

International Law

PSC 352, Spring 2021

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11am-12:20pm (online)

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Teaching Assistants:

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(Go to the “Course Information” tab on Blackboard for details about our office hours.)

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 (IL) is fundamentally flawed, would states invest any resources in negotiating treaties and conventions in the first place? 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?

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

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

To answer these types of descriptive and causal questions, we will primarily apply analytical tools from the field of International Relations (IR). Along the way, you will:

- ✓ Learn core concepts and key terms used by commentators and practitioners who rely upon international law
- ✓ Use those concepts and terms to explain well-known legal disputes involving issues of territorial boundaries, laws of war, human rights, and more
- ✓ Build on those precedents to defend positions on controversial current issues
- ✓ Hone your reading, writing, and speaking skills

Although we will use some specialized language, we will not concentrate as closely on cases as would a law school course.

Since this course stresses the pervasive role of rules in regulating human interaction, we expect you to abide by the policies in this syllabus and in assignment guidelines. We will often apply (mostly minor) penalties for non-compliance. Exceptions may apply, especially given the pandemic. Contact us if you face extenuating circumstances.

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 & Assessments

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 assignments posted on Blackboard [BB]. Arrive at every session having read (or watched) assigned materials and, when relevant, having completed any tasks.

Since this course does not include smaller discussion sections, participation grades (20%) will cover multiple types of engagement. Most sessions will be interactive lectures, with a chat function and sometimes with break-out groups. Be prepared for questions about the assigned materials – we may randomly call on people. Often, we will create additional tasks, such as surveys or homework. Also, follow news related international law, then post items and comments on the “law in the wild” discussion forum.

Attendance is a precondition for participation – logging into a virtual room, or watching the recording later, does not suffice. Regardless of personality, you should engage regularly, at minimum in one way every week, whether verbally or via the chat in class or asynchronously on discussion boards. Identify at least one participation goal for the semester, then create a few self-assessment benchmarks. For shy people, pledging to speak up every week may be an appropriate challenge. Conversely, for talkative people, active listening may be a skill to practice on the discussion board. We look for improvement too.

Two take-home exams (40% each), submitted via TurnItIn, will cover key concepts and major debates. Expect a few short essay-style questions involving documentary analysis, with a bit of choice. You will receive detailed guidelines at least one week prior to the due date.

Policies & Procedures

In general, we follow university policies on accommodation, absences, and accountability. We also have course-specific policies on technology and deadlines.

Virtual classrooms alter expectations about acceptable behavior, including uses of technology. While we will not require cameras in synchronous sessions, anyone not engaging might be moved back into a waiting room. Of course, avoid disrespectful behavior (or worse). We will collectively generate and agree upon additional procedures and etiquette.

Tasks frequently include a proportional late penalty as well as a procedure for requesting an exception or extension. In general, better late than never: you will usually receive partial credit. However, sometimes tasks must be submitted by class, except for an excused absence. Other times, you might need to complete one task in order to access the next task. Always ask if you face extenuating circumstances.

Register any requests for Religious Observances via MySlice, and let us know in advance about athletic or academic events. Then consult us if you need to modify any assignment deadline. If you are sick, contact one of us once possible (no documentation needed). For major illnesses, family emergencies, or other issues, you should also contact your advisor.

We aim to create an inclusive classroom but cannot anticipate everything. You are welcome to discuss any issues related to accessibility, regardless of whether your circumstances relate to formal accommodations. Anyone requesting formal accommodations should first contact Disability Services, and then confirm with us any detailed arrangements.

Papers you submit for this class will become part of the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. We will review paraphrasing and other academic writing standards. See the Academic Integrity website for university policies and possible penalties for infractions. If in doubt, ask us before submitting.

Many of the topics that we cover – especially war or rights violations – can be emotionally jarring. SU provides a wide range of support services. If you feel anxious, for whatever reasons, consider making an appointment at the Barnes Center. Veterans can also find help via the [VA](#) hospital, next to campus, 315-425-4400. Another option for anyone needing support related to sexual violence is [Vera House](#), the Syracuse-area community organization that provides 24/7 support services, 315-425-0818. Because of “mandatory reporter” rules, **instructors cannot guarantee confidentiality** if you discuss an incident of sexual violence, but we can guide you to confidential help.

Daily Schedule

This overview only lists the textbook assignments. Each session will include additional reading (or other material) on an illustrative topic. Typically, homework will be assigned in class, often on the last lecture slide. Caveat: Illustrations may change in response to news. Always check the Coursework folder.

Part 1: Core Components of International Law

Tu 2/9: Introduction to the concept of international law and overview of the course

Th 2/11: Rule and Rules – International Law (IL) in International Relations (IR)

Read Scott, chs.1 & 15.

Illustration: Montevideo Convention

Tu 2/16: States and Sovereignty

Read Scott, ch.2.

Illustration: Brexit

Th 2/18: Non-state Actors

Read Scott, ch.3

Illustration: Landmines

Tu 2/23: International Organizations

Read Scott, ch.4

Illustration: World Health Organization

Th 2/25: Courts and Tribunals

Read Scott, ch.5

Illustration: International Criminal Court

Tu 3/2: Types of Law

Read Scott, ch.6

Illustration: Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Th 3/4: Arguments

Read Scott, ch.7

Illustration: Whaling Convention

Tu 3/9: Documents

Read Scott, ch.8

Illustration: Genocide Convention

Th 3/11: Regimes

Read Scott, ch.9

Illustration: Refugees

Tu 3/16: Review

Th 3/18: Exam 1

Tu 3/23: "Wellness Day" -- no class or assignments, per university policy

Th 3/25: "Spring Break" -- another day without class (catch up on any late work)

Part 2: Themes and Issues in International Law

Reminder: check the Coursework folder for supplementary reading or other material.

Theme: Armed Conflict

Tu 3/30: *Jus ad Bellum* (Scott, ch.10)

Th 4/1: *Jus in Bello* (Scott, ch.11)

Tu 4/6: Weapons Proliferation (Scott, ch.12)

Th 4/8: Debate (IHL topic to be determined)

Theme: Human Rights

Tu 4/13: Political and Civil Rights (Scott, ch.13)

Th 4/15: Social and Economic Rights

Tu 4/20: Racism and Self-Determination

Th 4/22: Debate (HRL topic to be determined)

Theme: Environment

Tu 4/27: Environmental Governance (Scott, ch.14)

Th 4/29: Biodiversity

Tu 5/4: Climate Change

Th 5/6: Debate (IEL topic to be determined)

Tu 5/11: Review

Th 5/13: Exam 2