

International Law

PSC 352, Spring 2019
Tu/Th 12:30-1:50 in SOM 201

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Questions? Catch us after class, see us during office hours, or email for an appointment.

Overview & Objectives

If might makes right, as skeptics often claim, why do states comply with most of their many international commitments? And why, if international law is fundamentally flawed, would states invest any resources in negotiating treaties and conventions in the first place? In this course, we go beyond cynical clichés, but without resorting to excessive optimism, by concentrating on questions embedded in the politics of international law, such as:

What leads to bilateral or multilateral agreements on certain issues but not others?

Why do some legal principles remain resilient in the face of criticism but others ebb?

When do states and non-state actors seek to bolster or undermine such commitments?

To answer these types of descriptive and causal questions about the salience of international law, we will primarily apply analytical tools from the field of International Relations (IR). We will also use some of the specialized language of International Law (IL), but we will not concentrate as closely on textual interpretations as would a law school course.

By the end of the semester, you should have a clear **understanding of concepts and terms** used by commentators and practitioners who rely upon international law. Based on readings, lecture, and homework, you should be able to **explain key debates** over well-known legal disputes involving territorial boundaries, laws of war, and human rights conventions. Through independent research, you will **defend a position** on a controversial current issue involving international law. To accomplish these goals, we will hone your **reading, writing, and speaking skills**.

Since this course concentrates on the role of rules in regulating human interaction, we expect you to abide by the expectations indicated in this syllabus and in assignment guidelines. We will apply penalties for non-compliance, as detailed. Exceptions may apply, based on your individual circumstances, which you would need to explain to us.

This course may satisfy various requirements, including the [Social Science](#) core for Arts & Sciences and concentrations for [International Relations](#) or [Political Science](#) degrees. Consult your college or major advisor if you have any degree-related questions.

Assignments & Assessment

For the basics, we will use one required textbook: Shirley Scott, *International Law in World Politics: An Introduction* 3rd edition (Lynne Rienner, 2017) – be sure to get this edition. We will supplement this concise book with official documents and various commentaries. You will find links to these additional materials (readings, videos, etc.) and any homework assignments posted on [Blackboard](#) [BB]. Arrive every session having read (or watched) assigned materials and, when relevant, bring a paper copy of the homework.

Since this course does not include smaller discussion sections, your participation grade (25%) will cover multiple types of engagement. Most sessions will be interactive lectures. Be prepared for questions about the assigned materials – we may randomly call on people or give quizzes. Other days may involve break-out groups or presentations. Also follow the news, looking for international law in action.

Regular attendance matters most for participation but does not suffice. Regardless of personality, we also expect everyone to contribute. For shy people, speaking up requires practice. Conversely, for talkative people, active listening may be the skill to practice. We look for improvement during the semester, gauged on your individual baseline.

Two exams (25% each) will cover key concepts, terminology, and major issues. These exams will be closed-book, except for a crib sheet (one page, double-sided). You can ignore the final exam listed on MySlice. Instead, you will have an opportunity to delve deeper into a current controversy of your choice through a five-page research paper (25%). Stay tuned for details on study strategies for these exams and for paper guidelines.

Policies & Procedures

In general, we follow university policies on Disability Accommodation, Official Absences, and Academic Integrity. We also have course-specific policies on technology and deadlines.

- Anyone who might need accommodations (including but not limited to quiet space for exams) should contact the Office of [Disability Services](#) (804 University Avenue Room 309; 315- 443-4498). You are welcome to discuss individual circumstances with us, especially if you are unclear whether to contact ODS.
- Register any requests for [Religious Observances](#) via MySlice within the first two weeks of the semester, then consult us if you need to modify any assignment deadline. For Athletic or Academic events, provide documentation of any scheduled absence. If you are sick, contact one of us whenever possible. If in doubt, stay home instead of spreading germs (on the honor system). Only for extended illness or other absences, we want to see documentation (e.g., from a doctor or clinic). For major illnesses, family emergencies, or other issues that interfere with academics, you should also contact your dean's office.
- Papers you submit for this class will become part of the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. For a review of paraphrasing and other academic writing standards, see the [Academic Integrity](#) website, which also explains university policies and possible penalties for infractions. If in doubt, ask us.

- Always silence and put away cellphones. Some people have legitimate reasons to use other devices in the classroom, but for most people, technology too often creates distractions for you and people around you. Anyone texting or otherwise device-distracting will be ejected for the day.
- Each written assignment includes a proportional late penalty as well as a procedure for requesting an exception or extension. For example, homework must be submitted in class on the due date for full credit, except for an excused absence. Better late than never: you will still receive half-credit.

SU provides a wide range of support services, as do additional local organizations. If you need help with other concerns, we will do our best to find appropriate resources.

- Students reach college through diverse educational avenues. Some of you will enter this course with a stronger writing base than others, but we all benefit from feedback. As you work on your paper, consider signing up for a tutoring session at the [Writing Center](#).
- Many of the topics that we cover – especially war or rights violations – can be emotionally jarring. If you feel anxious, for whatever reasons, consider making an appointment at the [Counseling Center](#), 315-443-4715 (any time). Veterans can also find help via the [VA](#) hospital, next to campus, 315-425-4400.
- References to sexual violence can be disturbing for survivors. Anyone needing support can contact the [Sexual & Relationship Violence Response Team](#) within the Counseling Center, 315-443-4715. Another option is [Vera House](#), the Syracuse-area community organization that provides 24/7 support services, 315-425-0818. Please note that (for better or worse) instructors must report any incidents that students discuss with us.

Daily Schedule

Reminders: Arrive in class having done the reading (or other assignment) and bring any homework in writing (unless otherwise directed). Typically, homework will be assigned in class, often on the last lecture slide. If for any reason you miss class, check BB. Always better to turn in homework late, instead of never.

Part 1. What is International Law?

Tu 1/15: Introduction to the concept of international law and overview of the course

Informal homework = review for next session your notes from PSC124 (or similar course) on the role of international law in theories of International Relations (or global affairs). Bring questions to class.

Th 1/17: Rule and Rules – refresher on International Law (IL) in International Relations (IR)

Read Scott, chs.1 & 15.

Homework for next session to be assigned in class (then posted on BB).

Tu 1/22: States and Sovereignty

Read Scott, ch.2.

Th 1/24: Non-state Actors

Read Scott, ch.3

Tu 1/29: International Organizations

Read Scott, ch.4

Th 1/31: Courts and Tribunals

Read Scott, ch.5

Tu 2/5: Types of Law

Read Scott, ch.6

Th 2/7: Arguments

Read Scott, ch.7

Tu 2/12: Review

Th 2/14: Exam 1

Part 2. Issues in International Law

Tu 2/19: Documents

Read Scott, ch.8

Th 2/21: Regimes

Read Scott, ch.9

Tu 2/26: *Jus ad Bellum*

Read Scott, ch.10

Th 2/28: Research Day – building on prior homework assignments, you should be ready to select a general area for your research paper. Start to dig into details to identify some aspects that are currently controversial, from which you will hone a research topic by next week.

Tu 3/5: *Jus in Bello*

Read Scott, ch.11

Th 3/7: Research Proposal Due – you will submit via BB a short summary of your issue along with a list of potentially relevant resources. You will be clustered in groups based on topics.

Spring Break! No classes on 3/12 & 3/14.

Tu 3/19: Arms Control

Read Scott, ch.12

Th 3/21: Groups or Presentations

Readings to be assigned, and class format to be determined, based on research topics

Tu 3/26: Human Rights

Read Scott, ch.13

Th 3/28: Groups or Presentations

Readings to be assigned, and class format to be determined, based on research topics

Tu 4/2: Environment

Read Scott, ch.14

Th 4/4: Groups or Presentations

Readings to be assigned, and class format to be determined, based on research topics

Tu 4/9: Review

Th 4/11: Exam 2

Part 3. Current Controversies

Research Group sessions on Tu 4/16, Th 4/18, Tu 4/23, and Th 4/25. Groups and days to be assigned. Each group will meet for one session to discuss research projects, clustered by similar themes (e.g., laws of war or environment). Attendance on other days, optional. You will also meet at least once individually with the instructors for guidance on your paper.

Tu 4/30: Wrap up! Be prepared to discuss your research results within broader trends.

Papers due (via BB) Tuesday, May 7th by 10am (instead of the Final Exam as listed on MySlice).