



POLI:1500:AAA | FALL 2025

INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

[The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#)

Course Instructor

Instructor: Sara Mitchell, Professor, [Department of Political Science](#)

Email: sara-mitchell@uiowa.edu; **Phone:** 335-2356
Drop-in Hours (309 SH): Monday, 1:30-4:30pm

Teaching Assistants:

Tahia Jannati, PhD student, Political Science

Email: tahia-jannati@uiowa.edu

Drop-in Hours (330 SH): Tuesday, 11:30am-2:30pm

Soojin Lee, PhD student, Political Science

Email: soojin-lee@uiowa.edu

Drop-in Hours (369 SH): Wednesday, 2:00-5:00pm

Brendan Mapes, PhD student, Political Science

Email: brendan-mapes@uiowa.edu

Drop-in Hours (330 SH): Friday, 9:00am-12:00pm

Sherlean Roberts, PhD student, Political Science

Email: sherlean-roberts@uiowa.edu

Drop-in Hours (318 SH): Tuesday, 12:15-3:15pm

Academic Course Home

[Department of Political Science](#)

[The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#)

Class Meeting Times

Main lecture, Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30-4:20pm, AUD Macbride Hall (MH)

Discussion sections meet once per week

Course Site

To access the course site, log into [Iowa Courses Online \(ICON\)](#) using your Hawk ID and password.

Drop-in Hours

Students are invited to drop by during the professor's or TA's drop-in hours to discuss questions about the course material or address any other concerns. We are also available by appointment if you are unable to attend drop-in hours. To meet on Zoom instead of in-person, please email the instructor or TA to request a Zoom link.

Course Policies

Please see University policies here:

<https://provost.uiowa.edu/student-course-policies>

Other policies are listed at the end of the syllabus.

Department Executive Officer (DEO):

Professor Julianna Pacheco: polisci@uiowa.edu or julianna-pacheco@uiowa.edu

Course Description and Goal

Course Description:

In this course, you will learn about several contemporary issues in international politics and the analytical tools to analyze them. Major parts of the course cover such topics as the dynamics of conflict and cooperation, the processes of foreign policy decision-making, major international economic issues, and basic future trends in global politics. The course also provides an overview of the primary perspectives and analytical approaches for studying world politics. The overall objective is to give students sufficient awareness of the interaction of political, technological, economic, and social factors to permit a critical appreciation of the contemporary international environment and ways of thinking about the future.

Course Learning Goals: After taking this class, students should be able to:

- Be familiar with major concepts and theories for studying international relations (IR)
- Translate knowledge from IR theories to ongoing events in global politics

- Learn about the relevant actors in international relations and their interests
- Understand how institutions constrain and affect interactions in international relations

Required Textbook

The **required textbook** for this course is:

- Frieden, Jeffrey A., David A. Lake, and Kenneth A. Schultz. 2021. *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, and Institutions, 5th Edition*. New York: WW Norton. ISBN (paperback): 978-0-393-87222-4.

Note: The electronic textbook is available on the ICON course page on the “Home” page under the “Textbook Information” tab. Click on “World Politics Ebook” to access the book. You will be charged \$44.48 to your U-Bill. You may [opt out](#) of this content, but the consequences of doing so may negatively affect your outcomes in this course. We recommend that you take advantage of the extra resources (e.g., Inquizitive) that come with the online textbook to help you review the material.

Grading Criteria

Final course grades will be assessed based on the student’s performance in the following items:

| Graded Item | Points | % of final grade |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Response Paper | 62.5 | 12.5% |
| Current Events Assignments (2) | 62.5 | 12.5% |
| Section Grade | 150 | 30% |
| Exams (3) | 225 | 45% |
| Total Points: | 500 | 100% |

Course grades will be distributed as follows:

| | |
|------------|-------------|
| 99-100: A+ | 77-79: C+ |
| 93-98: A | 73-76: C |
| 90-92: A- | 70-72: C- |
| 87-89: B+ | 67-69: D+ |
| 83-86: B | 63-66: D |
| 80-82: B- | 60-62: D- |
| | Below 60: F |

Course Policies

- **Collaboration:** While you are expected to discuss with other students and work together in simulations in discussion sections, all written work is individual and should not be undertaken in collaboration.
- **Late Assignment Policy:** Any assignment or paper submitted after the due date will be assigned a 10% penalty per day late.
- **Grade Questions:** If for some reason you are dissatisfied with the final grade received on a paper or assignment, you may submit a written memo to your teaching assistant (TA) explaining why you think the grade is unfair. This memo must be submitted within 1 week of receiving the grade. Your TA will read the memo, re-read the paper/assignment, and then assign a new grade. The TA reserves the right to assign a lower grade after reading the paper/assignment again.
- **Communication:** All electronic communications will be posted as announcements on ICON. I recommend you have ICON notifications sent to your University of Iowa email address. See information about the use of UI email for all communications in the university policies section.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage:** Students may not use AI for any written assignments, papers, or exams. Penalties for AI usage include grade deductions or zero credit.

Course Structure

This course includes a large lecture (340+ students) that meets twice per week along with smaller discussion sections (<30 students) that meet once per week. Students will find course information on the ICON page (icon.uiowa.edu), including links for submitting paper assignments.

Students are expected to:

- **Review** the course syllabus to learn about the overall course structure, purpose, and deadlines.
- **Read** assigned readings before each class. The date listed after each reading is the day it is due.
- **Attend** the main lectures and discussion section each week.
- **Submit** assignments by designated deadlines **via the ICON “Assignments.”**
- **Participate** in discussions in assigned sections. The TAs will clarify the expectations for their sections.

Course Work

Response Paper: 12.5%

You will write one short (2-3 page) response paper based on a prompt. We provide more detailed instructions for the format and the prompt on ICON. The paper is due on 10/29.

Current Events Assignments (2): 12.5%

You will complete two short assignments relating course material to current events (12.5%, 2 at 6.25% each) due on 10/8 and 11/19. We provide more detailed instructions for these assignments on ICON.

Section Grade: 30%

Each student is assigned to one of the following discussion sections.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|---------|
| Section A01 (Roberts) | Wednesday | 8:30-9:20am | 131 SH |
| Section A02 (Mapes) | Tuesday | 5:00-5:50pm | 151 SH |
| Section A03 (Jannati) | Wednesday | 12:30-1:20pm | 150 SH |
| Section A04 (Lee) | Wednesday | 5:30-6:20pm | 150 SH |
| Section A05 (Roberts) | Tuesday | 5:00-5:50pm | 131 SH |
| Section A06 (Jannati) | Thursday | 11:00-11:50am | 131 SH |
| Section A07 (Roberts) | Wednesday | 12:30-1:20pm | 151 SH |
| Section A08 (Roberts) | Thursday | 8:30-9:20am | 151 SH |
| Section A09 (Lee) | Thursday | 5:00-5:50pm | 150 SH |
| Section A10 (Mapes) | Wednesday | 5:30-6:20pm | 151 SH |
| Section A11 (Jannati) | Thursday | 12:30-1:20pm | 216 EPB |
| Section A12 (Mapes) | Thursday | 5:00-5:50pm | 151 SH |
| Section A13 (Mapes) | Wednesday | 11:30am-12:20pm | 151 SH |
| Section A14 (Jannati) | Thursday | 2:00-2:50pm | 131 SH |
| Section A15 (Lee) | Wednesday | 11:30am-12:20pm | 131 SH |
| Section A16 (Lee) | Wednesday | 9:30-10:20am | 131 SH |

Discussion section grades (150 points) are based on attendance and participation for each class (10 points per section, 130 points total) and 2 pop quizzes (10 points per quiz, 20 points total). You can miss one section without grade penalty. You will not have discussion sections in week 1 or week 11 (during the second exam week). Sections will include a variety of activities such as discussions, simulations, and review of course material. Your section grade will be updated throughout the semester on ICON.

Exams (3): 45%

Examinations (45%, 3 @ 15% each): There are three multiple choice exams covering material from the textbook, lectures, and discussion sections. Each exam is worth 15% of the final grade, covers roughly 1/3 of the course, and is non-cumulative. The exams will be taken online in a monitored environment (more information provided in class). The first two exams are scheduled on Thursday, October 2nd and Tuesday, November 4th. The last exam will be scheduled during finals week, and you will have 60 minutes to complete it. The day and time of exam 3 will be provided on ICON once it is set by the university. Requests to take the exams at times other than the scheduled times must be made in advance and will be granted at the discretion of the instructor. If a student fails to take an examination, the decision to allow a makeup and the penalty associated with that makeup, if granted, is completely at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Calendar

| Learning Objectives | Learning Activities & Assessment/Assignments |
|--|---|
| Week 1 Course and Theoretical Introduction (August 25-29) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Differentiate IR “isms” approaches | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduction to class (8/26)Read FLS, pp. xxvi-xxxix (8/28)No discussion sections for Week 1IR Knowledge Quiz: Available on ICON; due by 8/31 (11:59pm) |
| Week 2 Understanding Interests, Interactions, and Institutions (September 1-5) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Compare interests, interactions, and institutions | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Read FLS, Ch 2, pages 42-69 (9/2)Read FLS, Ch 2, pages 69-91 (9/4)Discussion section theme: strategic interaction models |
| Week 3 Why are There Wars? (September 8-12) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand the bargaining model of war | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Read FLS, Ch 3, pages 92-107 (9/9)Read FLS, Ch 3, pages 107-140 (9/11)Discussion section theme: bargaining model of war |
| Week 4 Domestic Politics and War (September 15-19) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss whether leaders use force for political purposesAnalyze why democracies do not fight each other | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Read FLS, Ch 4, pages 144-175 (9/16)Read FLS, Ch 4, pages 175-191 (9/18)Discussion section theme: democratic peace & diversionary theory |

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| Week 5 International Institutions and War (September 22-26) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine how military alliances deter attacks Assess effectiveness of peacekeeping | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read FLS, Ch 5, pages 194-215 (9/23) Read FLS, Ch 5, pages 216-241 (9/25) Discussion section theme: institutions & review for exam 1 |
| Week 6 Exam 1 (September 29-October 3) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Exam 1 (covers chapters 1-5) | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review for exam 1 in lecture (9/30) Exam 1: Thursday, October 2nd Discussion section theme: tips for response & current events papers |
| Week 7 Violence by Nonstate Actors: Civil Wars and Terrorism (October 6-10) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiate factors that contribute to civil wars and terrorism | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read FLS, Ch 6, pages 246-278 (10/7) Read FLS, Ch 6, pages 278-301 (10/9) Discussion section theme: civil wars & terrorism Submit Current Events Assignment #1 (10/8 by 11:59pm) |
| Week 8 International Trade (October 13-17) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use political economy theories to understand how trade between countries works | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read FLS, Ch 7, pages 306-336, 358-363 (10/14) Read FLS, Ch 7, pages 336-355 (10/16) Discussion section theme: trade & comparative advantage |
| Week 9 International Financial Relations (October 20-24) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about financing and debt in global politics | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read FLS, Ch 8, pages 364-378 (10/21) Read FLS, Ch 8, pages 379-403 (10/23) Discussion section theme: financing & debt |
| Week 10 International Monetary Relations (October 27-31) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how currencies & exchange rates affect our lives | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read FLS, Ch 9, pages 406-422 (10/28) Read FLS, Ch 9, pages 422-442 (10/30) Discussion section theme: monetary policy & exam 2 review Submit Response Paper (10/29 by 11:59pm) |

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|--|---|
| Week 11 International Law and Norms & Exam 2 (November 3-7) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Exam 2 (covers chapters 6-9, weeks 7-10) | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exam 2: Tuesday, November 4th ▪ Read FLS, Ch 11, pages 484-498 (11/6) ▪ No discussion sections for Week 11 |
| Week 12 International Law and Norms & Human Rights (November 10-14) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the role of law and norms in international relations | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read FLS, Ch 11, pages 499-517 (11/11) • Read FLS, Ch 12, pages 520-538 (11/13) • Discussion section theme: law & norms |
| Week 13 Human Rights (November 17-21) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraise how human rights violations are addressed in IR | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read FLS, Ch 12, pages 538-560 (11/18) • No Class, ISA Midwest Conference (11/20) • Discussion section theme: human rights • Submit Current Events Assignment #2 (11/19 by 11:59pm) |
| Week 14 Fall Break (November 24-28), No Class | |
| Week 15 The Global Environment (December 1-5) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize how climate change will affect conflict and cooperation | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read FLS, Ch 13, pages 564-579 (12/2) • Read FLS, Ch 13, pages 579-605 (12/4) • Discussion section theme: environment |
| Week 16 Challenges to the Global Order (December 8-12) | |
| Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge from class to future problems in international relations | Learning Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read FLS, Ch 14, pages 608-633 (12/9) • Read FLS, Ch 14, pages 633-665 (12/11) • Discussion section theme: challenges to global order & review for exam 3 |
| Finals Week Take Exam 3 (60 minutes total) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covers chapters 10-14 and weeks 11-16 ▪ Taken during the university's designated date and time for the final exam | |

UNIVERSITY & ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

Course's College (Administrative Home)

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the home of this course, and CLAS governs the add and drop deadlines, academic misconduct policies, and other undergraduate policies and procedures. Other UI colleges may have different policies.

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

All students in CLAS courses are expected to abide by the [college's standards of academic honesty](#). Undergraduate academic misconduct must be reported by instructors to CLAS according to [these procedures](#).

Student Complaints

Students with a complaint about a grade or a related matter should first discuss the situation with the instructor and/or the course supervisor (if applicable), and finally with the DEO (Chair) of the department, school or program offering the course. Sometimes students will be referred to the department or program's Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) or Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Undergraduate students should contact [CLAS Undergraduate Programs](#) for support when the matter is not resolved at the previous level. Graduate students should contact the [CLAS Graduate Affairs Manager](#) when additional support is needed.

Drop Deadline for this Course

You may drop an individual course before the drop deadline; after this deadline you will need collegiate approval. You can look up the drop deadline for this course [here](#). When you drop a course, a "W" will appear on your transcript. The mark of "W" is a neutral mark that does not affect your GPA. To discuss how dropping (or staying in) a course might affect your academic goals, please contact your Academic Advisor. Directions for adding or dropping a course and other registration changes can be found on the [Registrar's website](#). Undergraduate students can find policies on dropping CLAS courses [here](#). Graduate students should adhere to the [academic deadlines](#) and policies set by the Graduate College.

UI Email

Students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for any communication with instructors or staff in the UI community. For the privacy and the protection of student records, UI faculty and staff can only correspond with UI email addresses.

Date and Time of the Final Exam

The [final examination date and time](#) will be announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes, and it will be announced on the course ICON site once it is known. Do not plan your end of the semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public. It is your responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam. According to the Registrar's final exam policy, students have a maximum of two weeks after the announced final exam schedule to request a change if an exam conflict exists or if a student has more than two exams scheduled for the same day (see the [policy](#) here).

Resources for Students

Tutor Iowa: <https://tutor.uiowa.edu/>

Students will find the Writing Center and the Speaking Center very useful for this course.

Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.uiowa.edu/>

Speaking Center: <http://speakingcenter.uiowa.edu/>

Attendance and Accommodations

Absences from Class

University regulations require that students be allowed to make up examinations which have been missed due to illness, religious holy days, military service obligations, including service-related medical appointments, jury duty, or other unavoidable circumstances or other university-sponsored activities. Students should work with their instructors regarding making up other missed work, such as assignments, quizzes, and classroom attendance.

Absences for Religious Holy Days

The university is prepared to make reasonable accommodations for students whose religious holy days coincide with their classroom assignments, test schedules, and classroom attendance expectations. Students must notify their instructors in writing of any such religious holy day conflicts or absences within the first few days of the semester or session, and no later than the third week of the semester. If the conflict or absence will occur within the first three weeks of the semester, the student should notify the instructor as soon as possible. See [Policy Manual 8.2 Absences for Religious Holy Days](#) for additional information.

Absences for Military Service Obligations

Students absent from class or class-related requirements due to U.S. veteran or U.S. military service obligations (including military service–related medical appointments, military orders, and National Guard Service obligations) shall be excused without any grading adjustment or other penalty. Instructors shall make reasonable accommodations to allow students to make up, without penalty, tests and assignments they missed because of veteran or military service obligations. Reasonable accommodations may include making up missed work following the service obligation; completing work in advance; completing an equivalent assignment; or waiver of the assignment without penalty. In all instances, students bear the responsibility to communicate with their instructors about such veteran or military service obligations, to meet course expectations and requirements.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. If a student has a diagnosed disability or other disabling condition that may impact the student's ability to complete the course requirements as stated in the syllabus, the student may seek accommodations through [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS). SDS is responsible for making [Letters of Accommodation \(LOA\)](#) available to the student. **The student must provide an LOA to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, but requests not made at least two weeks prior to the scheduled activity for which an accommodation is sought may not be accommodated.** The LOA will specify what reasonable course accommodations the student is eligible for and those the instructor should provide. Additional information can be found on the [SDS website](#).

Students are welcome to initiate **conversations** about any accommodations such as those related to any of the above reasons (disabilities, religious holy days, military service, etc.). If you would like to discuss accommodations, please send me an email to set up a time when we can discuss about what constitutes a reasonable accommodation for the specific circumstance.

Free Speech and Expression

The University of Iowa supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principles of academic and artistic freedom. We are committed to open inquiry, vigorous debate, and creative expression inside and outside of the classroom. Visit the [Free Speech at Iowa website](#) for more information on the university's policies on free speech and academic freedom.

Non-discrimination Statement

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preferences. The university also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to university facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Senior Director, Office of Civil Rights Compliance, the University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1316, 319-335-0705, ui-ocrc@uiowa.edu. Although not required, students have the option to share their pronouns and chosen/preferred names in class, and their [gender](#) and chosen/preferred [names](#) through MyUI. Instructors and advisors can find information about a student's chosen/preferred name in MyUI.

Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to comply with University policies regarding appropriate classroom behavior as outlined in the [Code of Student Life](#). While students have the right to express themselves and participate freely in class, it is expected that students will behave with the same level of courtesy and respect in the virtual class setting (whether asynchronous or synchronous) as they would in an in-person classroom. Failure to follow behavior expectations as outlined in the [Code of Student Life](#) may be addressed by the instructor and may also result in discipline under the [Code of Student Life](#) policies governing E.5 Disruptive Behavior or E.6 Failure to Comply with University Directive.

Class Recordings

The sessions in this course will be **not** recorded or live-streamed. The unauthorized video or audio recording of academic activities (e.g., lectures, course discussions, office hours, etc.) by a student is prohibited. Students with a reasonable accommodation for recording approved by Student Disability Services should notify each instructor and provide the Letter of Accommodation prior to using the accommodation. A student may record classroom activities with prior written permission from the instructor and notice to other students in the class that audio or video recording may occur. Any and all classroom recording must be for personal academic use only. The distribution, sharing, sale, or posting of recordings on the internet (including social media), in whole or in part, is prohibited and doing so may be a violation of the Code of Student Life and/or state or federal privacy, copyright, or other laws.

Mental Health

Students are encouraged to be mindful of their mental health and seek help as a preventive measure or if feeling overwhelmed and/or struggling to meet course expectations. Students are encouraged to talk to their instructor for assistance with specific class-related concerns. For additional support and counseling, students are encouraged to contact University Counseling Service (UCS). Information about UCS, including resources and how to schedule an appointment, can be found at counseling.uiowa.edu. Find out more about UI mental health services at: mentalhealth.uiowa.edu.

Basic Needs and Student Support

It can be difficult to maintain focus and be present if you are experiencing challenges with meeting basic needs or navigating personal crisis situations. The Office of the Dean of Students can help. Contact us for one-on-one support, identifying options, and to locate and access basic needs resources (such as food, rent, childcare, etc.).

[Student Care and Assistance](#)

132 IMU

dos-assistance@uiowa.edu

319-335-1162

Basic Needs info:

- [Food Pantry at Iowa](#)
- [Clothing Closet](#)
- [Basic Needs and Support Resources](#)

Sexual Harassment/Sexual Misconduct and Supportive Measures

The University of Iowa prohibits all forms of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and related retaliation. The [Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#) governs actions by students, faculty, staff and visitors. Incidents of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct can be reported to the [Office of Civil Rights Compliance](#) or to the [Department of Campus Safety](#). Students impacted by sexual harassment or sexual misconduct may be eligible for academic supportive measures and can learn more by [contacting the Office of Civil Rights Compliance](#). Information about confidential resources and videos explaining these resources can be found on the [Office of Civil Rights Compliance website](#).

Conflict Resolution

The Office of the Ombudsperson is a confidential, impartial, informal, and independent resource for any member of the university community with a problem or concern. The Office of the Ombudsperson offers a safe place to discuss conflicts or concerns. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance. The office will brainstorm with students to help identify options, answer any questions, and provide referrals to other offices as appropriate. More information about the Office of the Ombudsperson, including how to schedule an appointment, can be found at ombudsperson.org.uiowa.edu.