Introduction to International Relations

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| **Credit level:**4 |
| **Length:** semester 1 |
| **ECTS credit value:** 8 |
| **College and School:** Lazarski University in Warsaw, Faculty of Economics and Management |
| **Module Leader:** prof. Paweł Borkowski |
| **Host Course:** BA International Relations |
| **Pre-requisites:** N/A |
| **Co-requisites:**N/A |
| **Special features:**N/A |
| **Access restrictions:**N/A |
| **Summary of module content:** The aim of the module is to familiarise students with basic terminology and conceptual frameworks developed within the academic discipline of International Relations. The links between IR and other social sciences are presented with an emphasis on history, political philosophy and international law. The evolution of the system of international relations since the treaties of Westphalia is analysed, followed by theoretical acquis and presentation of the most important areas of studies including: security, political economy, international institutions and globalisation. Differences and points of conformity between different approaches are explained and the axiological bases of the international order are discussed. |

**Assessment Methods***.*

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| Rank | Assessment type | Assessment name | Weighting | Qualifying set (where the minimum mark required applies across multiple assessments) |
| 1. | Coursework | Policy Brief (theoretical part) | 30 |  |
| 2 | Group Presentation | In-class PP presentation (historical part) | 30 |
| 3 | Closed Book Exam | Final | 40 |

**Synoptic assessment**

N/A

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module the successful student will be able to:

1. Identify and explain key terms and concepts in International Relations (IR), such as state, security, national interest, international order, sovereignty, globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and regionalism.
2. Analyze historical events that shaped the current international order, critically assessing their ongoing relevance and the competing narratives surrounding global order.
3. Present and discuss the paradigms and theoretical frameworks used by IR scholars
4. Be familiar with the institutions and actors of state foreign policy, identifying their interests, motives, and influence within the international system.
5. Demonstrate an understanding how continuity and change, cooperation and conflict, values and interests coexist in international relations
6. Illustrate how global events shape the fate of nations, social groups and individuals, showcasing an ability to construct well-reasoned arguments through writing, discussion, and presentation.
7. Develop foundational academic skills necessary for university-level study, including critical thinking, structured argumentation, and effective communication in oral and written formats.

**Course outcomes the module contributes to:**

* L4.1 An ability to identify the primary characteristics of International Relations as a scholarly discipline, informed by key theories and political concepts, in the context of cognate disciplines.
* L4.2 Competence in understanding rival accounts of the international system and the historical dimensions of global order.
* L4.4 Appreciation of the value of critical thinking in assessing the diverse range of scholarly traditions within International Relations.
* L4.8 A successful transition to the demands and expectations of university-level study
* L4.9 The ability to develop and sustain well-justified arguments through a range of media including writing, public speaking, and visual presentations.

**Indicative syllabus content**

**Historical part**

* The Peace of Westphalia and the establishment of the modern state system
* Great power politics in the 17th-20th century
* The inter-war period in international relations
* World politics during the Cold War
* Post-Cold War International Relations and globalisation

**Theoretical part**

* The nature of International Relations and the variety of the actors engaged in shaping them
* Discussion of historical evolution and importance of such terms as sovereignty, security (national and international), globalisation and regionalisation, war and peace
* Main paradigms of international relations: realism, liberalism, constructivism, critical approaches,
* Principles of foreign policy

**Teaching and learning methods**

The module consists of two forms of teaching – two weekly seminars, covering historical and theoretical dimensions, and workshops. Seminars will be normally in the form of traditional lectures, with some time to discuss important issues which arise during these classes. Workshops will be more of a discussion related to the previous seminar and related to set reading materials. Students will provide a policy brief on a chosen topic for the theoretical part of the seminars and an in-class presentation on a chosen topic for the historical part of the seminars. As part of the in-class presentation, students will be required to answer questions related to their presentation topic.

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| Activity type | Category | Student learning and teaching hours\* |
| Lecture | Scheduled |  |
| Seminar | Scheduled | 60 |
| Tutorial | Scheduled |  |
| Project supervisor | Scheduled |  |
| Demonstration | Scheduled |  |
| Practical classes and workshops | Scheduled | 30 |
| Supervised time in studio/workshop | Scheduled |  |
| Fieldwork | Scheduled |  |
| External visits | Scheduled |  |
| Work based learning | Scheduled |  |
| Scheduled online learning | Scheduled |  |
| Other learning | Scheduled |  |
| Total scheduled |  | 90 |
| Placement | Placement |  |
| Independent study | Independent | 110 |
| Total student learning and teaching hours |  | 200 |

\*hours per activity type are indicative and subject to change.

**Assessment rationale: why has this assessment been used for this module?**

In terms of the assessment for the module overall, the module has two parts, one introducing IR in general and the other presenting the History of IR, that is the primary reason for having two separate assessments for coursework. In addition, the module contributes to the development of appropriate study habits, essential for level four and which set the basis for their studies at a higher level. Finally, by having three different forms of assessment, student engagement will be maintained, pressure will be reduced on students and more opportunities for feedback will be possible. These are all things that are of use for students beginning their university studies.

**1. A policy brief** (1,000 words) for the theoretical part of the class will be used to make a link between academic knowledge and communication skills to make students realise how various concept and theories can produce different political directives. It encourages critical engagement with theoretical perspectives and their real-world applications. (LOs 1, 3, 5).

**2. A recorded in-class power point presentation** for the historical part of the class will evaluate students' communication skills and analytical thinking as well as their ability to situate historical events within the larger context of the international system. In addition, the presentations will help to enhance public speaking and problem-solving. The ppp will be done in pairs on a topic from a list provided by the teacher. Each student will choose an aspect of the topic and present a ppp for 10 minutes (presentations will last 20 minutes in total). After the presentations, students will be asked questions to test their analytical skills, comprehension and ability to think on their feet within the wider context of the topic and the course. These skills boost employability in fields such as diplomacy, international organizations, business, consulting, policy analysis, public affairs, lobbying, and related careers. This type of assessment directly addresses LOs 2, 4.

Students will also be informed about the ethical considerations of AI usage in preparing their presentation and policy briefs. They may use it for tasks such as preliminary research, literature inquiry, brainstorming ideas, fact-checking, cross-referencing sources, and preparing for potential Q&A sessions.

3. **The final written exam** (90 minutes) consisting of essay-type questions, is designed to assess students' knowledge and understanding of key concepts covered in the module. It will encourage students to think analytically, synthesise information and think of solutions to key issues related to theories and the history of IR. One of the essay questions related to each part of the module will ask students to provide their solutions to current international problems and crises based on theoretical and historical models discussed during the module. The reason for this assessment is that in careers such as diplomacy, policy analysis, international relations, and consulting, critical thinking and the ability to analyze and solve issues succinctly and under time pressure are highly valued. The in-class exam imitates such conditions and aligns with LOs 1, 6, 7.

**Assessment criteria: what criteria will be used to assess my work on this module?**

As to the presentations, they will be assessed based on the following criteria, each worth 20%: (1) clarity of explanation, (2) use of sources, (3) quality of argument and analysis, (4) contextual understanding and factual accuracy, and (5) ability to answer questions.

As for the final exam, it will be assessed based on the following criteria, each worth 20%: (1) relevance and consistency, (2) background knowledge, (3) clarity, (4) critical analysis, and (5) quality of writing. Students will be expected to draw on some general literature related to the course during the exam and will be rewarded further if they use more developed literature and draw on different theoretical literature related to both the theoretical and the historical parts of the course.

The assessments in general will examine to what extent the student has demonstrated the ability to:

* Understand how historical events fit into wider historical trends in the world of International Relations
* Apply theoretical frameworks in the analysis of relevant historical case studies
* Illustrate how historical events impact how states behave in the present and potentially in the future
* Understand basic terms from the IR framework such as sovereignty, state and the international order and be able to explain them clearly
* Understand how theoretical frameworks shape our understanding of IR and apply them to contemporary issues
* Provide clear, analytical proposals for how to solve some of the most burning issues in international relations
* Demonstrate effective communication skills in written and oral formats, including structured argumentation and public speaking

**Sources**

**Essential Readings**

Baylis, John, Steve Smith & Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics, An introduction to international relations*. Oxford University Press 2020, 8th ed.

Kennedy, Paul *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Vintage, 1989.

Young, John, Kent, John, *International Relations since 1945: A Global History*. Oxford University Press, 2020, 3rd ed.

**Recommended readings**

Giddens, A., 2015. *Turbulent and Mighty Continent. What Future for Europe?* Cambridge: Polity.

Gray, Colin. S. *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*. Routledge, 2011, 2nd ed.

Huntington S., *The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of world order*, Penguin 1996 (and other editions).

Jackson, Robert, George Sorensen. *Introduction to International Relations, Theories & Approaches*.Oxford University Press 2019, 7th ed.

Kissinger, Henry. *Diplomacy*. Simon & Schuster, 1994

Mearsheimer, John. J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W. W. Norton, 2014.

Zakaria, Fareed. *The Post-American World and the Rise of the Rest*. Penguin Group, 2009.