POLI 12: Introduction to International Relations

Instructor: Eric Thai

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Course page: https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/65591

Class: Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 – 10:50 am, Ledden Auditorium

Office: SSB 324

In-Person Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 11 am – 12 pm; or by appointment.

Teaching Assistants, Email, Office Hours:

Sections	Teaching Assistant	Email	Office	Office Hours
A01 (Wed 11am) A02 (Wed 12pm)	Malika Talgatova	mtalgato@ucsd.edu	SSB 443	Wednesday 1-3 pm, Sign up link; Zoom appointment if needed
A03 (Thu 7pm) A04 (Thu 6pm)	Furkan Benliogullari	fbenliog@ucsd.edu	SSB 342	Thursday 3:30 – 5:50 pm (in person) or on Zoom
A05 (Fri 10am) A06 (Fri 11am)	Colvin Zhang	zhz182@ucsd.edu	SSB 443	Monday 3-5 pm, Sign up link

Course Description and Objectives

1. Why and when do violent wars break out among and within sovereign states?
2. Why and how do sovereign states cooperate on economic policies, the protection of human rights and the environment, and other issues that would otherwise lead to war?
3. How and under what conditions do international institutions like the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, or the International Criminal Court shape the behaviors of sovereign states?

This class will introduce you to concepts, theories, and empirical evidence that have been amassed over the better half of the century to guide your assessment of current events. This is not your usual introduction class. Yes, we will cover a wide variety of topics from our main textbook, *World Politics*, but we will pay special attention to three salient contemporary issue areas: *Interstate War, Intrastate War, and International Trade*.

Course Text

By enrolling in this course, you have been automatically enrolled in the UC San Diego Inclusive Access program. This means that your required course materials are being provided to you automatically, and at a discounted price. A charge for this material will be added to your student

account and will appear as "Course Materials Central Charge. The opt-out deadline for Spring 2025 is April 12, 2025, at 10pm.

Opt-out Portal Link: *UC San Diego Inclusive Access Opt-Out Portal*

- Jeffrey A. Frieden, David A. Lake & Kenneth A. Schultz. 2021. World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions, 5th Ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (hereafter "FLS").

Course Requirement:

Assignment	Deadline	Weight
Chapter Quizzes (Canvas)	Do at your own pace, deadline is June 6, 2025 11:59 PM	10%
Essay (first draft)	May 5th, 11:59 PM on Canvas	20%
Essay Final Draft	June 6th, 11:59 PM on Canvas	30%
Section Attendance and Participation		20%
Cumulative Final (MCQ)	June 9th, 8-11 AM (In Person)	20%

Grading Scale:

98-100 = A+	84-86.9 = B	70-73.9 = C-
93-97.9 = A	80-83.9 = B-	60-69.9 = D
90-92.9 = A-	77-79.9 = C+	0-59.9 = F
87-89.9 = B+	74-76.9 = C	70-100 = Pass if taking Pass/Fail

Chapter Quizzes:

Chapter quizzes are on Canvas and are meant to evaluate your understanding of the textbook material. These are short, low-stake quizzes that you can repeat until you are satisfied with your score. The deadline for all of the quizzes is June 6, 2025, 11:59 PM.

Cumulative Final:

The cumulative final will be on Monday, June 9, 8 -11 AM. The exam will be multiple choice, with a baseline of 50%. There will be 50 questions covering topics covered in class and in the textbook. The lowest score you can get is 50%.

Essay Topics:

You will write a 7-9 page essay responding to one of the three essay prompts.

Instructions (broad):[1]

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[1] A rubric and specific instructions will be provided later on in the course.

Construct a reasoned and compelling argument by employing logic and evidence—be it quantitative, historical, or theoretical—and leveraging insights from the course. Consider utilizing the Interest, Institutions, and Interactions framework, as well as any pertinent theories discussed in class.

There is no single correct response. We seek the thoughtful application of course concepts, cogently presented arguments, and analytical rigor in your writing.

Interstate War ---

> *International institutions like the United Nations, European Union, and treaty organizations, such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), have been heralded in the past as important mechanisms promoting stability and interstate peace. How should these arguments be viewed in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine? Have these institutions failed? Craft a compelling argument on why you think these international institutions have or have not failed.*

Intrastate War ---

> *What are the causes or determinants of civil wars? Conduct two case studies of recent civil conflicts of your choice and analyze whether and how the explanations provided in class and in the textbook align with empirical facts*

Trade War ---

> *On March 4th, President Trump instituted a comprehensive 25% tariff on all imports from Mexico and Canada. Critics of such tariffs argue they are counterproductive, whereas proponents contend they strengthen domestic industries. Critically evaluate both perspectives and provide a nuanced analysis of the likely outcomes of these tariffs. Include evidence and theoretical insights to support your conclusions.*

Class Policies:
Attendance:
I will not take attendance, but I highly encourage you to attend lectures because research has demonstrated that in-class attendance improves academic performance (See this, for example).

I reserve the right to provide upward to 2% extra credit at a random point during the quarter to everyone who attends.

Please refrain from having side conversations in class. Cell phones are prohibited from being used during class. Laptops are permitted but should only be used for taking notes and pulling up readings. I strongly recommend taking notes by hand as studies have found that hand-writing notes leads to better comprehension and material absorption.

This class will involve frequent discussions both in large and small groups. Respect for your fellow classmates is required. Disagreement is natural, and debate is encouraged, but students must be respectful of one another.

Participation

Evidence-based research on teaching and learning has documented a strong causal relationship between active participation/discussion and student learning. I design my lectures to have intermittent active engagement and discussions to allow students time to engage with lecture materials. I strongly encourage you to come to class prepared to contribute to these discussions

Email Policy

Your TAs are your first point of contact for any questions related to discussion sections and the essay.

Please direct any and all other questions about course materials or class logistics to my email at **ethai@ucsd.edu** (preferably *not* through the Canvas message function). If it is a class logistics question, please consult with the syllabus before emailing me.

Please allow me 24 business hours to respond (excluding the weekends). If it is urgent, please include "[URGENT]" in your subject line.

Late Assignment:

Assignments are due at the date and time indicated on the assignment on Canvas. Late assignments turned in within 24 hours of the due date will be penalized with minus 5%. Late assignments turned in 24-48 hours after the due date will be penalized with minus 10%. Please contact me if an assignment is later than 48 hours after the due date.

Grade Appeals:

We have three fantastic TAs who have been instructed to give students the benefit of the doubt when grading. However, our amazing TAs are also human, and humans make mistakes. If there is a clear error in grading, you can submit a grade appeal. Appeals about grades must be type-written, include evidence of the error with citations, and be no more than one page long. It must be submitted to your TA, who will discuss it with me.

Inclusive Classroom

I am committed to creating a learning environment that supports the diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identity. I urge all of you to contribute your unique perspective to discussions so we can all learn from each other. If you ever feel excluded or unable to fully participate in class, please let me know. I also ask that everyone abide by UCSD's Principles of Community and Student Code of Conduct.

Academic Integrity

As per UCSD's Academic Integrity Policy, any form of cheating is not tolerated. This includes, but not limited to, looking up answer during exam and copying the work or answers of others for any assignments.

Writing Assistance

UCSD offers multiple opportunities for feedback on your writing and assistance outside of this course. You can find more information about the UCSD Writing Center and the OASIS Language and Writing Program for English as a second language students here.

Disability Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities. Students are required to discuss accommodation arrangements with instructors and OSD liaisons in the department well in advance of any exams or assignments. Please contact the Department of Political Science OSD Liaison if you have any disability needs; please connect with staff via the Virtual Advising Center as soon as possible.

Recommendations

I am happy to write recommendation letters for students who regularly contribute to class discussions and attend office hours. Given the size of the class and the fact that Teaching Assistants do the grading of assignments, it is difficult for me to write recommendations for those who I do not get to know during class, so please participate in class and attend office hours if you think you might want to ask for a recommendation letter in the future.

Course Readings and Schedule:

---*Week 1*---

Class 1, March 31: Syllabus & Analytical Framework
- **Required**:
    - Syllabus
    - FLS Ch.2: Interests, Interactions, and Institutions
- **Recommended**:
    - FLS Ch.1: What Shaped Our World?

Module 1: Interstate Wars ---

Class 2, April 2: Introduction to Bargaining Model of War
- **Required**:
    - FLS FLS Ch.3: Why Are There Wars? (up until p.107)
    - 10 Conflicts to watch in 2025
- **Recommended**:
    - *See Canvas*

---*Week 2*---

Class 3, April 7: Causes for Bargaining Failure (and Hence, War)
- **Required:**
    - FLS FLS Ch.3: Why Are There Wars? (p.107-140)
- **Recommended:**
    - *See Canvas*

Class 4, April 9: Domestic Politics and Wars
- **Required**:
    - FLS Ch.4: Domestic Politics and War
    - NYT, March 25, 2025 Leaked Signal Chat, Annotated. Access here (free).
        - A unique insider look into policymakers, bureaucrats, and leaders' interests and strategic constraints.
- **Recommended**:
    - *See Canvas*

---*Week 3*---

Class 5, April 14: International Institutions and Wars
- **Required**:
    - FLS Ch.5: International Institutions and War
- **Recommended**:
    - *See Canvas*

Module 2: Civil War and Terrorism --

Class 6, April 16: Civil Wars
- **Required**:
    - FLS Ch.6 Violence by Nonstate Actors (p.246 – 277: "Civil War Sections")
- **Recommended**:
    - *See Canvas*

---Week 4---

Class 7, April 21: Terrorism
- **Required**:
    - FLS Ch.6 Violence by Nonstate Actors (p.278 – 301: "Terrorism")
- **Recommended**:
    - *See Canvas*

Module 3: International Trade & Institutions ---

Class 8, April 23: International Trade
- **Required**:
    - FLS Ch.7: International Trade
    - PIIE, Trump's Trade War Timeline 2.0: An Up-to-Date Guide. Access via Canvas or Here
    - Reich, Robert. 2025. Trump's Tariffs Will be Paid by The poor – While His Tax Cuts Help the Rich. Access Here
- **Recommended**:
    - *See Canvas*

---Week 5---

Class 9, April 28: Trade Institutions
- **Required**:

- o FLS Ch.7: International Trade (Focus on. p.336 – 347: "How Do Countries Get What They Want? The International Political Economy of Trade")
  - o Rosendorff, B Peter, and Helen V Milner. 2001. "The Optimal Design of International Trade Institutions: Uncertainty and Escape." *International Organization* 55: 829–57.

- **Recommended**:
  - o *See Canvas*

Module 4: Other International Political Economy Topics -----------------------------------

Class 10, April 30: Political Economy of Immigration
- **Required:**
  - o FLS 8: International Financial Relations: "International Migration: Economics and Political Economy" (p.397 – 402)
  - o Scheve, Kenneth F, and Matthew J Slaughter. 2001. "Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 83(1): 133–45.
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

--*Week 6*--

Class 11, May 5: International Financial Relations
- **Required:**
  - o FLS Ch.8 International Financial Relations
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

Class 12, May 7: International Monetary Relations
- **Required:**
  - o FLS Ch.9 International Monetary Relations
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

--*Week 7*--

Class 13, May 12: Development and Aid
- **Required:**

- o FLS Ch.10 Development: Causes of Wealth and Poverty of Nations
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

Module 5: Transnational Politics --

Class 14, May 14: International Law
- **Required:**
  - o FLS Ch.11: International Law (p.484 – 498. "What is International Law")
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

---*Week 8*---

Class 15, May 19: International Norms
- **Required:**
  - o FLS Ch.11: International Norms (p.499 – 515. "What is International Norm")
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

Class 16, May 21: International Human Rights Governance
- **Required:**
  - o FLS Ch.12: Human Rights
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

---*Week 9*---

May 26: Memorial Day (No Class)

Class 17, May 28: International Labor Rights Governance
- **Required:**
  - o The 1996 Singapore Ministerial Declaration
  - o The 1998 ILO Delcaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

- o Congressional Research Service Report on USMCA: Labor Provisions
  - o Hafner-Burton, Emilie M. 2005. "Trading Human Rights: How Preferential Trade Agreements Influence Government Repression." *International Organization* 59(3): 593–629.
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

---*Week 10*---

Class 18, June 2: International Environmental Governance
- **Required:**
  - o FLS Ch.14: The Global Environment
- **Recommended:**
  - o *See Canvas*

Class 19, June 4: Final Exam Review

FINAL EXAM: Monday, June 9th, 8 – 11 AM, Ledden Auditorium

This syllabus incorporates and adapts materials taken from the syllabi of (1) Erik Gartzke, (2) Jennifer Gaudette, and (3) Stephen Chaudoin.