



## PRESENTATION

- **Course:** Diplomacy & Decision Making
- **Degree:** Degree in International Relations (Diploma: Geopolitics & Diplomacy)
- **Year:** 4th (2nd Semester)
- **Teacher:** Bernardino León (coordinated by Prof. Emili Blasco)
- **Type of subject:** Mandatory
- **Number of credits ECTS:** 3
- **Language:** English
- **Schedule:** Each Thursday from 15:30 to 17:30 (Seminar Room B1, in floor -1).  
Additional classes, from 12:00 to 14:00, on February 12 and 26 (both days in Seminar Room 19, floor 0) and March 5 (Seminar Room 3, floor 0)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This theoretical and practical course offers a deep dive into the understanding of Diplomacy and the fundamental skill of Decision Making. Even for those not interested in Diplomacy as a professional career, it is interesting to understand how decisions are made in this context and its relevant consequences in all realms. Few contexts are more complex and diverse, particularly throughout international crises, and the sense of State and History required by Diplomacy can enlighten anyone's activity. The course will describe the Diplomatic law and institutions, weaving a narrative that spans historical foundations, legal frameworks, and the practical intricacies of knowledge and skills. Beginning with an exploration of the historical evolution up to 21<sup>st</sup> century Diplomacy, students will trace the development of diplomatic practice culminating in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) of 1961. This historical lens serves as a foundation for understanding the dynamics of most complex international crises and the practical way in which Diplomacy works, supported with case studies.

Understanding how decision-making unfolds in the diplomatic arena is crucial because diplomacy operates at the intersection of politics, strategy, and human judgment. Diplomatic decision-making involves multiple actors, competing interests, limited information, and high stakes, making it a rich environment for analyzing how choices are formulated, negotiated, and implemented.

Furthermore, the course extends its purview to crisis management, scrutinizing short-term and long-term crises from both socio-political and technical perspectives. The diplomatic toolbox is dissected, uncovering strategies at the intersection of high-level political engagement, decision prioritization, information selection, coordination, stress management, and leadership dynamics. Practical skills in crisis preparation, including anticipation models like crisis portfolios, scenario planning, risk management, and taxonomy are imparted, focusing also on the importance of consensus-building in government and society.

Studying this process is especially important. Crises compress time, increase uncertainty, and elevate the consequences of every available option. Under these conditions, leaders must make rapid decisions while navigating incomplete intelligence, intense domestic and international pressure, and the risk of escalation. This environment exposes the strengths and weaknesses of different decision-making models and reveals how cognitive biases, organizational dynamics, and international norms shape outcomes.

By examining diplomatic decision-making during crises, students gain insight into how governments respond to complex global challenges such as conflict, humanitarian emergencies,



or geopolitical confrontations. This understanding not only deepens theoretical knowledge but also develops practical skills—such as strategic analysis, scenario planning, negotiation, and crisis communication—that are essential for practitioners in international affairs. Different case studies will be commented.

In sum, learning how decision-making works in diplomatic crises enables students to analyze real-world events more critically, anticipate strategic behavior, and build the competencies needed to navigate high-pressure situations effectively.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a comprehensive understanding of the foundations, evolution, and contemporary practice of diplomacy. The course aims to situate diplomacy within its historical, political, and institutional context, enabling students to appreciate how statecraft, power, representation, and diplomatic norms have developed and how they continue to shape today's international environment.

2. Examine how decision-making operates within international relations and diplomatic settings. A core objective is to explore the principal models, processes, and constraints of decision-making in international affairs, including leadership dynamics, bureaucratic structures, cognitive factors, and real-world complexities that influence diplomatic choices.

3. Develop an integrated understanding of bilateral, multilateral, formal, and informal diplomatic processes. The course seeks to familiarize students with how diplomacy is conducted across different levels and formats—state-to-state, multilateral organizations, informal channels—and how actors, structures, rules, and procedures interact in diverse diplomatic arenas.

4. Strengthen students' capacity to analyze how international law frames and conditions diplomatic action. A key objective is to examine the legal underpinnings of diplomacy, especially diplomatic law, and how treaties such as the Vienna Conventions shape the rights, duties, immunities, and limitations of diplomatic actors.

5. Enhance students' understanding of crisis diplomacy and the tools available for managing high-stakes international situations. The course aims to provide conceptual and practical insight into crisis management, mediation, negotiation, and decision-making under pressure, using historical cases—such as the U.S. Hostages Case—to illuminate challenges and best practices.

6. Cultivate ethical awareness and responsibility in international decision-making and diplomatic leadership. An essential objective is to promote critical reflection on the ethical dimensions of diplomatic behavior, including accountability, moral reasoning, and the implications of decisions affecting peace, security, and global governance.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

1) Understanding Core Diplomatic Concepts. Students should learn the basic principles, functions, and historical evolution of diplomacy, including the role of states, international organizations, and non-state actors in global affairs.

2) Mastery of Decision-Making Frameworks. Learners should become familiar with key theories and models of decision-making—such as rational choice, bounded rationality, and cognitive biases—and understand how these frameworks apply to real diplomatic contexts.

3) Negotiation and Mediation Skills. The course should teach practical negotiation techniques, conflict-resolution strategies, and mediation processes, enabling students to analyze and participate in diplomatic negotiations effectively. It is crucial to understand that complex decisions can be made in complex environments by actors directly involve as much as diplomatic mediators, facilitators and international bodies.



# Universidad de Navarra

- 4) Analytical and Strategic Thinking. Students should develop the ability to assess complex international scenarios, identify stakeholders, anticipate and prepare outcomes, and design strategic options for action at the diplomatic level, including judicial or quasi-judicial means.
- 5) Intercultural and Communication Competence. A key learning outcome is understanding how culture, language, and communication styles affect diplomatic interactions, and learning how to navigate these differences successfully.
- 6) Ethical and Normative Considerations. The course will include the study of ethical principles, international norms, and legal frameworks that shape diplomatic behavior and decision-making.
- 7) Crisis Management and Rapid Decision-Making. Students should learn how diplomats operate under uncertainty and pressure, practicing tools for crisis assessment, scenario planning, and timely decision-making.
- 8) Applied Case Studies and Simulations. A fundamental component is the application of theoretical knowledge through real-world case studies, simulations, and role-playing exercises that replicate diplomatic challenges. In particular, the course will analyse the US hostages case that should give the students the opportunity to grasp interesting lessons on leadership, decision-making (right and wrong) under pressure, and intercultural understanding of crises.
- 9) Evaluation of Global Governance Dynamics. Learners should understand how decision-making occurs within multilateral systems, including the UN, regional organizations, and international legal institutions.
- 10) Development of Professional Skills beyond Diplomacy. Drafting documents, strategic communication, public messaging, and collaborative problem-solving will be useful tools in any professional environment.

## PROGRAMA

### SESSION 1 (2 hrs)

INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION OF THE METHODOLOGY OF THIS SUBJECT. Prof. Emili J. Blasco

### SESSION 2 (4 hours)

#### Class 1: INTRODUCTION TO DIPLOMACY, STATECRAFT, POWER AND REPRESENTATIONS. HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF DIPLOMACY. DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Essential reading:

-Roberts, I. (Ed.). (2016). *Satow's diplomatic practice*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1

Recommended:

-Fletcher, T. (2016). *Naked diplomacy: Power and statecraft in the digital age*. London: William Collins, Part Two 7, 8 and 13, and Part Three 14 and 15.

-Bjola, C., & Kornprobst, M. (2018). *Understanding international diplomacy: theory, practice and ethics*. Routledge. Part II, 2 and 3.

#### Class 2: CONTEMPORARY DIPLOMACY AND ITS CHALLENGES. DECISION MAKING AND LEADERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Essential reading:



-Introduction: "The Challenges of 21st-Century Diplomacy", in Cooper, A. F., Heine, J., & Thakur, R. (Eds.). (2013). *The Oxford handbook of modern diplomacy*. OUP Oxford.

Recommended:

-Cooper et al., chapters 1, 2 and 3.

-Roberts, I. (Ed.). (2016). *Satow's diplomatic practice*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2

-Deliberative Political Leaders: The Role of Policy Input in Political Leadership. Lees-Marshment, Jennifer. *Politics and Governance*, Lisbon T. 4, N.º 2, (2016): n/a. DOI:10.17645/pag.v4i2.560

-Breuning, M. (2022). *Investigating leaders: Integrating the study of individuals in foreign policy analysis and International Relations*. *Teoria Polityki*, (6), 81-99.

### **SESSION 3** (4 hours)

#### **Class 1: HOW DIPLOMACY WORKS: BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL RELATIONS, FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIPLOMACY. THE STRUCTURE OF DIPLOMACY: TIME, SPACE, ACTORS AND DOCUMENTS.**

Essential readings:

-Bjola (2018), part I.1 and part IV, 7 and 9

-Cooper et al (2013), Part III, chapters 12 and 13

Recommended for Multilateral and UN sponsored negotiations:

-León Gross, B. (2020). "A Diplomatic Perspective on Stabilisation". In *Stabilising the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 67-94). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Recommended for informal diplomacy and backchannels:

-Burns, W. J. (2019). *The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case for Its Renewal*. Random House. Chapter 9

-Stanzel, V., & und Politik-SWP-Deutsches, S. W. (2018). *New realities in foreign affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st century*, pages 27-38.

#### **Class 2: HOW DIPLOMACY WORKS: STATES'S DIPLOMATIC CENTRAL AND PERIPHERIC ADMINISTRATIONS. MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: UN, EU AND OTHER IO'S.**

Essential readings:

-Sanchez Frias, A., "International Organizations and other subjects of International Law". In *Handbook of International Law and Diplomacy* (pp. 47-64). Tirant lo Blanch

-Cooper et al (2013), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, OUP. Chapters 7 and 13.

-León Gross, B. (2020). "Foreign policy, defence, external action and the diplomatic system of the EU". In *Basic concepts of EU law*. (pp. 133-152). Tirant lo Blanch

Recommended readings:

-Naylor, T. (2018). *Social closure and international society: Status groups from the family of civilised nations to the G20*. Routledge.

-Roberts, I. (2023). *Satow's diplomatic practice*. Oxford University Press, Book 4, 17 and 19.



**SESSION 4** (4 hours)

**Class 1: INTERNATIONAL LAW AND DIPLOMACY. INTRODUCTION TO DIPLOMATIC LAW.**

Essential reading:

-Canal-Forgues, E. (2022). "International Law and Diplomacy". In *Handbook of International Law and Diplomacy* (pp. 358-369). Tirant lo Blanch.

**Class 2: THE VIENNA CONVENTION ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS 1961**

Essential readings:

-Vienna convention on diplomatic relations and optional protocols, done at Vienna, April 18, 1961.

Recommended:

-Wouters, J., Duquet, S., & Meuwissen, K. (2013). "The Vienna conventions on diplomatic and consular relations". In *The Oxford handbook of modern diplomacy*.

-Roberts (2016), chapters 13 and 14

**SESSION 5** (2 hours)

**THE SPANISH MFA AND THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION IN BRUSSELS.** Prof. Juan Gonzalez-Barba

**SESSION 6** (4 hours)

**Class 1: DIPLOMATIC CRISIS AND CONFLICT. CRISIS MANGEMENT. NEGOTIATION AND MEDIATION: WHEN FORMAL DIPLOMACY IS NOT THE SOLUTION.**

Essential reading:

-Rana, K. S. (2011). *21st-century diplomacy: A practitioner's guide*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA. Part II, chapter 8

-Butler, M. J. (2009). *International conflict management*. Routledge. Part I, chapter 1

Recommended:

-Roberts (2016), Part V, chapter 24

-Zartman, I. W., & Faure, G. O. (Eds.). (2005). *Escalation and negotiation in international conflicts*. Cambridge University Press. Part I, chapter 1

**Class 2: CRISIS WITHIN AND BEYOND DIPLOMATIC LAW. THE US HOSTAGES CASE: PRACTICAL EXERCISE**

Essential readings:

-León Gross, B. (2022). "The case concerning United States diplomatic and consular staff in Teheran (United States of America v. Iran)". In *Handbook of International Law and Diplomacy* (pp. 371-390). Tirant lo Blanch.

Case Concerning United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran (United States of America v. Iran); Order, 12 V 81, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 12 May 1981, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cases,ICJ,4023aaf77.html>



**SESSION 7** (4 hrs)

**Class 1** (2,30 hrs): DECISION MAKING IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. TYPES OF DECISIONS, CONTEXTS AND SCENARIOS. BIASES AND EMOTIONS. DECISION-MAKING PARADIGMS. PRESENTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS IN DIPLOMATIC CONTEXTS.

Essential readings:

-Mintz, A., & DeRouen Jr, K. (2010). *Understanding foreign policy decision making*. Cambridge University Press.

-Allison, G. T., & Zelikow, P. (1971). *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis*. Boston: Little, Brown.

-Roberts, J. M. (1988). *Decision-making during international crises*. Springer.

Recommended (for those interested in Economic Diplomacy):

-Bayne, N., & Woolcock, S. (2003). *The new economic diplomacy. Decision-making and negotiation in international economic relations, 2*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, [2017]

**Class 2** (1,30 hrs): **MID-TERM ORAL EXAM**

-----

**SESSION 8** (2 hrs)

**«DECISIONES CRÍTICAS. UN ANÁLISIS DE FACTORES CLAVE EN LOS MOMENTOS CRUCIALES DE LA HUMANIDAD»**, Carles M. Canals

Essential reading:

-Carles M. Canals (2023). *Decisiones críticas. Un análisis de factores clave en los momentos cruciales de la humanidad*. Alfabeto.

**SESSION 9** (2 hrs)

**ETHICS IN INTERNATIONAL DECISION-MAKING**, Prof. Emili J. Blasco

Essential reading:

-Joseph S. Nye Jr. (2020), *Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump*, Oxford University Press.

**FINAL EXAM MULTIPLE CHOICE**

## **FACULTY**

### **About Bernardino León**

Bernardino León (Málaga 1964) is a Spanish diplomat and politician with an extensive political and diplomatic career. In 2015 he was appointed Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Libya, where he played a key role in negotiating the Libyan Political Agreement, which ended the civil war that broke out in 2014. Previously, he was the European Union's Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean (a position created to deal with



## Universidad de Navarra

the Arab Spring actors), mediating important political processes in countries like Egypt and Tunisia. He was also posted to Algeria during the elections and subsequent internal conflict of the 90s.

Leon was a member of one of the first EU teams dedicated to foreign policy between 1998 and 2001, as political adviser to the EU special representative to the Middle East Peace Process, participating directly and indirectly in the implementation of the Oslo process between Israel and the Arab states and actors.

He was Secretary General at the prime minister Office in Spain, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Spanish representative in the G20, successfully negotiating the inclusion of Spain in this group. He has been posted in Liberia, Algeria and Greece.

León holds a degree in Law (University of Málaga) and Philosophy (UNED), and a postgraduate diploma in Diplomacy (University Central of Barcelona), an MA on International Humanitarian Law (IUGM-UNED) and an MA on International Human Rights Law (Oxford University). He has been director of the prestigious Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy between 2015 and 2022 in Abu Dhabi, where he also taught International Law. He has been a faculty teaching Diplomacy at the Oxford-Cambridge Diplomatic Academy, at Sciences Po in Paris, MedOr Institute in Rome, IE Madrid, Málaga University, among others.

He has directed the Spanish Moroccan Three Cultures of the Mediterranean Foundation, and co-founded with Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said the Barenboim-Said Foundation, which created the West-Eastern Divan orchestra for young musicians from the Middle East.

## EVALUATION

There will be an oral examen at the end of Session 8 on the content taught by Prof. Bernardino León (and Ambassador Juan González Barba). It will be 90% of the grade. After Sessions 8 & 9 there will be a multiple choice exam (10% of the final grade).

## TUTORING TIME

Thursday before or after class, by appointment

IR Office, Amigos building entrance corridor

## REQUIRED READING MATERIALS

Ivor Roberts, *Satow's Diplomatic Practice*, Oxford University Press, 7<sup>th</sup> revised Ed., 2018. [Link to the ebook in the Library \(Ed. 2023\)](#)

Salinas de Frías, A. M., Álvarez Arcá, I. (Eds.), León Gross, B. and Alter, E. (coords). (2021). *Handbook of International Law and Diplomacy*. Tirant lo Blanch [Link to the ebook in the Library](#)

Mintz, A., & DeRouen Jr, K. (2010). *Understanding foreign policy decision making*. Cambridge University Press. [Link to the ebook in the Library](#)

And for an understanding of the psychological decision-making process: Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Macmillan. [Link to the book at the Library \(Ed. 2013\)](#) [Link to the book at the Library \(Ed. 2011\)](#)

Apart from this list, every lesson has specific essential and recommended readings, as noted in the program



Universidad  
de Navarra