

International Organization

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Course website: <https://canvas.upenn.edu/courses/1570033>

This course is a seminar on international cooperation and international organizations (IOs) for students of international relations. The primary purpose of the course is to enhance students' understanding of the ways in which IOs facilitate or hinder international cooperation. How and to what extent have IOs been used in resolving conflicts between nations? How have IOs facilitated the achievement of common goals (i.e. climate change)? Can we facilitate international cooperation by changing design features of IOs? How do IOs interact with domestic political systems? Emphasis throughout the course is on the role of politics, on understanding why IOs operate as they do, and on recent episodes that illustrate the issues.

A special effort is made to relate the course material to important international incidents in the past decade: the evolution of the Paris Climate Agreement and climate cooperation, the role for human rights treaties in promoting women's rights and workers' rights, foreign investors' rights versus states' rights to regulate social and economic activity in their jurisdiction, how economic IOs (i.e. the WTO) mitigate trade disputes among nations (e.g., US-China disputes); the role for the WHO in curbing COVID-19. Most of the required readings are by political scientists who are grappling with issues at the intersection of international and domestic politics. Some reading is drawn from the popular press.

This is a seminar course with a significant discussion component. Those who take this course agree to treat discussion participation at least as seriously as they do written assignments. Classes are an opportunity to explore applications of IOs to actual international incidents and issues. We expect all weekly reading to be completed before attending classes; in turn, I promise to help clarify any confusion resulting from the readings, and to provide as stimulating a setting as is possible for you to share ideas, air issues, and analyze cases.

In this course, students are encouraged to think politically and analytically.

- Political thinking requires that students consider themselves as decision makers facing a policy problem. Put yourselves in the shoes of a head of an important IO or a head of a state. In synchronous virtual sessions and assignments, students will be asked to evaluate whether and how they can use IOs to resolve the policy problem at hand, how they can re-design an IO to facilitate cooperation, or whether they should remain, leave, or revamp an IO to accomplish their national interest.
- Analytical thinking is the other important component in this course. Students are expected to apply competing theories and provide supporting evidence in analyzing policy problems. Students who can generate competing hypotheses to

produce a solution to the problem at hand will do well in this course. Also, students who can provide credible evidence in evaluating their hypotheses will do well (i.e. secondary sources, existing research).

This course is composed of three modules: a) explaining cooperation: theories of international relations, b) application to contemporary issues, c) capstone: re-alignment of IOs.

- The first module is designed to provide analytical lenses that students can use to understand international cooperation and the role for IOs.
- With the analytical training in hand, students will apply the various analytical perspectives in understanding important policy problems ranging from territorial disputes, environmental challenges, human rights, foreign investments, trade, and global health.
- The final module is a capstone session where we make informed predictions about the future of international cooperation. In the last five years, we've witnessed a re-alignment of the extant international order (i.e. Brexit, AIIB). In this last module, we will discuss whether and to what extent the trend of re-alignment may continue in the next decade.

Class Structure for Spring 2021

* Asynchronous activities (1 hour worth) constitute an integral part of this course. I will provide a podcast of 15~20 minutes to preview the weekly readings and situate the readings in the context of current world affairs. I will ask a question at the end of each podcast. Students are required to share their short reaction (maximum 200 words) to the question on the discussion board. This portion of the course is designed to gauge the quantity and frequency of student reaction, NOT quality. This is a pass-fail assignment.

* Synchronous virtual sessions (Wed 3:30 – 5:30 PM EST) are planned for this class. Every virtual in-person session will be divided into two sessions. From 3:30 - 4:00 every session, I will give a lecture to lay the groundwork for discussions and to clarify the course materials. After a 15 minute break, from 4:15 - 5:30, students and I will have a guided discussion based on discussion questions provided in advance in the form of podcast/discussion materials. We will meet on Zoom, and the Zoom link will be posted on the Canvas course website closer to the first course meeting.

Expected Workload

Everyone has a different work style. That said, here's what your typical week may look like.

Previewing reading materials: You'll spend around ~30 minutes to listen to weekly podcasts to preview your weekly readings. Because the podcast materials will provide discussion questions you should think about while reading, this prep work will guide you to complete the readings more effectively.

Readings: Weekly mandatory readings are likely to range from 70-100 pages total. Weekly readings will include two-three pieces of academic articles/book chapters (each typically 30-50 pages) and one short news article.

Weekly discussion assignments: I expect you to react to some of the discussion questions I will ask in the podcast. Remember. This assignment is about QUANTITY, not QUALITY. I encourage you to complete this assignment within 40 minutes or less. Of course, I welcome if you can spend more time to discuss the materials. However, it is also important to keep ourselves sane in this challenging time. So, please know that the point of this assignment is to “show up,” rather than to “nail it.”

Memo assignments: You will have two policy memo assignments. You will receive the prompts one week before the deadlines. Accordingly, I encourage you to expect your workload to increase between Feb 12- Feb 19, and Mar 5 – Mar 12.

Final paper: You will have one final paper assignment. You will receive the prompts 10 days before the deadline. Please plan accordingly.

Outline of Assignments, Timeline & Assessments

- **Every week:** Weekly mini reaction to podcasts (on the course website TBD)-- (20 points total/ Pass-Fail grading with two free passes)
- **February 19 Friday (1st memo due):** A 1000 word-long policy memo in response to the prompt provided by the instructor -- (20 points) The prompt will be circulated on Feb 12 Friday 9AM EST. [See the grading rubric and example prompt.](#)
- **March 12 (2nd memo due):** A 1000 word-long policy memo in response to the prompt provided by the instructor -- (20 points) The prompt will be circulated on March 5 Friday 9AM EST. This assignment uses the identical format and grading expectations as the first memo assignment with a different prompt.
- **May 7 (final paper due):** A 3000 word-long paper in response to one of three essay prompts provided by the instructor -- (30 points) The prompts will be circulated on April 28 Thursday 9AM EST. [See the grading rubric and example prompt.](#)
- **Every week:** Attendance (10 points) with two free passes.

** Students can get support from the [Mark Family Center for Excellence in Writing](#) in finessing their memos and papers.

Essential Course Policies

- All readings will be accessible online on the course website. No need to purchase any textbook or articles for this course.

- Class attendance is mandatory in principle. Attendance is important because this is a seminar course. That said, I recognize students may be more likely to be subjected to unforeseen health or social challenges during the public health crisis. You may miss up to two sessions for any reason without any penalty. Beyond these two, each absence will lower your grade by 2 points unless we've come to an agreement in advance. You'll be responsible for making up missed work and material for any missed class by liaising with the instructor.
- This is an inclusive (virtual) classroom. I am committed to creating a welcoming environment for all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, religious beliefs, physical and/or mental health status, nationality, or socioeconomic status. I expect all participants in this course to treat each other with respect.

Office Hours & Pre-course Inquiries

During the semester, my office hours are 11AM – 12 PM EST Tuesdays and 5:30 – 6:30 PM EST Wednesdays. Outside of these times, I can meet virtually by appointment. Students should send me an email (leeboram@sas.upenn.edu) to schedule a meeting.

I welcome any inquiries about the course before you sign up for the course. Please reach me via e-mail.

Readings (There might be minor change before the course start date)

All the readings are available on the course website or [here](#).

Week 1. Introduction to International Cooperation (1/20)

What is it difficult for states to cooperate? What are some unique challenges that “states” face, as opposed to individuals or domestic entities (i.e. companies, NGOs), in promoting cooperation?

- Key concepts: Anarchy, Prisoner’s Dilemma, Shadow of Future, Collective action problem
- Syllabus
- Kenneth Oye. 1985. “Explaining Cooperation under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies.” *World Politics* 38(1): 1-24.
- Mancur Olson. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press: Chapter 1.

Spotlight case: The Case of Covax Facility: Can IOs facilitate international cooperation on the equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines?

- Clare Wenham & Mark Eccleston-Turner. 2020. “Where will poorer countries stand in the queue for a Covid-19 vaccine.” *The Guardian*.

Week 2. What Role for International Institutions? (1/27)

How do states overcome various challenges and cooperate? How and to what extent do international organizations help states cooperate?

- Key concepts: Regime, Information, Monitoring, Punishment, Transaction Costs, Selection.
- Robert O. Keohane. 1982. "The Demand for International Regimes." *International Organization* 36 (2).
- John Mearsheimer. 1994. "The False Promise of International Institutions." *International Security* 19.3: 5-49.

Spotlight case: The UN Security Council, does it matter?

- Oona A. Hathway & Scott J. Shapiro. 2013. "On Syria, a UN Vote Isn't Optional," *Op-ed Contributions The New York Times*. (3 pages)
- Erik Voeten. 2013. "Is UN Approval on Syria Imperative?," *Monkey Cage Washington Post*. (3 pages)

Week 3. Varieties of International Institutions: Designing IOs (2/3)

Are some IOs more effective in promoting cooperation than others? Why are international agreements and IOs designed differently?

- Key concepts: Precision, Obligation, Delegation, Flexibility, Centralization, Principal-Agent relationships.
- Abbot, Kenneth, Keohane, Robert, Moravcsik, Andrew, Slaughter, Anne-Marie, and Duncan Snidal. 2007. "The Concept of Legalization," in *International Law and International Relations* edited by Beth Simmons & Richard Steinberg: 115-130.
- Barbara Koremenos. "The Continent of International Law: Explaining Agreement Design," pp.25-56 in Chapter 2. Cambridge University Press.

Spotlight case: The Paris Climate Accord, couldn't we have made the agreement more precise and more binding?

- Johannes Urpelainen. 2015. "Here's what political science can tell us about the Paris Climate deal." *The Washington Post*.

Week 4. Design is Not Everything: The Role of Ideas and Bureaucracy (2/10)

Do IOs accomplish what their creators intend them to do? Are IOs autonomous actors relatively insulated from creators (states)' influence? Do bureaucrats with expertise make IOs more vital and functional or are they sources of IO dysfunction? Are IOs desirable (for states or other actors if any)?

- Key concepts: IO as agents vs. IO autonomy, Insulation, Rational-legal authority, IO vitality
- Michael Barnett & Martha Finnemore. 1999. "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," *International Organization* 53.4: 699-732.
- Julia Gray. 2018. "Life, Death, or Zombie? The Vitality of International Organizations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 62, Issue 1, March 2018, Pages 1–13.

Spotlight case: The World Bank, does staffers' expertise make the IO vital or dysfunctional in accomplishing economic development, the organization's mandate?

- Tom Wilson. 2020. "World Bank suspends its business climate index over data irregularities." *The Financial Times*. Available [here](#).

Week 5. Look Inward: Domestic Politics and International Institutions (2/17)

How do domestic politics (i.e. domestic institutions, domestic public opinion) affect international cooperation? Do governments always sign treaties that are aligned to their constituency preferences? Do onerous ratification requirements (i.e. a supermajority requirement for ratification) facilitate or hinder cooperation for the US?

- Key concepts: Two-level game (Level I and Level II), Win-set, Involuntary defection, Opportunity costs, Treaties vs. Executive Agreements (US context), Advice and consent (US context).
- Robert D. Putnam, 1988. "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level Game." *International Organization*.
- Judith Kelley & Jon Pevehouse, 2015. "An Opportunity Cost Theory of US Treaty Behavior," *International Studies Quarterly*.

Spotlight case: Withdrawal from the Open Skies agreement, should the Senate have the power to give consent and advice for presidents' decisions to withdraw from treaties?

- Bonnie Jenkins, 2020. "A Farewell to the Open Skies Treaty, and an Era of Imaginative Thinking." The Brookings Institute. Available [here](#).

[The first policy memo due on February 19.](#)

Week 6. Use of Force: Can International Institutions Regulate Warfare? (2/24)

Can international institutions, ranging from ceasefire agreements to alliances to the UN Security Council, mitigate or deter inter-state violence? If so, how? Do the institutions change actors' incentives or transmit more information on each other? Alternatively, do they change public support for belligerent foreign policy, thus weakening governments' incentives to use force?

- Key concepts: Reciprocity, Mutual deterrence, Hands-tying, Epiphenomenal, Rally round-the-flag.
- Virginia Page Fortna, 2003. "Scraps or Paper? Agreements and the Durability of Peace," *International Organization* 57.1: 337-372.
- Terrence Chapman, 2009. "Audience Beliefs and International Organization Legitimacy." *International Organization* 63.3: 733-764.

Spotlight case: Have cease-fire agreements worked in Syria?

- Mark Landler, Feb 2016. "U.S.-Russia Deal on a Partial Truce in Syria Raises More Doubt Than Optimism," *The New York Times*. Available [here](#).
- Max Fisher, August 2016. "Syria's Paradox: Why the War Only Ever Seems to Get Worse," *The New York Times*. Available [here](#).

Week 7. Economic Cooperation: Power, Design or Domestic Politics? (3/3)

Do IOs facilitate international trade? If so, do IO designs matter? To what extent the WTO's decision rules (i.e. consensus) and adjudication system help states continue international trade transactions? Do issue linkages, a strategy to link multiple issues, help creators of the WTO counteract anti-trade groups? If so, what is the mechanism?

- Key concepts: Issue linkage, Agenda-setting, Negative consensus.
- Richard Steinberg. 2002. "In the Shadow of Law or Power? Consensus-based Bargaining and Outcomes in the GATT/WTO." *International Organization* 56:2: 339-374.
- Christina Davis. 2004. "International Institutions and Issue Linkage: Building Support for Agricultural Trade Liberalization." *American Political Science Review* 153-169.

Spotlight case: Why adjudicate at the WTO? Does the WTO dispute settlement system help states resolve trade disputes?

- Chad Bown & Soumaya Keynes. 2019. "Episode 75. A US-China Farm Subsidy Fight at the WTO." *Trade Talks podcast*. Available [here](#).

Week 8. Spring break

The second policy memo due on March 12.

Week 9. Environment & Climate Change: Is Loose Coordination the Way to Go? (3/17)

What should an ideal climate IO look like? Currently, the global environmental regime is loosely dispersed across many IOs with a focus on capacity building. Is this the most optimal design to accomplish broader support from industrializing countries? Why isn't there any climate court that is akin to the WTO's dispute settlement body with punitive consequences, in particular for industrialized states with more climate responsibility?

- Key concepts: Public goods, Common pool resources, Coordination, Responsibility.
- Robert Keohane & David Victor. 2011. "The Regime Complex for Climate Change." *Perspectives on Politics*.
- Michael Bechtel & Kenneth Scheve. 2013. "Mass Support for Global Climate Agreements Depends on Institutional Design." *PNAS*.

Spotlight case: Two Tales of Climate Enforcement: A court for industrialized countries or Trade sanctions for industrializing countries?

- John Vidal. 2010. "Oxfam's fantasy climate court is both prescient and practical." *The Guardian*. Available [here](#).
- EU seeks Amazon protection pledge from Bolsonaro in push to ratify trade deal. *The Guardian*. Available [here](#).

Week 10. Human Rights: Is Compliance with International Law Good News? (3/24)

To what extent do signatory states comply with human rights treaties? Why would states commit to and comply with human rights treaties? Compared to international trade, do states have incentives to reciprocate and retaliate against non-compliers? Is compliance with international law good news about norm compliance?

- Key concepts: Joint gains & Reciprocity in the context of human rights, Agenda-setting, Mobilization, Evasion.
- Beth Simmons, 2009. *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, Chapter 3. Theories of Compliance. pp.112-155.
- Zoltán Búzás, 2018. "Is the Good News About Law Compliance Good News About Norm Compliance? The Case of Racial Equality." *International Organization*.

Spotlight case: The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), how can the treaty mobilize activists even in the absence of ratification?

- Heidi Nichols Haddad. 2020. “The US hasn’t signed the world’s foremost women’s rights treaty. Activists have gotten local versions passed instead.” *The Washington Post*.

Week 11. Investment: How to Reassure and Regulate Multinational Companies in Anarchy? (3/31)

Governments seek to attract foreign capital, while foreign investors typically are wary of the possibility of expropriation. How do host governments resolve the commitment problem and reassure investors? Do Bilateral Investment Treaties resolve the tension? If so, why do we see the spread of bilateral treaties, instead of a multilateral investment court akin to the WTO?

- Key Concepts: Obsolescing bargaining, Home and host country, Diffusion.
- Zachary Elkins, Andrew Guzman & Beth Simmons. 2006. “Competing for Capital: The Diffusion of Bilateral Investment Treaties, 1960-2000.” *International Organization* 60-4: 811-46.
- Beth Simmons. 2014. “Bargaining over BITs, Arbitrating Awards: The Regime for Protection and Promotion of International Investment.” *World Politics* 66(01), 12-46.
Spotlight case: Can a Multilateral Investment Court (MIC) save the day?
- Alan Beattie, 2017. Arbitration on Trial: The US and UK’s Fear of the Supranational. *The Financial Times*. Available [here](#).
- The European Commission. 2020. “The Multilateral Investment Court Project.” Available [here](#).

Week 12. International Organizations and Regions (4/7)

Scholars have argued common interests (mostly commercial interests) or shared ideas (e.g., liberal internationalism!) explain the emergence of regional IOs such as the EU and NATO. Given these existing accounts, how can we explain the collapse and weakening of such major regional integration projects?

- Key Concepts: Inter-governmental approach, Collective identity, Regionalism.
- Andrew Moravcsik. 1993. “Preferences and Power in the European Community: a Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 31.4: 473-524.
- Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein. 2002. “Why is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism.” *International Organization* 56.3: 575-607.
Spotlight case: Why Brexit? Economy or Idea?

- Lucy Hu. 2018. “Playing the Race Card: Did Racism Cause Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Brexit?” *Dartmouth Undergraduate Journal of Politics, Economics and World Affairs* 1-2: 5 (page 1-13).
- Italo Colantone and Piero Stanig. 2016. “The Real Reason the UK Voted for Brexit? Jobs Lost to Chinese Competition. *Monkey Cage*.

Week 13. Conclusion: Polarization, Complexity, and the Future of World Order (4/14)

What are some most important new challenges faced by international institutions? The rise of revisionism among the creators of the liberal world order? Footloose capital? The decline of elite bureaucrats in IOs?

- Key Concepts: Embedded Revisionism, Entrepreneurial Authority, Delegation, Managerialism.
- Stacie Goddard. 2018. “Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order,” *International Organization* 72(4): 763-797.
- Jessica Green. 2013. “Rethinking Private Authority: Agents and Entrepreneurs in Global Environmental Governance,” *Princeton University Press*. Introduction
- Leonard Seabrooke & Ole Jacob Sending. 2020. “Contracting Development: Managerialism and Consultants in Intergovernmental Organizations” *Review of International Political Economy*. 27(4): 802-27.

No spotlight case. Instead, we will have a guided discussion on the future of international institutions. The format will be determined before the course starts.

Week 13. Final Review Session (4/21)

No reading. Instead, we will review the contents for the entire course, with a specific focus on a) comparing institutions across issue areas, b) the validity of existing theories in light of the massive change in domestic politics in great power countries, and c) the future of international institutions.

[Final paper due on May 7.](#)