Alexandros Kentikelenis
Department of Social & Political Sciences
alexandros.kentikelenis@unibocconi.it

International Politics and Society

2026 Syllabus

Course Description

This course covers prominent theories and arguments in international relations and broader globalization scholarship, and then shifts gear to discussing cutting edge research. It places initial emphasis on the evolution of social-scientific thinking over international affairs: we cover the major paradigms in international relations research, and then switch to a discussion of the nature and structure of the international system. Subsequently, we move down levels of abstraction to examine how to approach questions of international politics and society through the analytical lenses of organizations (international or non-governmental) and individuals (diplomats, international bureaucrats, and political appointees). The remainder of the course switches to covering cutting-edge research in different issue areas: aid and development, global value chains, climate change, global health, and beyond. Based on the material covered in this class, you will be able to become a more sophisticated consumer—and possibly producer!—of international affairs scholarship.

Assessment for PhD students

Attendance and participation (50% of grade): All students are required to come to class ready to discuss the week's readings. In particular, for classes 2-6, we will have in-depth class discussions of the assigned readings, including their argument, research design, strength and weaknesses. For this reason, students should have independently prepared 2-4 main points / concerns / doubts that they should be willing to contribute to class and debate with their colleagues.

Two in-class presentations (50% of grade): Each week, excluding the first, one student will kick off the discussion through a presentation (20-30 mins) that brings together the threads of the different assigned readings, and any additional background research on the topic.

Assessment for MSc students

Attendance and participation (50% of grade): Same expectations as for PhD students.

Exam (50% of grade): Oral exam covering the course material.

Summary Course Plan

Class	Topic
1	The basics: Analytical foundations and the core theoretical perspectives
2	— Level of analysis: the international system — Level of analysis: organizations
3	— Level of analysis: individuals — The power of the 'weak' (?)
4	— Issue area 1 (see below) — Issue area 2
5	— Issue area 3 — Issue area 4
6	— Issue area 5 — Issue area 6

Readings

CLASS 1
The basics: Analytical foundations and the core theoretical perspectives

Realism: Keohane, Robert O., ed. 1986. *Neorealism and Its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Chapters 4 & 5 by Waltz]

Liberalism: Keohane, Robert O. 1982. "The Demand for International Regimes." *International Organization* 36 (2): 325–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830001897X.

Constructivism: Hurd, Ian. 1999. "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics." *International Organization* 53 (2): 379–408. https://doi.org/10.1162/002081899550913.

Feminism: Tickner, J. Ann. 2001. *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Introduction and Chapter 1]

Marxism: Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis*. Durham: Duke University Press. [Chapter 2]

Post-colonialism: Seth, Sanjay. 2011. "Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40 (1): 167–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829811412325.

———— ~ O ~ ————

CLASS 2a
Level of analysis: the international system

- Beckfield, Jason. 2010. "The Social Structure of the World Polity." *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (4): 1018–68. https://doi.org/10.1086/649577.
- Kentikelenis, Alexander, and Erik Voeten. 2021. "Legitimacy Challenges to the Liberal World Order: Evidence from United Nations Speeches, 1970–2018." *The Review of International Organizations* 16 (4): 721–54. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-020-09404-y.
- Velasco, Kristopher. 2023. "Transnational Backlash and the Deinstitutionalization of Liberal Norms: LGBT+ Rights in a Contested World." *American Journal of Sociology* 128 (5): 1381–1429. https://doi.org/10.1086/724724.

———— ~ O ~ ————

CLASS 2b
Level of analysis: organizations

- Stone, Randall W. 2008. "The Scope of IMF Conditionality." *International Organization* 62 (4): 589–620. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818308080211.
- Clark, Richard, and Lindsay R. Dolan. 2021. "Pleasing the Principal: U.S. Influence in World Bank Policymaking." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (1): 36–51. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12531.
- Forster, Timon, Dan Honig, and Alexandros Kentikelenis. 2024. "Formal Governance Matters: When, How, and Why States Act on the IMF Executive Board." *Review of International Political Economy*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2024.2441136.

———— ~ O ~ ————

CLASS 3a
Level of analysis: individuals

- Heinzel, Mirko. 2022. "International Bureaucrats and Organizational Performance: Country-Specific Knowledge and Sectoral Knowledge in World Bank Projects." *International Studies Quarterly* 66 (2): sqac013. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqac013.
- Heinzel, Mirko, Catherine Weaver, and Samantha Jorgensen. 2024. "Bureaucratic Representation and Gender Mainstreaming in International Organizations: Evidence from the World Bank." *American Political Science Review*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055424000376.

- Lang, Valentin, Lukas Wellner, and Alexandros Kentikelenis. 2024. "Biased Bureaucrats and the Policies of International Organizations." *American Journal of Political Science*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12921.

———— ~ O ~ ————

CLASS 3b
The power of the 'weak' (?)

- Carson, Austin, Eric Min, and Maya Van Nuys. 2024. "Racial Tropes in the Foreign Policy Bureaucracy: A Computational Text Analysis." *International Organization* 78 (2): 189–223. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818324000146.
- Morse, Julia C., and Bridget Coggins. 2024. "Your Silence Speaks Volumes: Weak States and Strategic Absence in the UN General Assembly." *The Review of International Organizations*, April. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-024-09538-3.
- Gray, Ian, and Jean Philippe Cointet. 2023. "Multilateralism of the Marginal: How the Least Developed Countries Find Their Voice in International Political Deliberations." *American Journal of Sociology*, September. https://doi.org/10.1086/727753.

———— ~ O ~ ————

THE REMAIN CLASSES WILL COVER 6 OF THE FOLLOWING 8 ISSUE AREAS, DEPENDING ON STUDENT INTERESTS:

Global economic governance

- Gray, Julia, and Philip Potter. 2020. "Diplomacy and the Settlement of International Trade Disputes." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64 (7–8): 1358–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002719900004.
- Schmidt, Averell. 2025. "Damaged Relations: How Treaty Withdrawal Impacts International Cooperation." *American Journal of Political Science* 69 (1): 223–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12826.
- Qian, Jing, James Raymond Vreeland, and Jianzhi Zhao. 2023. "The Impact of China's AIIB on the World Bank." *International Organization* 77 (1): 217–37. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818322000327.

Global health

- Holzscheiter, Anna, Thurid Bahr, Laura Pantzerhielm, and Martin Grandjean. 2024. "Positioning among International Organizations: Shifting Centers of Gravity in Global Health Governance." *International Studies Quarterly* 68 (2): sqae073. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqae073.
- Baccini, Leonardo, Mirko Heinzel, and Mathias Koenig-Archibugi. 2022. "The Social Construction of Global Health Priorities: An Empirical Analysis of Contagion in Bilateral Health Aid." *International Studies Quarterly* 66 (1): sqab092. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqab092.
- Park, Sojun, and Lauren C. Konken. 2024. "Exploiting Treaty Ambiguity: Public Health Exceptions in the WTO TRIPS Agreement." *The Review of International Organizations*, January. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-023-09525-0.

Climate change

- Hadden, Jennifer, and Lorien Jasny. 2019. "The Power of Peers: How Transnational Advocacy Networks Shape NGO Strategies on Climate Change." *British Journal of Political Science* 49 (2): 637–59. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123416000582.
- Clark, Richard, and Noah Zucker. 2023. "Climate Cascades: IOs and the Prioritization of Climate Action." *American Journal of Political Science*, ajps.12793. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12793.
- Genovese, Federica, Richard J. McAlexander, and Johannes Urpelainen. 2023. "Institutional Roots of International Alliances: Party Groupings and Position Similarity at Global Climate

Negotiations." *The Review of International Organizations* 18 (2): 329–59. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-022-09470-4.

Climate and the global economy

- Genovese, Federica, and Endre Tvinnereim. 2019. "Who Opposes Climate Regulation? Business Preferences for the European Emission Trading Scheme." *The Review of International Organizations* 14 (3): 511–42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-018-9318-3.
- Colgan, Jeff D., Jessica F. Green, and Thomas N. Hale. 2021. "Asset Revaluation and the Existential Politics of Climate Change." *International Organization* 75 (2): 586–610. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000296.
- Rowan, Sam S. 2024. "Effective Climate Clubs Require Ambition, Leverage and Insulation: Theorizing Issue Linkage in Climate Change and Trade." *The Review of International Organizations*, March. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-024-09535-6.

Human rights

- Moyn, Samuel. 2018. *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*. Harvard University Press. [Chapter 5.]
- Dancy, Geoff, and Christopher J. Fariss. 2024. "The Global Resonance of Human Rights: What Google Trends Can Tell Us." *American Political Science Review* 118 (1): 252–73. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000199.
- Terman, Rochelle, and Joshua Byun. 2022. "Punishment and Politicization in the International Human Rights Regime." *American Political Science Review* 116 (2): 385–402. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421001167.

Conflict

- Carnegie, Allison, and Christoph Mikulaschek. 2020. "The Promise of Peacekeeping: Protecting Civilians in Civil Wars." *International Organization* 74 (4): 810–32. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000442.
- Farrell, Henry, and Abraham L. Newman. 2019. "Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion." *International Security* 44 (1): 42–79. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00351.
- Mallard, Grégoire, and Jin Sun. 2022. "Viral Governance: How Unilateral U.S. Sanctions Changed the Rules of Financial Capitalism." *American Journal of Sociology* 128 (1): 144–88. https://doi.org/10.1086/719925.

Diplomacy over time

- Lebovic, James H., and Elizabeth N. Saunders. 2016. "The Diplomatic Core: The Determinants of High-Level US Diplomatic Visits, 1946–2010." *International Studies Quarterly* 60 (1): 107–23. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqv008.
- Malis, Matt, and Alastair Smith. 2021. "State Visits and Leader Survival." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (1): 241–56. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12520.
- Thrall, Calvin. 2025. "Informational Lobbying and Commercial Diplomacy." *American Journal of Political Science* 69 (3): 1147–62. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12873.

The international-national nexus

- De Vries, Catherine E., Sara B. Hobolt, and Stefanie Walter. 2021. "Politicizing International Cooperation: The Mass Public, Political Entrepreneurs, and Political Opportunity Structures." *International Organization* 75 (2): 306–32. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000491.
- Carnegie, Allison, Richard Clark, and Ayse Kaya. 2024. "Private Participation: How Populists Engage with International Organizations." *The Journal of Politics* 86 (3): 877–91. https://doi.org/10.1086/727595.
- Thrall, Calvin. 2024. "Informational Lobbying and Commercial Diplomacy." *American Journal of Political Science*. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12873.