

POLS 433 International Organization

Spring 2025

MWF 11:00–11:50 AM

Engineering E 104

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Course Description and Objectives

This is a course about cooperation at the international level. Why do states cooperate? More specifically, why do states form and act through international institutions? Can international institutions alter states' behavior, influence domestic politics, or create and spread new norms about appropriate behavior?

There are several competing answers to these questions. The objective of this course is to help you evaluate the validity of these competing answers and discuss what evidence you would need to see in order to gain confidence in one answer and reject others. We will begin with a broad overview of the international system, incentives for cooperation under anarchy, and controversies surrounding international organizations (IOs) in the context of international relations theory. We will then examine the history, structure, and activity of IOs like the UN, the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, covering issue areas like finance, trade, health, nuclear weapons, the internet, and the environment. To conclude, we will evaluate the success of IOs in solving global problems as well as the major challenges they face in meeting their mandates.

You are welcome — even encouraged! — to disagree with the answers proposed by the assigned readings. If this is the case, you should be able to formulate an evidence-based counter-argument that convinces your colleagues to reject alternative explanations. This analytical exercise will help you prepare for a career in settings where there are no clear-cut answers, such as consulting, research, finance, public policy, or law.

Readings

Our main reference will be the following textbook, available **for free** (in PDF) from the [CSU Library Course Reserve](#):

- Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. 2023. *International Organization and Global Governance*. 3rd edition. Routledge.

Several other readings will come from the following handbook, which is available for free at the library:

- Jacob Katz Cogan, Ian Hurd, and Ian Johnstone (eds). 2016. *The Oxford Handbook of International Organizations*. Oxford University Press.

Additional readings will consist of articles in scientific journals or book chapters, all available on Canvas.

Optional: If you need a general IR theory refresher, the following textbook is a good companion to our main textbook:

- John Baylis, Patricia Owens, and Steve Smith. 2023. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. 9th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Assignments

Participation (10%) Preparing for the classes and engaging in discussion is a requirement for this course, which is why this grade evaluates the *frequency* and *quality* of contributions. I will not take attendance; if you miss class, I trust that you have legitimate reasons to do so. However, frequent absences might reduce your ability to engage in class discussion, which in turn will affect your participation grade.

Quizzes (20%) Nearly every week, a short online multiple choice quiz will gauge your comprehension of the readings and class discussions. Quizzes open every Friday at 11:59 PM and close on the following Friday at 11:59 PM, covering the materials of all classes in between. Late quizzes will be accepted until **Friday, February 21**. Students who join the course late should go back and complete missed quizzes in order to receive credit. There will be a total of 12 quizzes and the 3 lowest scores will be dropped. Since the 3 lowest scores will be dropped, *there will be no make-up quizzes*.

Presentation (10%) Beginning in Week 3, every Monday class will feature at least one 10-minute student presentation of an IO or international agreement. This is a low-stakes presentation; the goal is just to tell your colleagues how this entity works and connect it to the topic covered on that specific day. Please sign up to present an IO or agreement of your choice; since there are more students than presentation topics, some presentations can be done in pairs.

In-Class Midterm Exam (30%) An in-class exam on **Friday, March 28** will cover material from the readings, lectures, and class discussions up until that point (Parts 1 & 2 of the class). The exam will consist of a combination of providing definitions of terms and short essay questions. To help you prepare for the exam, there will be a review session on **Wednesday, March 26**.

Final Exam (30%) A final exam on **Thursday, May 15** from 7:30-9:30 AM will cover material from all the readings, lectures, and class discussions in Part 3 of the class. The exam will consist of 7–10 essay questions. To help you prepare for the exam, there will be a review session on **Friday, May 9**.

Course Policies

Communication The most reliable way to get in touch with me is via email. You should expect a response within 48 business hours.

Beyond Class While not required, I encourage you to keep up with current events in economics and politics by reading reputable newspapers and magazines (e.g. New York Times, Washington Post, Financial Times, The Economist, The Guardian, etc). Please check your emails regularly, as I may share pertinent articles with the class every week. I also encourage you to share news with your colleagues using the Canvas discussion board.

Academic Honesty and Integrity This course will adhere to the CSU Academic Integrity Policy as found on the Student' Responsibilities page of the [CSU General Catalog](#) and in the [Student Conduct Code](#). At a minimum, violations will result in a grading penalty in this course and a report to the Office of Student Resolution Center.

Accommodations Your experience in this class is important to me. If you require any accommodation, let me know ahead of time what would be helpful so that we can plan together for you to succeed. You do not need to share private information with me, but you must provide verifiable documentation to the [Office of Student Case Management](#) or [Student Disability Center](#). For religious accommodations, please complete the [Religious Accommodation Request Form](#). Please provide verifiable documentation *to them* (not to me!)

ahead of time and ensure that they forward me this information *at least one week* prior to the assignment for which accommodations are required. I cannot make adjustments after the fact.

Late Assignments I will accept no late assignments. Exceptions are granted only if the [Office of Student Case Management](#) is able to provide documentation of a health emergency or other life emergency. If you experience an emergency, please contact Student Case Management, which will then contact me.

Grievances If you are unhappy with your grade on an assignment, please wait 48 hours after the assignment is returned before contacting me. This provides the opportunity to let the initial emotions subside and think more clearly about the issue at hand. After 48 hours, you can contact me with a written explanation of why you feel your grade should be different. “I worked hard” is not a good explanation; I can only grade the quality of the work that you give to me! Based on this petition, I will decide whether to re-grade your assignment. However, be advised that your grade may move upwards or downwards.

Grading Policy

Grade	Range
A+	100% to 96.67%
A	<96.67% to 93.33%
A–	<93.33% to 90.0%
B+	<90.0% to 86.67%
B	<86.67% to 83.33%
B–	<83.33% to 80.0%
C+	<80.0% to 76.67%
C	<76.67% to 70.0%
D	<70.0% to 60.0%
F	<60.0% to 0.0%

Additional Resources and Policies

Check out this link or QR code for policies relevant to your courses and resources to help with various challenges you may encounter: <https://col.st/2FA2g>. This includes information about technical support, universal design for learning/accommodation of needs, undocumented student support, etc.



Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction

- **Optional:** Kenneth Abbott and Duncan Snidal. 1998. “Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42(1): 3-32.
- **Optional:** Inken von Borzyskowski and Felicity Vabulas. 2019. “Hello, Goodbye: When Do States Withdraw From International Organizations?” *Review of International Organizations* 14(2): 335-366.

Part 1: What IR Theories Say About IO

Week 2: Realism and Liberalism

- John J. Mearsheimer. 1994. “The False Promise of International Institutions.” *International Security* 19(3): 5-49 (skip pp. 26-37, “Collective Security”).
- Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin. 1995. “The Promise of Institutional Theory.” *International Security* 20(1): 39-51.
- **Optional:** Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 6 – Realism.
- **Optional:** Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 8 – Liberal Institutionalism.

Friday, January 31: Quiz 1 due

Week 3: Constructivism and Critical Theories

- Alexander Wendt. 1995. “Constructing International Politics.” *International Security* 20(1): 71-81.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 9 – Constructivism.

Presentations (3)

1. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
2. International Organization for Migration (IOM)
3. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Friday, February 7: Quiz 2 due

Part 2: The Purpose and Procedure of IO

Week 4: Delegation and Agency

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 11 – Rational Choice and Indirect Global Governance.
- **Optional:** Eugénia Heldt. 2017. “Regaining Control of Errant Agents? Agency Slack at the European Commission and the World Health Organization.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 52(4): 469-484.
- **Optional:** Daniel Nielson and Michael Tierney. 2003. “Delegation to International Organizations: Agency Theory and World Bank Environmental Reform.” *International Organization* 57(2): 241-276.

Presentations (2)

1. European Union
2. European Commission

Friday, February 14: Quiz 3 due

Week 5: Designing International Institutions — Rationality vs. Norms

- Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, and Duncan Snidal. 2001. “The Rational Design of International Institutions.” *International Organization* 55(4): 761-799 (skip pp. 780-799).
- Martha Finnemore 1993. “International Organizations as Teachers of Norms: The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and Science Policy.” *International Organization* 47(4): 565-97.

Presentations (2)

1. European Parliament
2. UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Friday, February 21: Quiz 4 due; last day to catch up on quizzes

Week 6: International Law — Origins

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 2 – The Evolution of International Law.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 39 – The Pursuit of International Justice.

Presentations (3)

1. International Criminal Court (ICC)
2. International Court of Justice (ICJ)
3. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Friday, February 28: Quiz 5 due

Week 7: International Law — Compliance and Enforcement (I)

- Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes. 1993. “On Compliance.” *International Organization* 47(2): 175-205.

Monday, March 3 and Wednesday, March 5: No class

Week 8: International Law — Compliance and Enforcement (II) and Budgets

- George W. Downes, David M. Roake, and Peter Barsoom. 1996. “Is the Good News about Compliance Good News About Cooperation?” *International Organization* 50(3): 379-406.
- Jacob Katz Cogan. 2016. “Financing and Budgets.” In *The Oxford Handbook of International Organizations*, edited by Jacob Katz Cogan, Ian Hurd, and Ian Johnstone. Oxford University Press, pp. 903-919.

Presentations (3)

1. Montreal Protocol
2. General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
3. UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

Friday, March 14: Quiz 6 due

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Review Session and Midterm Exam

Wednesday, March 26: Review session

Friday, March 28: In-class midterm exam

Friday, March 28: Quiz 7 due

Part 3: The Scope of IO

Week 11: Security, Peace, and Humanitarian Interventions

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 34 – UN Security Council and Peace Operations.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 40 – Humanitarian Intervention and R2P.

Presentations (2)

1. UN Security Council
2. UN Peacekeeping

Friday, April 4: Quiz 8 due

Week 12: Regional Alliances and Nuclear Weapons

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 35 – Regional Organizations and Global Security Governance.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 36 – Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Presentations (3)

1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
2. Warsaw Pact
3. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Friday, April 11: Quiz 9 due

Week 13: Global Finance

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 44 – Global Financial Governance.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 29 – Credit Rating Agencies.

Presentations (2)

1. International Monetary Fund (IMF)
2. New Development Bank

Week 14: Global Development

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 46 – Global Development Governance.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 31 – Global Philanthropy.

Presentations (3)

1. World Bank Group
2. World Health Organization (WHO)
3. Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance

Friday, April 25: Quiz 10 due

Week 15: Global Trade

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 23 – The Global South.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 45 – Global Trade Governance.

Presentations (3)

1. World Trade Organization (WTO)
2. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
3. North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Friday, May 2: Quiz 11 due

Week 16: Global Environment

- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 47 – Global Environmental Governance.
- Weiss and Wilkinson, Chapter 49 – Climate Change.

Presentations (2)

1. UN Environmental Program (UNEP)
2. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Friday, May 9: Review session

Friday, May 9: Quiz 12 due

Week 17: Final Exam

Thursday, May 15: Final exam