

# PIA5025: THEORY IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Theory in International Studies

### Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

### Course Number

5025

### Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

AIS5025 Theory in International Studies

### Exclusive Courses

AIS5022 Theory and Methodology in Asian and International Relations

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course seeks to ground students in the so-called "root discourses" of international relations (IR) - the field's core theoretical paradigms, concepts, debates, and questions - analysing how they relate one to another and exploring their

implications for understanding contemporary global issues. Students will learn how to use the theories to critically analyse and explain real-world events, tendencies, and institutions. The subject matter will include inter- and intra-state violence (such as wars and civil wars), patterned international economic exchanges, transboundary flows of ideas and images, the complex impacts of globalization, how state identities shape foreign policies, the evolving roles of international non-governmental organizations, and more. Students will participate actively in the class-wide discussions held as a part of every lecture session and will give presentations on how the theories can be used to illuminate contemporary global issues.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Explain the core theoretical traditions in international relations - the root discourses - and how they differ and inter-relate	40	x	x	
2	Discuss and critically evaluate the newer IR theories and show how they evolved from the root discourses	20	x	x	x
3	Develop the capacity to use IR theories critically to analyse and interpret real-world events, tendencies, and institutions	20	x	x	x
4	Cultivate the synoptic, high-level understanding of international relations theories that is necessary for conducting advanced and compelling research	20	x	x	x

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	1	Prepare the assigned readings prior to each class session	1, 2, 3, 4	
2	2	Listen actively and in an engaged way to the class lecture and PPT presentation	1, 2, 3	
3	3	Watch the short documentary material with an analytical mindset	1, 2, 3, 4	

4	4	Participate actively in class discussions, linking concepts covered in the readings and lectures to the real-world material presented in the documentary and in news sources	1, 2, 3	
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**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Class Participation	1, 2, 3	20	AI can be used for particular in-class tasks assigned by the instructor	Yes
2	Take-Home Quiz #1	1, 2, 3	25	-	No
3	Take-Home Quiz #2	1, 2, 3, 4	25	-	No
4	Group Research Paper	1, 2, 3, 4	30	AI can be used to design and refine research questions in an iterative process	Yes

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

Class participation (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

**Criterion**

Active engagement in classroom activities. Attentive listening to lectures (no phone use, etc.) and participation in discussions.

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of consistently high quality, including in discussions.

**Good**

(B+, B, B-) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of good quality, including in discussions.

**Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Partial understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a partial ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of decent quality, including in discussions.

**Marginal**

(D) Flawed understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a flawed ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of low quality, including in discussions.

**Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically. Attendance is irregular; assessment activities are not completed.

### **Assessment Task**

Take-Home Quiz #1 (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

### **Criterion**

Written responses to questions posed by the instructor requiring students to analyse international relations theory

### **Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of consistently high quality, including in discussions.

### **Good**

(B+, B, B-) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of good quality, including in discussions.

### **Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Partial understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a partial ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of decent quality, including in discussions.

### **Marginal**

(D) Flawed understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a flawed ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of low quality, including in discussions.

### **Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically. Attendance is irregular; assessment activities are not completed.

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### **Assessment Task**

Take-Home Quiz #2 (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

### **Criterion**

Written responses to questions posed by the instructor requiring students to analyse international relations theory

### **Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically.

### **Good**

(B+, B, B-) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically.

### **Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Partial understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a partial ability to use them critically.

### **Marginal**

(D) Flawed understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a flawed ability to use them critically.

### **Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically.

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### **Assessment Task**

Group Research paper (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

#### **Criterion**

Working in a group of approximately five students to produce a research paper of 12,000-15,000 words comparatively assessing the explanatory power of competing IR theories in interpreting a significant pattern, process, or event in international relations

#### **Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically and analytically.

#### **Good**

(B+, B, B-) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically and analytically.

#### **Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Partial understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a partial ability to use them critically and analytically.

#### **Marginal**

(D) Flawed understanding of theories of international relations, as well as a flawed ability to use them critically and analytically.

#### **Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically.

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### **Assessment Task**

Class participation (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

#### **Criterion**

Active engagement in classroom activities. Attentive listening to lectures (no phone use, etc.) and participation in discussions.

#### **Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of consistently high quality, including in discussions.

#### **Good**

(B+, B) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of good quality, including in discussions.

#### **Marginal**

(B-, C+, C) Partial understanding of theories of international relations as well as a partial ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of decent quality, including in discussions.

#### **Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any decent understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically. Attendance is irregular; assessment activities are not completed.

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### **Assessment Task**

Take-Home Quiz 1 (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

**Criterion**

Written responses to questions posed by the instructor requiring students to analyse international relations theory

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically.

**Good**

(B+, B) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically.

**Marginal**

(B-, C+, C) Partial understanding of theories of international relations as well as a partial ability to use them critically.

**Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any decent understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically.

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**Assessment Task**

Take-Home Quiz 2 (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

**Criterion**

Written responses to questions posed by the instructor requiring students to analyse international relations theory

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically.

**Good**

(B+, B) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically.

**Marginal**

(B-, C+, C) Partial understanding of theories of international relations as well as a partial ability to use them critically.

**Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any decent understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically.

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**Assessment Task**

Group Research Paper (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

**Criterion**

Working in a group of approximately five students to produce a research paper of 12,000-15,000 words comparatively assessing the explanatory power of competing IR theories in interpreting a significant pattern, process, or event in international relations

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Excellent understanding of theories of international relations as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically and analytically.

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(B+, B) Good to very good understanding of theories of international relations as well as a generally skilled ability to use them critically and analytically.

**Marginal**

(B-, C+, C) Partial understanding of theories of international relations as well as a partial ability to use them critically and analytically.

**Failure**

(F) Failure to demonstrate any decent understanding of IR theories, or any ability to apply concepts analytically and critically.

**Part III Other Information****Keyword Syllabus**

International Relations Theory; Liberalism; Realism; Neo-Neo Debate; Regime Theory; Prisoner's Dilemma; English School; Constructivism; Post-Modernism; Gender and IR; Critical Theory; Globalization; Non-State Actors; War; International Political Economy; Global Communication

**Reading List****Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Viotti, Paul R. and Mark V. Kauppi. International Relations Theory, 6th edition. New York: Pearson, 2019.
2	Reus-Smit, Christian and Duncan Snidal, eds. The Oxford Handbook of International Relations. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

**Additional Readings**

Title	
1	Buzan, Barry and Richard Little, International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
2	Robert Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
3	Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics 2nd edition, with a new foreword by Stanley Hoffman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
4	J. Ann Tickner, Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
5	Alexander Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
6	Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., Becoming National: A Reader (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
7	John Keane, Global Civil Society? (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).