

---

# Introduction to International Relations

## PSCI 400

---

Jason Hartwig, PhD Candidate  
jhartwig@sas.upenn.edu

Summer Session II, July 5-August 9, 2024  
T, TH: 10:30-12:20  
Classroom: Online  
Office Hours: TBD

Note: This is a preliminary draft syllabus; readings and topics are subject to change.

### Course Description

Why do states find it so difficult to coordinate in confronting challenges like climate change, immigration, or the threat of nuclear annihilation? Why have states continued to engage in warfare across history, despite their staggering costs? Is the interaction between states and societies better described as competitive or cooperative? What drives state behavior? What is the role of leaders, elites, and the public in formulating foreign policy? In this course we will explore these questions and unpack some of the prominent theories and evidence political scientists have offered as answers.

Over this summer session, students will be introduced to major theoretical arguments about international politics and explanations of the origins of the contemporary international system. We will specifically focus on how the international system is structured, who are the most important actors, the incentives for states to compete or cooperate, and how states and non-state actors employ power and/or persuasion. Theoretical answers to these larger questions will be applied to more specific issues like why do states engage in warfare, how do states seek security for themselves, how are wars fought and how do they end. In addition, we will discuss the international politics of economic development, trade, and immigration. The final section of the course will apply theoretical insights to some of the most pressing current issues in international politics.

By the end of the course, students should have a more nuanced understanding of the history of the international system and theoretical arguments explaining the dynamics of international politics. This course can act as a foundation for further study of political science and international relations or simply provide a way of organizing your thoughts about how the world works beyond the borders of the United States. My expectation is that you will be equipped to analyze arguments and evidence about international politics and be confident in advancing your own views, supported by evidence.

### Course Requirements

This is an online course and will be a mix of asynchronous lecture, synchronous lecture, small group discussion, and written reflections and discussion on the class Canvas page. Each class meeting will be preceded by three 20 minute prerecorded lectures, which students should watch before class begins. Each session will begin with a lecture tying together readings and previous asynchronous

modules and then then move into small group discussion. Game theory features prominently within theories of international relations and, in many classes, we will engage in a simple game or simulation to demonstrate key concepts. Readings for each class are structured so that students should not expect to spend more than 1.5 hours on a set of readings. Due to the condensed nature of this course, we will be reading a number of short excerpts from important works from the field in order to increase exposure to diverse arguments from different voices.

Students are expected to watch prerecorded lectures, attend class, actively engage in course discussions, complete weekly readings, and provide weekly written reflections on course material. Students should also stay informed on international events during the duration of the course as we will seek to employ our critical insights on international politics to events as they unfold. The Penn Library provides free access to news outlets like the New York Times, Economist, Washington Post. Recognizing that students learn in a variety of ways, you will be evaluated in multiple dimensions. Students will be evaluated through active class participation, written reflections, an in-class quiz and final exam, and a short (1000 word) paper on a current event of your choosing. Your final grade will reflect the following distribution:

Class Participation	20%
Quiz	10%
Weekly Reflections	20%
1000 Word Paper	25%
Final Exam	25%

## Tentative Course Outline

### Section I: What is the International System and how does it work?

*July 9 - Class 1: Race and Empire*

Readings:

- W.E.B. Dubois, “Worlds of Color”
- Philip Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World*, short excerpt
- David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, short excerpt

*July 11 - Class 2: Hierarchy, Anarchy or Collaboration*

Readings:

- Janice Bially Mattern and Ayşe Zarakol, “Hierarchies in World Politics”
- Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, short excerpt
- Jack Snyder, “One World, Rival Theories”
- Garrett Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons”
- Helen Milner, “International Theories of Cooperation”

*July 16 - Class 3: Power, Persuasion, and Norms*

Readings:

- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, excerpt
- Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”
- Jessica Weeks, “Strongmen and Strawmen”

## **Section II: The problem of war**

*July 18 - Class 4: Causes of War*

Readings:

- James Fearon, “A Rationalist Explanation for War”
- Christopher Blattman, *Why We Fight*, excerpt

*July 23 - Class 5: Conduct and Outcomes of War*

Readings:

- Ivan Arreguín-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars”
- Dan Reiter, *How Wars End*, excerpt

*July 25 - Class 6: Security Cooperation: Arms Control and Peacekeeping*

Readings:

- Andrew Coe and Jane Vaynman, “Collusion and Nuclear Non-Proliferation”
- Nina Tannenwald, “The Nuclear Taboo”
- Hegre, Hultman, Nygård, “Peacekeeping Works”

## **Section III: Economic Development and Trade**

*July 30 - Class 7: Economic Development and Trade*

Readings:

- Kenneth Sokoloff and Stanley Engerman, “Institutions, Factors Endowments, and Paths of Development in the New World”
- Mansfield and Mutz, “Support for Free Trade”

## **Section IV: Contemporary Challenges in International Politics**

*August 1 - Class 8: China and the United States/War in Ukraine (1000 Word Paper Due)*

Readings:

- TBD
- TBD

*August 6 - Class 9: Conflict in the Global South*

Readings:

- TBD
- TBD

*August 8 - Class 10: Populism, Immigration, and Climate Change*

Readings:

- TBD
- TBD