

PIA3121: THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Theories of International Relations

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

3121

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

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

AIS3121 Theories of International Relations

PIA3108 International Relations

POL3108 International Relations

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course seeks to ground undergraduate PIA students in the so-called “root discourses” of International Relations (IR) – the field’s most important theories and concepts – analysing how they relate one to another and how they illuminate contemporary real-world issues and problems. Students will learn to use the theories critically to analyse and explain international trends and events. The subject matter will include the global economy, wars and terrorism, the transboundary flow of ideas and images through the media, the impact of globalization on governance, how state identities shape foreign policies, and more. Students will attend the instructor’s class lectures; take part in discussions; sit for a quiz; and write a term paper using IR theory to analyse an important global problem, including submitting an outline in advance and meeting the instructor to discuss it.

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	25	x	x	
2	Discuss and critically evaluate the newer IR theories and show how they evolved from the root discourses	25	x	x	x
3	Develop the capacity to use IR theories critically to analyze and interpret real-world events, tendencies, and institutions	25	x	x	x
4	Cultivate the synoptic, high-level understanding of international relations theories that is necessary for conducting advanced and compelling research	25	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	Readings	Prepare the assigned readings prior to each class session	1, 2, 3, 4	
2	Lectures and PPT presentations	Listen actively and in an engaged way to the class lecture and PPT presentation	1, 2, 3, 4	

3	Documentaries	Watch the short documentary material with an analytical mindset	1, 2, 3, 4	
4	Class participation	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	2, 3, 4	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Class Participation	1, 2, 3	20	For specific in-class activities I assign	Yes
2	Quiz #1	1, 2, 3	25	-	No
3	Quiz #2	1, 2, 3, 4	25	-	No
4	Group Research Paper	1, 2, 3, 4	30	For forming and refining research questions only	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Class participation

Criterion

Active and informed participation in the classroom

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

Paper outline

Criterion

Ability to identify a promising topic and set out potential arguments and a structure

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

Quiz

Criterion

Demonstrating mastery of the material midway through the term

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.

Assessment Task

Research paper

Criterion

Ability to write an effective and compelling 3,000–5,000-word research paper, analysing a global problem from competing theoretical vantage points

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.

Assessment Task

Discussant

Criterion

Ability to pose probing questions and raise insightful comments

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 demonstrated ability to use them critically. Analysis provided in all assessment activities is of consistently good quality, including in discussions.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Partial 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 decent quality, including in discussions.

Marginal (D)

Flawed 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 low quality, including in discussions.

Failure (F)

Failure to demonstrate any understanding of theories of International Relations, as well as a demonstrated ability to use them critically. Assessment activity not completed or completed with negligence.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

International Relations Theory; Liberalism; Realism; Marxism/Critical Theory; Constructivism; Global Environment; Non-State Actors; War; International Political Economy; Security and New Security; Artificial Intelligence and Technology

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Viotti, Paul R. and Mark V. Kauppi, International Relations Theory, 5th edition (New York: Pearson, 2011).

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).