

POLS112, Mary Baldwin University
International Relations
Fall 2023, MoWeFr 11:00 & 12:00
Carpenter 307 (11) or 209 (12)

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Office Hours: [Tu 08:30 - 11:00 \(Zoom\)](#)

This syllabus is subject to change up until the first day of class.

Course Description: This course is intended to be a “zero presumed knowledge” introduction to the study of International Relations (IR). IR is the sub-field of political science concerned with the interaction of political entities – usually but not exclusively nation-states – outside of national boundaries, thus differentiating it from American Politics (which looks at politics within the United States) and Comparative Politics (which looks at politics within any country but the United States). Given the importance of globalization to all of our daily lives, IR is relevant for understanding today’s increasingly interconnected world.

This course will introduce you to the academic study and practical relevance of IR and foreign policy. We will spend the first half of the course talking about the study of international relations and its classical theoretical approaches. After that introductory review, we will spend the next several weeks discussing key recent events and debates in global politics. Some of the questions we will engage with are: Why is there war in Ukraine? How did America and China find themselves in a trade war? Why is it so difficult for countries to cooperate on climate change and global development?

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the course, students will be expected to be able to **a)** explain what international relations is as a field of academic study; **b)** articulate the basic assumptions and arguments of the following theories of international relations: neorealism, liberal institutionalism, constructivism, feminism, and post-colonialism; **c)** use these same theories to explain key current events in international affairs; **d) most importantly of all,** upon completion of the course, students should be able to reflect on what they have learned, whether they think it is worthy of further study, and if so what they would be interested in studying.

Required Readings: College is expensive enough as it is, and I’m not going to ask you to buy a textbook. Instead, we will make use of several freely available, online, open source resources, mostly those provided through the [E-International Relations](#) platform. We will read several chapters of their International Relations Theory, and Introductory International Relations textbooks, both of which I have downloaded in advance and will distribute to you all for your convenience. I will assign additional articles each week, all of which will be made available to you either through the [MBU library](#), or through direct hyperlinks in this syllabus. A detailed breakdown of the readings per week is provided later in this syllabus.

Grading and Assignments:

Your final course grade will be based on the following components:

- In-class participation and attendance: 20% (Learning Outcomes a, b, c)
- Midterm essay (open book, open note): 20% (LOs b, c)
- Research idea: 30% (LO d)
- Final essay (open book, open note): 30% (LOs b, c)

Each assignment will be scored out of 100 points, and will follow MBU's standard transformation from percentage to letter grade, meaning a 93% is the benchmark for an A, and a D is the minimum passing grade. I provide details about each of these components below.

Participation and attendance: Students are expected to be present at class. I expect each of you to make a concerted effort to come on time, *and come prepared*. I expect you to have done the readings, made your notes, and come into class with a full understanding of the material, and/or questions prepared on what you did not fully grasp. It is my personal belief that not having mastered the material fully before coming to class should be no impediment to participating in class: if you have questions, then other students probably do as well. Opening up the floor to discuss those questions will be beneficial for both yourself and the class overall. Moreover, participation and attendance will be graded not *just* on your engagement with the lecturer, but *also* on your engagement with your fellow students: be respectful and understanding of one another's perspectives, and try to help one another with the material.

Midterm essay: You will be asked to write a four page, 12-point font, double margins essay after the first half of the course. It will be due October 27. The essay will cover the material we will have discussed up to that point. I will distribute your prompt one week before the due date. During this week, there will be no in-person class, but I will be available to meet with you during virtual office hours.

Research idea: You will be asked to write a four page, 12-point font, double margins research idea paper and submit it before November 22. This research assignment will involve you reviewing the relevant literature on an IR topic of your choice, and identifying a research question: an important issue not previously addressed by academic research. During week 2 we will discuss what a literature review is and how to go about writing one in more detail. The point of this assignment is to motivate you to think about what aspect of IR you find to be particularly interesting and worthy of further study. I recommend you talk to me either via email or during office hours about potential research ideas sooner rather than later.

Final essay: You will be asked to write a four page, 12-point font, double margins essay during the final exam period. It will be due December 8 and I will distribute the prompt a week in advance. It will cover the material of the entire course, not just the material that has been discussed since the midterm. Grades will be returned to you December 13 at the latest.

Mary Baldwin University Institutional Policies:

Accessibility: Mary Baldwin University is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, due to a documented disability, please contact the Director of Accessibility Services to request testing or classroom accommodations (arc@marybaldwin.edu, 540-887-7250). Required documentation must include an evaluation by an appropriate medical professional and must describe the current impact of the disability as it relates to the request for accommodation, in compliance with the ADA.

The Academic Resource Center: The ARC provides writing, math, and subject-area tutoring services. Residential students can meet with tutors virtually or face-to-face in the Center for Student Success, on the first floor of Grafton Library. Online and remote students can work virtually with tutors on papers, assignments, and test-taking strategies. Appointments are scheduled through HandShake. For more information, contact the Director of the Academic Resource Center, or arc@marybaldwin.edu.

MBU Honor Pledge: Believing in the principles of Student Government, I pledge myself to uphold the ideals and regulations of the Mary Baldwin University community. I recognize the principles of honor and cooperation as the basis of our life together. I shall endeavor faithfully to order my life accordingly. I will not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, or violate my pledge of confidentiality. I will encourage others to fulfill the ideals of the Honor System and will meet my responsibility to the community by reporting incidents of Honor offenses.

Course Policies:

• Attendance and Participation

- Treat one another and your instructor with respect. Consider one another's opinions in good faith.
- Be on time for class. Be prepared for class.
- If you are someone who struggles with shyness, please reach out to me.

• Grades

- Assignments will be penalized 5 points for each day they are submitted late. For example, if the deadline is October 27 23:59 and you submit your essay October 28 01:28, a 93 would turn into an 88.
- Conditional use of artificial intelligence permitted: AI Writing tools such as ChatGPT are permitted in this class, provided that you cite when and how you use the tool. You will be provided with examples of how to cite your use of this tool in your writing.
- Grades will be returned to you within ten working days of submitting the assignment.

- **Communicating with your Instructor and Fellow Students**

- College represents a transition from adolescence / high school to adulthood / professional life. As a result, I expect you all to make a good faith effort at behaving professionally and responsibly. I will not hold it against you if you slip up: this is a time where you can figure these things out.
- I will respond to emails within 12 hours if received between 7am and 8pm.
- If you wish to voice concern or criticism of the course, I am responsive to that. If you feel uncomfortable raising these issues with me personally, you can use an anonymous Google feedback form, which I will provide.

Course Outline & Readings

Introduction & IR Theory - Why Does IR Matter and How Do We Study It?

- Week 1 (Aug 28) – Course Introduction
 - This syllabus
 - *Getting Started*. Pages 1–7 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
 - *The Making of the Modern World* by Erik Ringmar. Pages 8–19 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
- Week 2 (Sep 4) – Why Does IR Matter?
 - *One World, Many Actors* by Carmen Gebhard. Pages 32–44 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
 - *International Relations Theory* by Dana Gold & Stephen McGlinchey. Pages 46–56 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
 - *Doing a Literature Review* by Jeffrey W. Knopf. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, January 2006. [Access through the library](#).
- Week 3 (Sep 11) – Realism
 - *Realism* by Sandrina Antunes & Isabel Camisã. Pages 15–21 in *International Relations Theory* by McGlinchey, Walters & Scheinpflug.
 - *The Thucydides Trap and the Rise and Fall of Great Powers* by Jacek Bartosiak. *Geopolitical Futures*, July 2020. Available [here](#).
 - *Anarchy and the Security Dilemma* by Noah Zerbe. *Core Concepts in International Relations*, January 2020. Available [here](#).

- Week 4 (Sep 18) – Liberalism
 - *Liberalism* by Jeffrey W. Meiser. Pages 22–27 in *International Relations Theory* by McGlinchey, Walters & Scheinpflug.
 - *International Organisations* by Shazelina Z. Abidin. Pages 71–77 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
 - *Liberal Internationalism* by Michael W. Doyle. *Nobel Prize Outreach*, June 2004. Available [here](#).
- Week 5 (Sep 25) – Constructivism, Feminism, and Postcolonialism
 - *Constructivism* by Sarina Theys. Pages 36–41 in *International Relations Theory* by McGlinchey, Walters & Scheinpflug.
 - Paul Poast’s Twitter Thread on Cynthia Enloe. Access [here](#) (for Twitter users) or [here](#) (if you don’t mind ads).
 - Paul Poast’s Twitter Thread on W.E.B. Du Bois. Access [here](#) (for Twitter users) or [here](#) (if you don’t mind ads).

International Security - What Are the Causes of War and Violence?

- Week 6 (Oct 2) – Terrorism and Civil Conflict
 - *Transnational Terrorism* by Katherine E. Brown. Pages 152–162 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
 - *New Wars, Old Strategies* by David Cortright. *Peace Policy*, December 2012. Available [here](#).
 - *Did Security Studies Learn From 9/11?* by Peter Henne. *The Duck of Minerva*, September 2021. Available [here](#).
- Week 7 (Oct 9) – China & Taiwan
 - *China’s Unpeaceful Rise* by John J. Mearsheimer. *Current History*, April 2006. Available [here](#).
 - *Opinion: U.S. must avoid turning China chip war into hot war.* by Dale Copeland. *Nikkei Asia*, November 18, 2022. Available [here](#).
 - *Don’t Panic About Taiwan* by Jessica Chen Weiss. *Foreign Affairs*, March 2023. Available [here](#).
- Week 8 (Oct 16) – The War in Ukraine
 - Please note that there is no class on October 16 due to Fall Break. We will return to class on October 18.
 - *Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault* by John J. Mearsheimer. *Foreign Affairs*, September 2014. [Access through the library](#).

- Paul Poast’s Twitter Thread on the War in Ukraine. Access [here](#) (for Twitter users) or [here](#) (if you don’t mind ads).
- *The Russo-Ukrainian War and Global Order* by John M. Owen. *The Hedgehog Review*, April 2022. Available [here](#).
- Week 9 (Oct 23) – Midterm
 - There will be no meetings this week to facilitate you writing your midterms. I will hold office hours on Tuesday as normal.
- Week 10 (Oct 30) – Cybersecurity and American Foreign Policy
 - **There will be no lecture on Monday. Class will resume as normal on Wednesday.**
 - *Book Review: This Is How They Tell me The World Ends* by Nicole Perlroth. Review by Joshua Huminski. *The Diplomatic Courier*, February 2021. Available [here](#).
 - *The Vulnerability of Nuclear Facilities to Cyber Attacks* by Brent Kesler. *Strategic Insights*, Spring 2011. Available [here](#).
 - *How killer robotics are changing modern warfare* by The Guardian. February 2023. Watch [here](#).

International Political Economy - How Does Globalization Affect Us All?

- Week 11 (Nov 6) – Economic Statecraft
 - *What Is Economic Statecraft?* by World 101 from the Council on Foreign Relations, May 2023. Available [here](#).
 - *Dutch Dilemma: Caught in the Middle of the US-China Tech Cold War* by Charles Martinet. *Centre for European Policy Analysis*, January 2023. Available [here](#).
 - *Can anything challenge the almighty dollar’s dominance?* by DW News. March 2023. Watch [here](#).
- Week 12 (Nov 13) – Globalization and Populism
 - *Global Political Economy* by Günter Walzenbach. Pages 87–97 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
 - *Economic Causes of Populism* by Yotam Margalit. *VoxEU*, December 2019. Available [here](#).
 - *What an “America First” Trade Strategy Gets Wrong* by Layna Mosley. *The Duck of Minerva*, January 2017. Available [here](#).
- Week 13 (Nov 20) – Student’s Choice
 - Because your Thanksgiving break starts November 22, there will be no readings, only a short lecture on Monday. I’ll let you all pick the topic of said lecture from a set of options I’ll distribute the preceding week.

- Week 14 (Nov 27) – Poverty & Inequality
 - *Global Poverty and Wealth* by James Arvanitakis & David J. Hornsby. Pages 113–122 in *International Relations* by Stephen McGlinchey.
 - *Chapter 1: Introduction of Global Inequality* by Branko Milanovic, 2016. [Access through the library.](#)
 - *Development, Self-Interest, and the Countries Left Behind* by Sarah Bermeo. *Brookings*, February 2018. Available [here](#).