Course Description and Objectives

International relations is the study of the interactions among the various actors, including states, international organizations, and individuals, and how they participate in international politics. It is the study of the behaviors of these actors as they participate individually and together in international political processes.

This course provides a broad overview of the international relations by focusing on important questions about the world today. This course will offer you opportunities to learn about international politics by exploring historical contexts of contemporary international relations and contending theoretical perspectives. We will discuss issues like war, political economy, and human rights and examine the roles of various actors (e.g. states, international organizations, individuals etc.) in the decision-making process. This course will provide you with useful theoretical and analytical frameworks to examine a wide range of political outcomes and will, therefore, prepare you for more advanced-level study on international relations.

Throughout the course we will examine the major theories of international relations (e.g. Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism) and will use theoretical arguments to address a number of broad questions such as: Why do states go to war? Do international organizations promote conflict or cooperation? Additionally, the course will also provide students with skills and tools to think critically about these issues and help them develop and answer their own questions related to international politics.

At the end of the course, students should be able to
1. Demonstrate the ability to recognize key concepts and major theories of international relations;
2. Acquire theoretical and empirical tools necessary to explore the issues in international politics;
3. Be able to identify and critically evaluate the arguments of scholarly research in international relations;
4. Engage in conceptual analysis and theoretical interpretation of international political phenomena.

**What You Must Have**

This is an online course and our interaction relies entirely on the use of computer and the internet. In order to take this course, you must have access to or know how to use the following:

1. Access to a personal computer with high speed internet connection.
2. A backup plan (i.e. computer) in case your primary machine fails.
3. A basic understanding of your computer.
4. The ability to use the Microsoft Office Suite, specially Word, Excel, and Powerpoint.
5. The ability to read Adobe PDF documents.
6. The ability to use UBLearns and a UB email address.
7. A solid understanding of how to use the UB Library's website to access journal articles and other material.

**Course Materials and Requirements**

Due to the nature of the course, there will be no formal classroom lecture on the course material. We will interact and discuss via UBLearns and email. This is a reading intensive course, which means that you will be required to read a considerable amount of material each week, and you will have to read everything closely in order to do well in this class. Keeping up with the reading is a must, as the discussion boards and quizzes are all based the course material. The readings of this class will consist of one textbook (available for purchase online or at bookstores) and some journal articles and book chapters which I will post on UBLearns.

The book is structured thematically. The first few chapters introduce students to various theoretical perspectives and historical contexts of contemporary international relations. The subsequent chapters discuss broader concepts like state, war, political economy, international institutions etc.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade is determined by the following:

Quizzes (35%):

At the end of every other week, you will be given a quiz on the readings required for the weeks. That means, for instance, the first quiz (due Feb. 8) will be based on the readings of the first two weeks (see the Course Schedule below). There will be a total of 7 quizzes (no quiz during the final week when you will have a final exam) and each quiz is worth 5% of your final grade. I will upload the quiz early in the week and you will have until 11:59 pm on Sunday to complete and submit it. The quiz will not be available after its due date. Don’t wait until the last minute to complete the quizzes. There will no makeup quiz except during medical or family emergencies which need to be documented.

Discussion Boards (45%):

Every week you are required to (1) write a reaction paper on the material you have read for the week, and (2) respond to one of your classmates’ original reaction paper. Reaction papers are thoughtful comments on, not just summaries of, the readings. Each post should be 250 words, substantiated by citations (author’s last name, year of publication, and page number in that order). Summaries and unsubstantiated posts will receive almost no points. There will be a total of 15 posts, one for each week. Each reaction paper is worth 2% and each response 1% of your final grade. The reaction paper is due 11:59 pm on Wednesday and the response 11:59 pm on Sunday. Late posts will not be accepted. Discussion posts cannot be made up, no exceptions.
The discussion boards are in the post-first format which means that you will be able to view other students’ posts only after you have made your own initial post. All posts must be written in formal language with complete sentences and proper grammar, including punctuation. Posts written in slangs and abbreviations (e.g. BTW etc.) will receive almost no points. While responding to your classmates’ posts, use respectful language.

**Final Exam (20%)**: You will be given a final exam during the final week. The format of the exam will be posted on UBLearns.

Letter grades are determined as follows:

- **A 92.50+**
- **A- 90.00-92.49**
- **B+ 87.00-89.99**
- **B 84.00-86.99**
- **B- 80.00-83.99**
- **C+ 77.99-79.99**
- **C 74.00-76.99**
- **C- 70.00-73.99**
- **D+ 65.00-69.99**
- **D 60.00-64.99**
- **F 0.00-59.99**

**Academic Integrity**

According to UB Rules and Regulations: “The University has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect for others’ academic endeavors. By placing their name on academic work, students certify the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments.”

Academic dishonesty includes submitting previously submitted work, plagiarism, cheating, falsification of academic materials, misrepresentation of documents, selling academic assignments, and selling computer assignments. The UB guidelines are available at [http://www.advising.buffalo.edu/student/academicintegrity.php](http://www.advising.buffalo.edu/student/academicintegrity.php). The instructor has a policy of zero tolerance for academic dishonesty.
Communication

Our communication about the course material and policy will take place via UB Learns and email. You may expect my response within 24 hours or earlier during weekdays and 48 hours during weekends. I will hold online office hours between 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Keep checking your UB Learns and official email regularly. I will respond to only those questions that are unanswered by the syllabus. You must always email me through your UB mail account and include a subject line and your name. I may not respond to emails received from non-UB addresses.

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Readings are subject to change at any time during the semester.

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on UB Learns (under Course documents on the left panel).

Week 1: Approaches to International Relations

Readings

- Mingst, pages 2-17.

Discussion Board Posts

Week 2: The Historical Context

Readings

- Mingst, pages 18-70.

Discussion Board Posts

Quiz 1

Week 3: Theoretical Perspectives

Readings

- Mingst, pages 72-105.

Discussion Board Posts

Week 4: Neorealism v. Neoliberalism

Readings

*Discussion Board Posts*

*Quiz 2*

**Week 5: The International System**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 106-129

*Discussion Board Posts*

**Week 6: The State**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 130-174.

*Discussion Board Posts*

*Quiz 3*

**Week 7: The Individual**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 176-201.

*Discussion Board Posts*

**Week 8: International Organizations**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 202-246.

*Discussion Board Posts*

*Quiz 4*

**Week 9: War**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 248-302.

*Discussion Board Posts*

**Week 10: Regime Type and International Conflict**

*Readings*


*Discussion Board Posts*

*Quiz 5*

**Week 11: International Political Economy**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 304-348

*Discussion Board Posts*

**Week 12: Human Rights**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 350-382.

*Discussion Board Posts*

*Quiz 6*

**Week 13: Terrorism and Security**

*Readings*


*Discussion Board Posts*

**Week 14: International Peacekeeping**

*Readings*


*Discussion Board Posts*

*Quiz 7*

**Week 15: Transnational Issues: Environment, Health, and Crime**

*Readings*

• Mingst, pages 386-429.

*Discussion Board Posts*

*Final Exam*