

The MGIMO School of Government and International Affairs

Introduction to International Relations and World Politics

Undergraduate Course Syllabus

Instructors

Assoc.Prof. Dr. Yulia Nikitina, Assoc.Prof. Dr. Alexandra Khudaykulova

Moscow – 2022

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This syllabus is designed in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard for the Bachelor's Program in International Affairs (program track *Government, International Politics and Law*).

Authors _____ Assoc.Prof. Dr. Yulia Nikitina, Assoc.Prof. Dr. Alexandra Khudaykulova

Director MGIMO Library _____ Marina Reshetnikova

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PART 1:

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION, COURSE DESCRIPTION AND TEACHING METHODS

1.1. General information

Full course title: Introduction. International Relations and World Politics.

Type of course: Compulsory

Level of course: B.A.

Year of study: 1st

Number of ECTS credits allocated: 2

Academic hours: 76 (36 for in-class activities and 40 for home assignments)

Lectures: 18 hours

Seminars: 18 hours

1.2. The course goals and objectives

This course is designed to be an introduction to the field of international relations and world politics. It examines key contemporary issues of world politics from an international relations perspective.

The main goal of the course is to provide students with empirical knowledge, the background and conceptual tools for comprehensive and richer understanding of how the world works by looking at both its historical development and the relevant contemporary issues.

Accordingly, the course is structured around several main topics. First, a solid grounding in the basic concepts of international relations will be offered along with a brief overview of the evolving international system post-1945. Students will explore how the current international system came into being. A special focus will be done on the features and concepts that have come to characterize the contemporary international system. Second, students will focus on the role of states in shaping today's international system, especially the role of great and emerging powers in framing the rules of the world order. Third, students will be exposed to some specialized topics such as globalization/de-globalization, cooperation and conflict, international law, norms and institutions, global governance. Finally, the course will be concluded by exploring the role of Russia in world politics.

Thus, the course objectives are:

- To introduce basic terms (state, sovereignty, order, power, conflict, identity, international institutions, etc.), core issues (globalization/de-globalization, cooperation, etc.) and challenges of the post-Cold War era (conflicts, new threats and challenges, etc.);
- To identify key actors on the world stage, in particular states in shaping today's international system and the various forms of interaction in which they are involved;
- To determine the role of institutions and norms in resolving cooperation problems;
- To reveal the role of Russia in world politics;
- To understand and articulate benefits and limits of global governance as a concept and as a practice.

The study of international relations enables students to critically engage with new perspectives, approaches, challenges, etc. in order to better make sense of this changing world. We make extensive use of case studies and actual events, taking place in the

international system today. This introductory course will provide students with a sufficient background to further undertake more advanced courses in IR such as International Relations Theory, History of International Relations, International Relations Trends, etc.

1.3. Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able:

- To explain the main trends in historic developments of international affairs based on the knowledge of IR history;
- To use empirical and theoretical knowledge on international relations;
- To discuss and critically examine contemporary problems in international affairs and world politics;
- To analyze primary sources (Foreign Policy Documents of different states).

In addition, students should come away from the course with the oral communication skills, presentation abilities, comprehension of each other's views and capacity to formulate, defend one's own position clearly and effectively (through class discussions); critical comprehension (through required reading); effective writing and development of arguments (through writing assignments).

The knowledge acquired in this course will provide students with frameworks to analyze new cases.

1.4. Course requirements and grading plan

Students will be required to attend not less than 90% of classes and be prepared for class discussions. Unexcused absences will lower the participation grade.

Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria: A – outstanding work; B – solid, capable work; C – good work; D – satisfactory work; F – failure to meet minimum goals.

The *intermediate grade for the course* will consist of the following components:

2 mid-term multiple choice tests – 20% each (40% in total)

1 open-ended test (with one open question) – 20%

participation in seminar classes, including discussions and presentation – 40%.

The *final grade for the course* is awarded on the basis of a written exam held in January. The final exam is organized in a mixed format: 25 multiple choice test questions and one open-ended question (short essay) from the list of 16 questions presented in part 2.3 of the syllabus (blind choice). Cheating will automatically lead to an F grade.

Presentation on great and emerging powers: general guidelines and requirements. The length of presentation is preferably 15 minutes and should not exceed 20 minutes at maximum. The structure of the presentation should be as follows:

Slide 1. Title of the presentation and the names of the presenters, date of the presentation;

Slide 2. Your definition of a great (or a middle/regional) power and the parameters that you choose to analyze. Include here all the parameters that you will analyze. Choose around 5-7 different parameters.

Slides 3-9: Reasoning and application of the chosen parameters (e.g. economic power measured in GNI per capita; military power measured in military spending, size of the army, etc; soft power - invent your way how to measure it or use the soft power index <https://softpower30.com/>). Check the list of different indexes here (in Russian): <https://russiancouncil.ru/library/stat/> Find the latest figures in the original English-language indexes.

Slide 10. Conclusion. Provide an answer to the question suggested in the introduction.

Slide 11: Bibliography.

DO NOT make more than 11 slides, otherwise you will not be able to make the presentation in 15 min. DO NOT include the history of the country, etc. Just the analyses of the chosen parameters. If a parameter is rather complex (for example, from Dr Tatiana Shakleina: tradition of thinking and acting globally, then, here you can include a little bit of history, but no more than 1 slide = 2 min). While presenting, DO NOT read from your mobile phone or other electronic devices.

Assessment criteria for presentation: Is the presentation well organized? Is there a logical structure of the presentation? Is the presentation clear, coherent and focused? Does the presentation demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding of the issue? Is the factual information accurate? Are key terms defined clearly and accurately? Does the presentation contain clear critical analysis? Are all of the main points justified? Is there a clear awareness of alternative interpretations or points of view?

Reading and participation in discussions. Students are required to do all the assigned readings. While this course is an introductory one, it is by no means an “easy” course in terms of reading. Conscientious reading of the assigned materials is compulsory. Lectures and the required reading complement each other, they are not substitutes. On seminars, students are expected to take active part in the discussion and produce good acquaintance with the content of lectures and respective literature.

It is specially recommended to read the following textbook – The Globalization of World Politics / [ed. by] John Baylis, Steve Smith, Patrica Owens. Oxford University Press (eighth edition), 2020. The textbook is uploaded to the Google classroom.

Students should become aware of the academic literature in the field and should be familiar with the following key international relations journals – World Politics, International Organization, Foreign Policy, International Studies Quarterly, Foreign Affairs, European Journal of International Relations, International Security, Review of International Studies, Security Studies.

2. COURSE CONTENT

2.1. Types of work

Types of work	Academic hours
Total	76
Total for classwork	36
Lectures	18
Seminars	18
Homework	40
Individual presentation	20
Preparation for lectures, seminars, written or oral tests	20
Course assessment	Multiple choice tests, activity at seminars, group presentation

2.2. Course content and readings by topic

Lectures (8)

	Topic
Lecture 1.	International relations as a phenomenon. Westphalia system and modern international relations
Lecture 2.	States as major actors in IR
Lecture 3.	Great and rising powers in IR
Lecture 4.	Global trends and challenges
Lecture 5.	Conflict and cooperation as modes of interaction in IR: schools of thought, main dilemmas of conflict and cooperation
Lecture 6.	Norms and institutions in international relations
Lecture 7.	Russia as a player in international affairs
Lecture 8.	Global governance

Seminars (8)

	Topic	Assignment
Seminar 1.	International relations as a phenomenon. Westphalia system and modern international relations	None
Seminar 2.	States as major actors in IR	Readings
Seminar 3.	Great and rising powers in IR	Readings. Group presentations
Seminar 4.	Global trends and challenges	Readings. Test
Seminar 5.	Conflict and cooperation as modes of interaction in IR: schools of thought, main dilemmas of conflict and cooperation	Readings
Seminar 6.	Norms and institutions in international relations	Readings. Test
Seminar 7.	Russia as a player in international affairs	Readings
Seminar 8.	Global governance	Readings .Test

Lecture 1. International relations as a phenomenon. Westphalia system and modern international relations

Introduction to international relations. Understanding international relations and world politics. What is the phenomenon of international relations and why do we care about it? Development of IR as an academic discipline. What is world politics? An outline of key concepts: nations and nation-states, international system, state, great and rising powers, balance of power, foreign policy. International relations in historical perspective. The emergence of the Westphalian system. The Treaty of Westphalia as the basis of the creation of nation-states.

Seminar 1. Questions to be covered:

What is this course all about, how is it structured, and what is expected of me? What do IR theorists mean by sovereignty? What is a nation? What is a nation-state? What is the Westphalia system? What are the major principles of international relations? Why are nations legally equal in international relations? Are they equal in real life? Is sovereignty still important in the current world?

Literature:

- Textbook. Introduction, pp. 6-7.
- Textbook Chapter 2 “The Rise of Modern International Order”, pp. 39-52.
- НИКИТИНА Ю.А. Международные отношения и мировая политика: введение в специальность: учебное пособие. М.: Аспект-Пресс, 2014.

Lecture 2. States as major actors in IR

States and their importance in the international system. The growth in the number of states in the history of international relations and its causes. The process and challenges of state formation. Integration and disintegration of states. Approaches to the typology and classification of states. The power hierarchy of states at the present stage. Great powers. Middle and small states. Failed states and international responses. Sources of foreign policy: leaders, domestic institutions, external constraints. Prospects and the facilitating factors of cooperation among states in a state of anarchy. Nature and quality of political order at the systemic level. Transformation of the Westphalian political system. Contours of the emerging world order. The erosion of state sovereignty. The future of the modern nation-state system in an era in which globalization is still the dominant global trend.

Seminar 2. Questions to be covered:

What role for states in world politics? What makes a state sovereign? How do states gain recognition? Explain the meaning behind the terms “weak” and “failed” states. Why do states do what they do? What is a nation and how does it differ from a state? What is the future of the nation state? Is state still the main actor in world politics? Why did the

modern state triumph over other forms of political organization? What challenges do nation-states face now? What do you believe will be the future of the nation-state system? What instruments and patterns of behavior do states use in pursuit of their foreign policy goals? Do you agree that a multipolar system of international relations is more stable and peaceful than other types of international systems? Provide arguments.

Literature:

- Textbook. Chapter 30 “Nationalism, National self-determination and International Relations”, pp. 481-497.

Lecture 3. Great and rising powers in IR

Status-role ranking of states. Concept of great and rising powers. The parameters for defining a country a great or a rising power. The potential difference problem. Dominance of great powers in setting the agenda for international relations and the way international processes are regulated. Role of great powers in framing the rules of the world order. The accelerated rise of the emerging powers: reasons and perspectives. Rising powers as challengers to the current world order. Redistribution of power between traditional and emerging centers of influence.

Seminar 3. Questions to be covered:

Why are great powers important? What is so important about emerging powers? Are rising powers actually powerful? Why do rising powers seek a stronger voice in global governance? Do you agree that rising powers pursue more assertive foreign policies now than before? Are Russia and China great or rising powers? Are rising powers undermining US hegemony? What does the debate about rising powers tell us about the longer-term evolution of a new global international society?

Literature:

- Textbook. Chapter 4 “From the End of the Cold War to a New World Dis-order?”, pp. 70-82.
- Textbook. Chapter 5 “Rising Powers and the Emerging World Order”, pp. 84-98.
- Шаклеина Т.А. Великие державы и региональные подсистемы // Международные процессы. – 2011. – Т.9. – №26. – С. 29-39. <http://intertrends.ru/userfiles/img/files/Shakleina-26.pdf>

Lecture 4. Global trends and challenges

Building and consolidating a new world order as a key global trend. The many meanings and dimensions of globalization. Globalization: pro at contra. Countering the promotion of globalization and fragmentation. Integration and disintegration: cases and reasons. Geopolitical great power competition. Forming blocs, coalitions and regional orders.

Increasingly uncontrolled processes in the international sphere. The emerging global agenda and overview of contemporary global problems “without passports”: climate, food security, mass migration and refugees, resources and energy security. Gap between problems and national/international responses.

Seminar 4. Questions to be covered:

What is globalization? Is globalization something, which is new, or just something which has happened several times before on a slightly smaller scale? What are the effects of globalization? Why are so many people upset about it? Why has globalization stimulated so much resistance? Has globalization increased or decreased inequality? How do you understand de(post)globalization? What are the reasons for the disintegration of states? What are the implications of the geopolitical competition of the great powers for the world order? Is the sovereign state system still viable in an age of global migration, disease, communication and social movements? Do new global challenges more likely lead to conflict than cooperation?

Literature:

- Textbook. Introduction, pp. 14-17.
- Textbook. Chapter 1 “Globalization and Global Politics”, pp. 19-33.
- Textbook. Chapter 23 “Regionalism in International Affairs”, pp. 365-380.

Lecture 5. Conflict and cooperation as modes of interaction in IR: schools of thought, main dilemmas of conflict and cooperation

Major conflict as a key element of IR. The First World War in the context of multi-polar context causing conflict. The Second World War in the context of multi-polar failure to prevent further conflict. The Cold War in the context of bipolarity in IR. The post-Cold War era in the context of new world order. Conflicts and the use of military force as key issues in contemporary world politics. Sources of war. What accounts for the use of force in the 21st century? Cooperation in world politics. The ability of states to cooperate in a state of anarchy. Prospects and facilitating factors of collaboration among states and the nature and quality of political order at the systemic level. Problems of cooperation. Factors facilitating cooperation. Democratic peace theory: pros and cons.

Seminar 5. Questions to be covered:

Why do states fight, and what makes them cooperate? Since the end of WWII, there have been significant changes in when and how states engage in military conflicts. Have international laws and norms played an important role? Discuss the most important changes in conflict patterns and assess the causal effect of international law, if any. Why, despite deepening economic interdependence, war remains an inherent feature of international relations? What are the causes and resolutions of modern conflicts? Why do

conflicts occur in IR? Does the use of threat of force lead to security? Can states cooperate to solve global problems, such as nuclear proliferation, poverty, or climate change? Will the spread of democracy, free trade and international organizations promote peace?

Literature:

- Textbook. Chapter 14 “War and World Politics”, pp. 225-238.
- Textbook. Chapter 32 “Humanitarian Intervention in World Politics”, pp. 514-527.

Lecture 6. Norms and institutions in international relations

Definition and functions of institutions/norms. Roles and effectiveness of institutions. Evolution and categories of norms. The power of norms. United Nations: idea of establishment, principles and structure. Key areas and agenda. What is the role of the United Nations in resolving conflicts? Different images of the UN. Advantages and weakness of the UN system. Challenges and dilemmas the UN faces in the 21st century. UN reform: recent developments.

Seminar 6. Questions to be covered:

What is the role of institutions and norms globally? Why are they created? What do they do? What are the reasons for the rise in number in influence of international IGOs? Do they matter? Who drives them forward? Are they independent actors on the world stage? How do international institutions constrain power? Are international institutions designed to efficiently resolve cooperation problems or to magnify the interests of powerful states? How can we best conceptualize them? What are the differences between the various types of international structures? How representative are the IGOs? What is the UN?

Literature:

- Textbook. Chapter 20 “International Organizations in World Politics”, pp. 319-332.
- Textbook. Chapter 21 “The United Nations”, pp. 334-347.

Lecture 7. Russia as a player in international affairs

Contemporary international environment and Russian role and place in world politics. Debates about Russian place in the world politics. Doctrinal foundations of Russian foreign policy. Four generations of Russian FP doctrines. Russia’s foreign policy interests and priorities (in official Russian FP documents).

Seminar 7. Questions to be covered:

What are the characteristics of the Russian understanding of major changes in international politics since the end of the Cold War? How does the new Russia see itself in the world? How does it perceive the new international environment?

Literature:

- Shakleina T.A. Russia in the contemporary international order. Chapter 1. pp. 12-51. In *Russia and the United States in the evolving world order* / ed. by A. Torkunov, N.C. Noonan, T. Shakleina. Moscow: MGIMO University, 2018.

Lecture 8. Global governance

Global governance perspectives in the context of globalization or de(post)globalization. Modes and competing of global governance. Key actors, regimes, and norms of global governance.

Seminar 8. Questions to be covered:

What is global governance and how does it matter? How does attention to the problem of global governance affect or intersect with key concepts in IR such as anarchy, power, the state, international society, etc.? How does the global governance concept differ from the concepts of anarchy and hierarchy? How does governance look like in a world characterized by transnational problems? Are state-centric notions of governance adequate to describe and explain world political processes? Interdependence: does it prevent war? Suggest your scenario of global governance architecture. Give arguments of why this variant is viable and better than the current system of global governance

Literature:

- Weiss Thomas, Wilkinson Rorden. "Rethinking Global Governance? Complexity, Authority, Power, Change." // *International Studies Quarterly*. 2014. # 58, pp. 207-215.

2.3. Exam questions:

1. The Westphalia system: a contested concept?
2. Transformation of the Westphalian political system.
3. Is sovereignty still important in the current world?
4. Is state still the main actor in world politics? Why did the modern state triumph over other forms of political organization?
5. Globalization: pro at contra.
6. What accounts for the use of force in the 21st century?
7. What impact do international institutions and norms really have on the conduct of international relations?
8. What functions do international institutions have? For each function, provide a specific example.
9. What is global governance and how does it matter? What are the possible scenarios of global governance?
10. What are Russian official and academic approaches to the current world order

11. What are the implications of the geopolitical competition of the great powers for the world order?
12. Redistribution of power between traditional and emerging centers of influence.
13. How do you understand multipolarity?
14. The role of the UN in solving global issues .
15. The accelerated rise of the emerging powers: reasons and future perspectives.
16. Which problems and challenges could be considered global? Provide examples.

2.4. Consolidated reading list (in alphabetic order)

Textbooks:

- The Globalization of World Politics / [ed. by] John Baylis, Steve Smith, Patrica Owens. Oxford University Press (eighth edition) – 2020.

Sources:

- Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2016)

Additional Literature:

- Никитина Ю.А. Международные отношения и мировая политика: введение в специальность: учебное пособие. М.: Аспект-Пресс, 2014.
- Шаклеина Т.А. Великие державы и региональные подсистемы // Международные процессы. – 2011. – Т.9. – №26. – С. 29-39. <http://intertrends.ru/userfiles/img/files/Shakleina-26.pdf>
- Shakleina T.A. Russia in the contemporary international order. Chapter 1. pp. 12-51. In Russia and the United States in the evolving world order / ed. by A. Torkunov, N.C. Noonan, T. Shakleina. Moscow: MGIMO University, 2018.
- Weiss Thomas, Wilkinson Rorden. “Rethinking Global Governance? Complexity, Authority, Power, Change.” // International Studies Quarterly. 2014. # 58, pp. 207-215.