policy Paper**

This session will review the class content and go over the guidelines for the policy paper.

No class on November 27 (Thanksgiving Break).

(Dec. 1)

Policy Paper

*The policy paper topic will be disclosed at the normally scheduled class time (**Tuesday, December 1**). Students will have **24 hours** from the moment of disclosure to submit their paper via the course management system.*

Policy Paper Submission Deadline: Wednesday, December 2 at [class start time]. Late submissions will not be accepted except in cases of documented medical emergency.