



POLI 2520: World Politics

Fall 2023

Professor Leah Sarson

Schedule:	Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:05 to 11:25
Location:	[REDACTED]
Office Hours:	Mondays, 10:00 to 11:30 and Wednesdays, 11:45 to 1:15 in my office [REDACTED]. (N.B. Office hours are opportunities to meet with your professor or TA to discuss the course material. Please don't hesitate to make use of them.)
Email:	Leah.Sarson@dal.ca
Course Website:	Brightspace
TAs:	Xinyu Gong: Xinyu.Gong@dal.ca Office Hours: Mondays, 11:30 to 12:30 [REDACTED] or by appointment

Dalhousie University is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

Course Description

POLI 2520 is a general introduction to how we study and analyze world affairs and power in global politics. As a subfield of political science, the study of world politics – or International Relations (IR) – is about seeking to understand, explain, or predict events, decisions, relationships, and ideas in a global context. In this course, we will explore some of the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological tools in IR to help us make sense of the world around us and better appreciate our place in it.

The term is divided into three units, beginning with a conceptual and material overview of modern international relations. From there, we look at the fundamental theories and approaches to the study of International Relations, such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, and critical approaches. The final section of the course applies these approaches to central themes in global politics, such as security, diplomacy, and international law. We conclude with a look at the challenges facing IR in both theory and practice.

Course objectives include:

- Identifying the key concepts and theories in IR and applying them to the world around us and to scholarly ideas;
- Recognizing and describing power structures in global politics;
- Constructing and communicating compelling analytical arguments and a broader analytical perspective in response to the course material;
- Critically assessing world events and global politics;
- Encouraging curiosity about the world around us and our place in it.

Required Readings

Textbooks

1. *Global Politics: A New Introduction*, 3rd ed, 2019. Edited by Jenny Edkins, Maja Zehfuss
 - A link to purchase an e-book is available on our Brightspace page. Hard copies are available for purchase at the Dalhousie Bookstore.
2. *International Relations Theory*, 2017. Edited By Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters and Christian Scheinpflug.
 - Free download available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/international-relations-theory/>

Textbook readings will be supplemented with journal articles, book chapters, and occasional news media. Some readings will be available on the Brightspace page as PDFs and others are available on the library website. Please note that where available, I expect you to find the articles/book chapters yourselves on the library website or Google Scholar; the ability to find appropriate articles online is essential to your academic success. The librarians and TAs are available if you have trouble sourcing articles.

Classroom Etiquette

The classroom must be a safe, equitable, and professional academic environment in which students are encouraged to express their views in a collegial and respectful manner. Learning to form and articulate complex arguments is difficult. I expect students in this class to remain humble, to accept constructive criticism, and to maintain the healthy learning environment necessary to nurture new ideas. While we all make mistakes and may say the wrong thing from time to time, there will be no tolerance for hateful or discriminatory behaviour.

Please familiarize yourself with the Dalhousie University rules and regulations on student rights and responsibilities, which can be found here: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities.html

Communication with the Professor

In all email communications with me, please include **POLI 2520** in the subject line and proper greetings and salutations. Always sign-off with your full name. During the work week, I will do my best to respond in 24 hours.

Office hours are Mondays, 10:00 to 11:30 and Wednesdays, 11:45 to 1:15 in my office. Office hours are opportunities to meet with your professor or TA to discuss the course material. Please don't hesitate to make use of them.

Most course content will be posted on Brightspace. Please check it regularly for announcements, assignments, discussions, and other resources.

Accessibility

Our course should be equally accessible to all students. If you encounter any content that is not accessible or perceptible for you, please do not hesitate to inform me or someone from the Accommodations Office. For students experiencing or anticipating barriers to their learning environments or other issues, please see the Accommodations Office. Accommodation reduces or removes barriers to your learning to ensure fair and equitable access to your classroom, testing or co-op/fieldwork environments. Accommodations can be introduced when a protected characteristic (as defined by provincial human rights legislation) may place you at a disadvantage compared to other students who are not affected by a protected characteristic.

If you face a serious unexpected challenge during the course for which you require special accommodations, please notify me as far in advance as possible.

Assessment

Complete assignment instructions are available on the Brightspace page.

1. Reading reflections (4 x 5% each = 20 %) – Pick one option from each of the four sections. Please submit to the relevant Brightspace folder.

Section A:

- Option 1: Module 2: Making Sense... – due September 13 at 11:59 pm
- Option 2: Modules 3 & 4: Why Do We Study & How Do We Study – due September 20 at 11:59 pm

Section B:

- Option 1: Module 5: “Dominant” Approaches – due September 27 at 11:59 pm
- Option 2: Module 6: “Critical” Approaches – due October 4 at 11:59 pm
- Option 3: Module 7: “Alternative” Approaches – due October 13 at 11:59 pm

Section C:

- Option 1: Module 8: IPE – due October 25 at 11:59 pm
- Option 2: Module 9: Security – due November 1 at 11:59 pm
- Option 3: Module 10: Diplomacy – due November 3 at 11:59 pm
- Option 4: Modules 11 & 12: International Institutions & International Law– due November 10 at 11:59 pm

Section D:

- Option 1: Module 13.1: Climate Change, chapter 3 – due November 22 at 11:59 pm
- Option 2: Module 13.2: Migration, chapter 10 – due November 24 at 11:59 pm
- Option 3: Module 13.3: Health, Davies & Hobson – due November 29 at 11:59 pm

2. Assignment: Constructing an argument in IR (20%) – due October 18
3. Report: “International Relations: The ‘How Not to’ Guide” (30%) – due November 22
4. Final exam (30%) - TBD

Lecture Schedule and Assigned Readings

Unit 1 – Define and Discover

During these first few weeks, we will provide an overview of the subfield of International Relations. What is the study of International Relations? How do we think about it and how do we do it? Why do we think about it and do it the way we do? This section is an essential foundation of the key concepts and actors that we discuss in this course. By the end of this unit, you should be able to identify, define, and critique central concepts.

1. Course Orientation – September 6

Try to get a sense what it means to be a student of International Relations (IR). Think about what drew you to this course and what you hope to get out of it.

Recommended reading:

- Paul N. Edwards, “How to Read a Book, v5.0, School of Information, University of Michigan, <https://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf> (Please note: The tips in this document are also generally applicable to reading journal articles.)
- Stephen Van Evera, 1997, “Appendix: How to Write a Paper,” *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 123-128. ([Available as a PDF on the Brightspace page.](#))

2. Making Sense of the World Around Us – September 8 and 13

Consider familiar terms like order, power, and international. When we begin to dissect them, we might realize that we don’t understand them as well as we may have thought. How do we know what we know?

- *Global Politics*, chapters 2 and 11
- Ikenberry, G. J., Parmar, I., & Stokes, D, 2018, “Introduction: Ordering the world? Liberal internationalism in theory and practice.” *International Affairs* 94(1), 1–5.
- Gurminder K. Bhambra, et al., 2020, “Why Is Mainstream International Relations Blind to Racism?” *Foreign Policy*, 3 July 2020. ([Available as a PDF on the Brightspace page.](#))
- Anjali Dayal, “We Must Reckon with the Terrible Realities Hidden in Plain Sight,” 02 April 2018, <https://onbeing.org/blog/anjali-dayal-we-must-reckon-with-the-terrible-realities-hidden-in-plain-sight/?s=03>.

Additional recommendations:

- Christian Reus-Smit, 2020, “International Relations: A Very Short Introduction, OUP Press, Chapter 1.
- Film: PBS’ *Commanding Heights*
 - Episode 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfRTpoYpHfw>
 - Episode 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2Ks3_Oli74
 - Episode 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgFrBedelIA>

3. Why Do We Study International Relations? – September 15

Can we ever study the world around us objectively? If not, how do we understand normativity or subjectivity in the context of our analysis? Should questions of how the world *ought* to be drive our work, or should we focus on what it is? What role do ethics and justice have in our work?

- Hurrell, A. and Macdonald, T., 2013. “Ethics and Norms in International Relations Handbook of International Relations,” eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, Beth A. Simmons, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Additional recommendations:

- Krystalli, R. & Schulz, P., 2022, “Taking Love and Care Seriously: An Emergent Research Agenda for Remaking Worlds in the Wake of Violence,” *International Studies Review* 24 (1).

4. How Do We Study International Relations – September 20

Think about starting to put the puzzle pieces together. Think about concepts like order and power; how does the *way* we think about them change *how* we think about them?

- Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters, and Dana Gold, 2017, “Getting Started with International Relations Theory,” In *International Relations Theory*, eds. Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters and Christian Scheinpflug. <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/international-relations-theory/>
- Marysia Zalewski, 1996, “All these theories yet the bodies keep piling up’: theories, theorists, theorising,” in *International Theory Positivism and Beyond*, eds Smith, Booth, and Zalewski. Cambridge University Press, 340-353.

Unit 2 – Analyze and Apply

This section of the course explores the core approaches (sometimes called theories or lenses) that International Relations scholars apply to better understand and explain world politics. Each approach offers its own criteria for making sense of the world, including particular assumptions and concepts. By the end of this unit, you should be able to identify, explain, and apply the key approaches to studying International Relations and link their development to a particular historical era. When you are thinking about these theories and approaches, remember IR Professor Robert Cox’s famous 1981 dictum that “theory is always for someone and for some purpose.”

5. “Dominant” (Anachronistic?) Approaches to Studying IR – September 22 and 27

5.1. Realism and Neorealism

5.2. Liberalism and “Neoliberalism”

This module’s readings introduce you to the traditional or orthodox approaches to studying IR. Their development is linked to key moments in history as scholars attempted to respond to major world changes and events.

- Jack Snyder, 2004, “One World, Rival Theories.” *Foreign Policy*, no. 145, 52-62.
- Sandrina Antunes and Isabel Camisã, “Realism,” In *International Relations Theory*, 2017. Edited By Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters and Christian Scheinpflug.
- Jeffrey W. Meiser, “Liberalism,” In *International Relations Theory*, 2017.

6. “Critical” Approaches to Studying IR – September 29 and October 4

6.1. Marxism and Others

6.2. Constructivism

This module’s readings explore the theories or approaches that emerged in response to realism and liberalism. These readings offer a brief primer and introduce you to one of the germinal pieces in the literature by Alexander Wendt.

- Alexander Wendt, 1992, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics” *International Organization* 46.2, 391-425.
- Theys, Pal, Gerreria, and McMorro, 2017, “Chapters 4-7: Constructivism, Marxism, Critical Theory, and Poststructuralism,” In *International Relations Theory*, eds. Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters and Christian Scheinpflug. <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/international-relations-theory/>

7. “Alternative” Approaches to Studying IR – October 6, 11, and 13

7.1. Gender and International Relations (aka Feminist International Relations)

7.2. Non-Western Approaches to International Relations

7.3. Race and International Relations

These readings consider who is left out or marginalized by the more conventional approaches. They encourage you to think about alternative ways of understanding the world around us that yield different perspectives. As you read, think about what “critical” or “alternative” means. Critical of what? Alternative to what? How can these approaches help us understand the world around us and how we think about world politics?

- Laura Sjoberg and Cameron Thies, 2023. “Gender and International Relations,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 26, pp.451-467.
- Hayden King, 2017, “The Erasure of Indigenous Thought in Foreign Policy,” *OpenCanada*. <https://www.opencanada.org/features/erasure-indigenous-thought-foreign-policy/>.
- Pinar Bilgin, 2020, “Opening up international relations, or: how I learned to stop worrying and love ‘non-Western IR’,” in *Handbook of Critical International Relations*, ed. Steven Roach, Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Robbie Shilliam, 2020, “Race and racism in international relations: retrieving a scholarly inheritance.” *International politics reviews* 8 (2), 152–195.

Additional recommendations:

- Olivia U. Rutazibwa and Robbie Shilliam, 2018, “Postcolonial Politics: An Introduction,” In *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics*,” eds. O. Rutazibwa and R. Shilliam, Routledge.

October 18 – Review and Regroup

Unit 3 – Reflect and Practice

The following weeks focus on how political actors behave in the context of contemporary global challenges. By the end of this unit, you should be comfortable analyzing world events through the various approaches discussed in the previous unit. You should also be able to question and dissect who benefits from particular approaches and recognize marginalized voices.

8. International Political Economy – October 20 and 25

8.1. Economy and Finance

8.2. Poverty and “Development”

How do markets and politics interact? What is the role of the corporation in global politics? Who are the “haves” and “have-nots”? Think about earlier emphases on power and consider the relationship between economic power and political power.

- *Global Politics*, chapters 17, 18, and 20

Additional recommendations:

- *Global Politics*, chapter 19

9. Security – October 27 and November 1

9.1. War and Conflict

9.2. Human Security

International Relations is primarily concerned with facilitating cooperation and avoiding conflict between actors in global politics, but how do we understand these key questions of security? Who or what gets to be secure and how do we realize those goals?

- *Global Politics*, chapters 23 and 24
- Hadley Freeman, 2017, “What Do Many Lone Attackers Have in Common? Domestic Violence,” *The Guardian*, 28 March 2017.
- Jessica Davis, 2020, “Incel-related violence is terrorism – and the world should start treating it that way,” *The Globe and Mail*, 20 May 2020.

Additional recommendations:

- Jennifer Welsh, 2016, “The Responsibility to Protect after Libya and Syria,” *Daedalus* 145:4, 75-87. (N.B. There is another piece with the same title by Zifcak; don’t get confused.)
- Film: *Fog of War* (2003) (available on the library website)

10. Diplomacy – November 3

Consider who is behind the events, actors, and institutions that we've discussed over the past few weeks. Think about how a policy-maker might apply the approaches discussed in unit 2 to help with decision- and policy-making.

- Stephen McGlinchey, "Chapter 2: Diplomacy," *International Relations*, ed. Stephen McGlinchey, <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/beginners-textbook-international-relations/>
- Adam Chapnick, 2020, "Ottawa's Ill-Fated Quest for a UN Security Council Seat," *Policy Options*, 19 June 2020. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2020/ottawas-ill-fated-quest-for-a-un-security-council-seat/>

11. International Institutions– November 8

How do international institutions work on the ground? Do they matter in global politics? Think about how the previous unit helps you make sense of the political developments explored this week.

- Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 1998, "International norm dynamics and political change," *International Organization*, Autumn, 887-917.
- Stephanie C. Hofmann and Christian Kreuder-Sonnen, 2020, "How international organizations are stepping up to respond to the pandemic," *The Washington Post*, 4 May 2020.

12. International Law and Human Rights – November 10

Absent a world government or world police, is international law an effective tool to further international peace and security? How does it develop and how is it enforced? Is there a better way to protect and promote human rights?

- *Global Politics*, chapter 25

Additional recommendations:

- Smith, Rhona, 2022, "Monitoring, Implementing, and Enforcing Human Rights," *International Human Rights Law*, 10th ed. Oxford University Press.

13. Global Governance Challenges – November 22, 24, and 29

13.1. Climate Change

13.2. Migration

13.3. Health

Focus on putting together the concepts, theories, actors, and ideas that we have discussed to analyze complex problems in global politics. Think about how global politics work in the real world, beyond theories and definitions. Think back to why you wanted to study IR and what you have learned. How can we avoid the catastrophes of yesterday? How can we make things better for tomorrow?

- *Global Politics*, chapter 3 and 10
- Mathew Davies and Christopher Hobson, 2023, “An embarrassment of changes: International Relations and the COVID-19 pandemic,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 77:2

14. Looking to the Future – December 1

- *Global Politics*, chapter 26

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect (The Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, 1999). As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity.

At university we advance knowledge by building on the work of other people. Academic integrity means that we are honest and accurate in creating and communicating all academic products. Acknowledgement of other people’s work must be done in a way that does not leave the reader in any doubt as to whose work it is. Academic integrity means trustworthy conduct such as not cheating on examinations and not misrepresenting information. It is the student’s responsibility to seek assistance to ensure that these standards are met. We will be using Urkund in this class as a tool to avoid academic integrity issues.

In your work, please be sure to:

- Make sure you understand Dalhousie’s policies on academic integrity. Please visit http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity/academic-policies.html
- Do not cheat in examinations or write an exam or test for someone else.
- Clearly indicate the sources used in your written or oral work (including diagrams, videos, etc.).
- Do not use the work of another from the Internet or any other source and submit it as your own.
- When you use the ideas of other people (paraphrasing), make sure to acknowledge the source.
- Do not submit work that has been completed through collaboration or previously submitted for another assignment without permission from all instructors involved.
- This is not a comprehensive list. If you are ever unsure about any aspect of your academic work, please contact me or a TA. The library also offers services to help you ensure your academic integrity.
- Academia can be incredibly stressful. Whatever you do, do not be tempted to plagiarize or otherwise cheat. It is not worth it. Instructors are required to report every suspected offence.

Dalhousie Grade System

Letter grades have a grade point assigned that is used to calculate your GPA (Grade Point Average). The following table explains and defines Dalhousie's grading system and shows the GPA value that corresponds with each letter grade.

Grade	Grade Point Value		Definition	Notes
A+	4.30	90-100	Excellent	Considerable evidence of original thinking; demonstrated outstanding capacity to analyze and synthesize; outstanding grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
A	4.00	85-89		
A-	3.70	80-84		
B+	3.30	77-79	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
B	3.00	73-76		
B-	2.70	70-72		
C+	2.30	65-69	Satisfactory	Evidence of some understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems; benefitting from his/her university experience.
C	2.00	60-64		
C-	1.70	55-59		
D	1.00	50-54	Marginal Pass	Evidence of minimally acceptable familiarity with subject matter, critical and analytical skills (except in programs where a minimum grade of 'C' is required).
F	0.00	0-49	Inadequate	Insufficient evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.
INC	0.00		Incomplete	
W	Neutral and no credit obtained		Withdrew after deadline	
ILL	Neutral and no credit obtained		Compassionate reasons, illness	
P	Neutral		Pass	
TR	Neutral		Transfer credit on admission	
Pending	Neutral		Grade not reported	

Please note that while I have done my best to finalize the syllabus, it may be subject to changes as required.