Universidad de Navarra

International Relations Theory (RRII)

Guía docente 2026-27

INTRODUCTION

Course Description:

International Relations (IR) is an inherently interdisciplinary field of study, drawing insights from history, political science, economics, law, sociology, and philosophy. Yet, what gives International Relations its distinctive intellectual identity is its rich body of theoretical literature. IR theory provides the conceptual foundations that enable scholars and practitioners to understand, explain, and evaluate international phenomena. For this reason, the study of IR theory occupies a central place within the discipline and is essential for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of global affairs.

In an age characterized by an unprecedented abundance of information, the challenge is no longer access to facts but rather the ability to interpret them meaningfully. Indeed, contemporary society is often described as suffering from a form of "data smog," in which the sheer volume of information can obscure rather than clarify our understanding of the world. Theory serves as a vital tool for navigating this complexity. It offers analytical frameworks that help us identify patterns, ask meaningful questions, evaluate competing explanations, and make sense of international events.

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to the major theoretical traditions in International Relations, including Realism, Liberalism, Marxism, Constructivism, and a range of post-positivist approaches. Students will explore how these perspectives differ in their assumptions about the nature of international politics, the causes of conflict and cooperation, the role of power, identity, and ideas, and the possibilities for global change. The course will also examine emerging debates within the discipline concerning the implications of phenomena such as artificial intelligence, climate change, pandemics, and other non-human factors that increasingly shape international relations.

Throughout the course, theoretical concepts will be applied to both historical and contemporary international events, enabling students to appreciate the practical relevance of abstract ideas. By engaging with diverse and often competing perspectives, students will develop the ability to critically assess international developments and construct their own informed interpretations of world politics.

Ultimately, the course aims not only to provide students with a solid understanding of the major theories of International Relations but also to cultivate the analytical, critical-thinking, and argumentative skills necessary for academic success, professional life, and informed global citizenship.

- **Degree**: International Relations
- **Module**: International Relations Theory
- **ECTS**:3
- **Year**:First Year, First Semester
- **Type of Course:** Obligatorio(Compulsory)
- **Instructor**: Dr. Shahana Thankachan
- **Language**: English
- **Lecture Schedule**: Thursday, 1000-1200, B1, Amigos

RESULTADOS DE APRENDIZAJE (Competencias)

CB2	Que los estudiantes sepan aplicar sus conocimientos a su trabajo o vocación de una forma profesional y posean las competencias que suelen demostrarse por medio de la elaboración y defensa de argumentos y la resolución de problemas dentro de su área de estudio
CB3	Que los estudiantes tengan la capacidad de reunir e interpretar datos relevantes (normalmente dentro de su área de estudio) para emitir juicios que incluyan una reflexión sobre temas relevantes de índole social, científica o ética
CB4	Que los estudiantes puedan transmitir información, ideas, problemas y soluciones a un público tanto especializado como no especializado
CG01	Analizar, valorar y razonar las diferentes situaciones internacionales a la luz de los conocimientos adquiridos.
CG04	Usar el inglés con propiedad según la terminología científica y académica propia de la Relaciones internacionales.
CG08	Manejar con destreza las nuevas tecnologías de la información y comunicación aplicándolas a las relaciones internacionales.
CE01	Conocer los conceptos y técnicas aplicadas al análisis de los actores y relaciones internacionales.
CE02	Analizar la naturaleza y características de las relaciones entre los actores internacionales y particularmente entre los Estados.
CE05	Conocer y comprender las teorías y concepciones de las relaciones internacionales en perspectiva histórica.
CE09	Comprender la estructura, competencias y funcionamiento de las instituciones y organizaciones internacionales.

CE14	Conocer y analizar la cooperación internacional como elemento fundamental en la reducción de las desigualdades y la pobreza, conociendo los mecanismos para la implementación de la ayuda al desarrollo.
CE16	Analizar los diferentes conflictos internacionales, sus causas, desarrollo y efectos sobre los países y la sociedad internacional.
CE17	Analizar los problemas jurídicos y sociales que se derivan de las relaciones internacionales en todos los ámbitos con base en el conocimiento adecuado de los principios y normas de Derecho internacional.
CE18	Analizar las realidades internacionales (económica, social y política) como método de prevención de focos de conflicto.

PROGRAM

I.*The Nuts and Bolts of IR Theory: Introduction*

Topics:

- What is IR Theory and why do we need it?
- Classification and Debates in IR Theory

Readings

Compulsory

Chapter 1 and 2, “Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches” /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen.

Recommended

Kenneth N. Waltz, “Laws and Theories” in his Theory of International Politics; J. David Singer, “The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations” World Politics, 14 (1), October 1961, pp. 77-92;

II. *Pessimism Galore?:Classical Realism*

Topics:

- Elements of Realism
- Classical Realism -Thucydides Machiavelli, Hobbes and the Security Dilemma, Kautilya, Sun Tzu

Readings:

Compulsory

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Chapter 3, “Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches” /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen.

Recommended

Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,” History of the Peloponnesian War; Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chs 14-20,21

Kautilya, The Arthashastra- Part III,X and XI; Sun Tzu, The Art of War,

III. *The many faces of Realism:*

Topics:

- Neorealism, Strategic Realism, Hegemonic Realism, Defensive and Offensive Realism, and Neoclassical Realism

Readings:

Compulsory

Chapter 3, “Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches” /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen.

Recommended

Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, pp. 3-26; Kenneth N. Waltz, “Political Structures”, from Theory of International Politics, pp. 79-101; Kenneth N. Waltz, “Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory,” Journal of International Affairs 44 (1) (Spring-Summer 1990), pp. 21-37.

Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” International Security, 17 (1) Summer 1992, pp. 177-98; John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, chapters 1 & 2; Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” World Politics, 51 (1), 1998, pp. 144-72; Robert Gilpin, “The Theory of Hegemonic War,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History 18:4 (Spring 1988), pp. 591-613; Mohammed Ayoob, “Subaltern Realism: International Relations Theory Meets the Third World,” Stephanie Neuman, ed., International Relations Theory and the Third World (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 31-54

IV. *Cautious optimism or unbridled idealism?:Liberal Theory in IR*

Topics:

- Classical Liberal Theory, Sociological Liberalism, Interdependence School
- Institutional Liberalism, Republicanism, Neorealist Critique of Liberalism

Readings:

Compulsory

Chapter 4, “Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches” /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen.

Recommended

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence, pp. 3-31; John R. Oneal and Bruce Russett, “The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefits of Democracy, Interdependence and International Organizations, 1885-1992,” World Politics, 52:1 (October 1999), pp. 1-37.

G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0,” Perspectives on Politics 7:1 (March 2009), pp. 71-87; Kenneth Oye, “Explaining Cooperation Under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies,” World Politics 38:1 (October 1985), pp. 1-24; Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics,” The American Political Science Review 80:4 (December 1986), pp. 1151-69.

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V. *International Society/English school: state or the individual?*

Topics:

- Basic International Society Approach; The Three Traditions: Theory; The Three Traditions: Practice; Order and Justice; Statecraft and Responsibility

Readings:

Compulsory

Chapter 5, "Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches" /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen.

Recommended

Hedley Bull, "The Emergence of a Universal International Society" & "The Revolt Against the West," Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, eds., The Expansion of International Society, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 117-126 & 217-228.

Alex J. Bellamy, "Introduction: The English School and International Society," Alex J. Bellamy (ed.), International Society and its Critics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 1-26;

VI:*International Political Economy: "Is it all about the money?"*

Topics:

- Mercantilism, Economic Liberalism, Marxism and Gramscian IR

Readings:

Compulsory

Chapter 6, "Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches" /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen.

Recommended

Andrew Linklater, "Marxism," Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, et al, eds., Theories of International Relations, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2005, second edition, pp. 129-154; Alex Callinicos, "Does Capitalism Need the State System?," Cambridge Review of International Affairs 20 (4), 2007, pp. 533-549.

VII:*Constructivism: "Anarchy is what states make of it"*

Topics:

- Cultures of Anarchy; Norms of International Society; The Power of International Organizations; Domestic Formation of Identity and Norms

Readings:

Compulsory

Chapter 7 , "Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches" /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen. Recommended

Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," International Organization 46 (2), Spring 1992, pp. 391-425; Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," Annual Review of Political Science, 4, 2001, pp. 391–416.

VIII:*Post-Positivist Theories in IR: "Reality is contingent, interpretative and unstable"*

Topics:

- Post-structuralism, post-colonialism and Feminist Theory

Readings:

Compulsory

Chapter 8, "Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches" /Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen.

Recommended

Jacqui True, "Feminism," Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, eds., Theories of International Relations (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp. 210-251; J. Ann Tickner, "Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation," Millennium: Journal of International Studies 17 (3), 1988, pp. 429-440.

IX. Posthuman and Environmental IR: How to study IR in the age of AI, pandemics and climate change

ACTIVIDADES FORMATIVAS

I. **CLASSROOM TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

1. **Lectures**: Most classes will include lectures given by the Professor using the blackboard, powerpoint slides, videos and audio clips. The slides will be posted on ADI before each class. The students are required to engage with the lectures and participate in class.
2. **Seminars**: (They Include)
    1. Lectures on current topics by the Professor or by a guest lecturer who might be a practitioner or expert of the field.
    2. Group presentations on a topic related to the subject. The students have to choose from a list of topics provided by the Professor. Students will be divided into groups of 5-6, and are required to conduct a through investigation of their topic and make presentation before the class in a format of their choosing. Each presentation will be a followed by a discussion.
    3. Responses to students questions by the Professor and classmates.
    4. Discussion of the pre-assigned reading at the end of every class.
3. **Evaluation:** Exams to assess the successful accomplishment of the objectives.

II. **PERSONAL WORK**

1. The students have to devote regular study hours outside of the lectures to gain the maximum from the subject.
2. The students are compulsorily required to come prepared to class having read the pre-assigned reading in order to fully understand the lecture. The students should also be able to display their understanding of the reading and the lecture through their engagement with the instructor and other classmates during the lecture.
3. The students are required to study the powerpoint slides provided by the instructor, take notes during the lecture to use it for study, and also study the compulsory readings assigned for the subject.
4. The students also have the conduct research and prepare a group presentation.

III. Credits/hours distribution of the activities. 3 ECTS= 75 h

1. Lectures 30 h

2. Seminars 13 h

3. Evaluation 2 h

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Total classroom activities 45 h

4. Personal work 30 h

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Total 3 ECTS 75 h

EVALUACIÓN

FINAL EXAM	60%
MID-TERM EXAM	30%
CLASS PARTICIPATION, DEBATE AND DISCUSSIONS	10%

Class Participation and Debates: 10%

The students will be assessed for active participation and engagement in the classroom. The participation and performance of the students in the debates and discussions initiated by the professor at the end of every class, will also be assessed. Students will also be judged for class preparation and regular reading of course material.

Mid-Term Exam: 30%

A partial exam will be conducted in the middle of the semester. Please refer to the chronogram to check the date. The student is required to study everything taught in the course until the date of the exam. The exam will be a combination of Multiple Choice Questions .

Final Written Exam: 60%

The final exam will and will consist of a series of questions in which the student must demonstrate the acquisition of factual and theoretical knowledge and conceptual clarity acquired from the content taught in class. The exam will also evaluate whether students can translate theoretical concepts into practical application. The written exam will include long essay-type questions and multiple-choice questions. The students need to study the slides provided by the Professor and the compulsory readings for each topic. The students need to study the entire content of the course, including the part covered in the partial exam.

Criteria to pass the course

- Students whose final grade is 5 points or more will pass the course.
- Students whose final grade is below 5 points will not pass the course and will be graded as *Suspenso* .
- Students who do not take the final exam will not pass the course and will be graded as *No presentado*.

Exams review

- Students will be able to review the exams in an interview with the professor, after publication of the grades, on a day and at a place that will be indicated.

CONVOCATORIA EXTRAORDINARIA

- If the students fail to attain a GPA of 5, and do not pass the subject, they will get another chance to write a single exam in June. This exam will be worth 100% of the total grade of the subject. If the student does not pass this exam either, they will have to retake the subject the next academic year.

HORARIOS DE ATENCIÓN

Dr. Shahana Thankachan .....(sthankachan@unav.es)

- Despacho 1721, Edificio- Biblioteca Central Planta 1
- Horario de tutoria: Monday- 1400-1500; Thursday -1200-1300
- Appointment Booking Links

https://calendar.app.google/FFuRhYUWgJZqyPiA7

https://calendar.app.google/Z9zdB8iFkUqBj3NT8

https://calendar.app.google/DrPJUy7A1y3ufKsq8

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

Bibliography and Resources

The students have to compulsorily follow the textbook "JACKSON, R. & SORENSEN, G., Introduction to International Relations. Theories and Approaches", 2022, Eighth Edition. The

students are advised to have a personal copy with them.The book is easily available on Amazon Spain. https://www.amazon.es/Introduction-International-Relations-Georg-S-C3-B8rensen-dp-0198862202/dp/0198862202/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

The students are also advised to get into the habit of reading academic articles that are recommended for the course as part of each topic. This will greatly enhance their understanding of the course. The students can also find some copies of the latest copies of the compulsory textbook in the university library.

Compulsory Textbook

JACKSON, R. & SORENSEN, G., *Introduction to International Relations. Theories and Approaches*, Eigth Edition, Oxford University Press (OUP), Oxford and New York, 2022 (Student Online Resource Centre: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/jackson_sorensen6e). Localízalo en la Biblioteca (ed. 2016) Localízalo en la Biblioteca (Ed. 2022)

Recommended Readings

Kenneth N. Waltz, "Laws and Theories" in his Theory of International Politics; J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations" World Politics, 14 (1), October 1961, pp. 77-92;

Thucydides, "The Melian Dialogue," History of the Peloponnesian War; Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, pp. 50-59. Kautilya, The Arthashastra, pp. 541-579; Sun Tzu, The Art of War, pp. 72-99;

Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, pp. 3-26; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Political Structures", from Theory of International Politics, pp. 79-101; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," Journal of International Affairs 44 (1) (Spring-Summer 1990), pp. 21-37.

Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics," International Security, 17 (1) Summer 1992, pp. 177-98; John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, chapters 1 & 2; Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," World Politics, 51 (1), 1998, pp. 144-72; Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 18:4 (Spring 1988), pp. 591-613; Mohammed Ayoob, "Subaltern Realism: International Relations Theory Meets the Third World," Stephanie Neuman, ed., International Relations Theory and the Third World (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 31-54

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence, pp. 3-31; John R. Oneal and Bruce Russett, "The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefits of Democracy, Interdependence and International Organizations, 1885-1992," World Politics, 52:1 (October 1999), pp. 1-37.

G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0," Perspectives on Politics 7:1 (March 2009), pp. 71-87; Kenneth Oye, "Explaining Cooperation Under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies," World Politics 38:1 (October 1985), pp. 1-24; Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," The American Political Science Review 80:4 (December 1986), pp. 1151-69.

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Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," International Organization 46 (2), Spring 1992, pp. 391-425; Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," Annual Review of Political Science, 4, 2001, pp. 391–416.

Andrew Linklater, "Marxism," Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, et al, eds., Theories of International Relations, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2005, second edition, pp. 129-154; Alex Callinicos, "Does Capitalism Need the State System?," Cambridge Review of International Affairs 20 (4), 2007, pp. 533-549.

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Jacqui True, “Feminism,” Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, eds., Theories of International Relations (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp. 210-251; J. Ann Tickner, “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation,” Millennium: Journal of International Studies 17 (3), 1988, pp. 429-440.

Useful Links to IR Journals

Cambridge Review of International Affairs, http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccam20

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/

Contemporary Politics, http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccpo20

European Journal of International Relations, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

Foreign Affairs, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

Foreign Policy, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

Foreign Policy Analysis, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

Harvard International Review, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

International Organization, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

International Affairs, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

International Studies Quarterly, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

International Studies Review, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

International Studies Perspectives, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

International Theory, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

Perspectives on Politics, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

Review of International Studies, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

Washington Quarterly, https://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/

World Policy Journal, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

World Politics, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics

The World Today, Localízalo en la Biblioteca

YaleGlobal Online, http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/