

Political Science (POL S) 203: Introduction to International Relations
Winter 2026
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00-10:20am
MLR 301

Instructor:

Gabriella Levy (glevy2@uw.edu)
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-4:00pm, Gowen 37

Teaching Assistants:

TA	Email	Sections	Office Hours
Mark Perry	mwperry@uw.edu	AB (9:30) & AD (10:30)	Thursdays 2:00-4:00pm; Gowen 28
Ali Bouterse	aliboute@uw.edu	AE (11:30) & AF (12:30)	Tuesdays 10:30-12:30; Smith 31

Course Overview:

Why countries go to war? Why is it so hard for them to cooperate over the protection of the environment? Why do some nations remain poor despite increasing standards of living in many parts of the world? International relations (IR) can help us answer these questions.

This introductory course is designed to acquaint students with the theoretical and empirical study of world politics. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- 1) Compare, contrast, and appraise key theories in IR
- 2) Explain both historical cases and current events by drawing on IR theories
- 3) Assess the feasibility and effectiveness of possible policy solutions to modern international problems
- 4) Express their views on the course material and world politics more broadly while respectfully engaging with the views of others

Required Readings:

There is one required textbook for this course, and all other readings will be posted on Canvas under the “Files” tab:

Frieden, Jeffry A., David A. Lake, and Kenneth A. Schultz. 2022. *World Politics: Interest, Interactions, Institutions (Fifth Edition)*. New York City: W.W. Norton. → hereafter referred to as FLS

You can purchase or rent the textbook in either physical or e-book format from the University of Washington bookstore or another seller. Please make sure that you purchase a version of the textbook with access to Inquizitive or purchase a separate version of Inquizitive.

You are expected to come to class having read the pages assigned for that day and having completed the Inquizitive questions related to the FLS chapters assigned for the class on Canvas. You can access Inquizitive from the Canvas “Home” tab. Additionally, please follow international events in a prominent, reputable newspaper such as the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, or *The Washington Post*.

Assignments:

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>How it will be assessed</i>	<i>Date</i>
Class Participation	20	1) Participation in quiz sections (8%) 2) 5 pop quizzes in quiz sections (5%) 3) Inquizitive questions on Canvas (7%)	Throughout the semester
In-Class Midterm 1	20	Short answers/IDs & 1 essay	January 29th
In-Class Midterm 2	20	Short answers/IDs & 1 essay	March 3rd
Final Exam	40	Short answers/IDs & 2 essays	March 18 th , 10:30am- 12:20pm

The pop quizzes administered in section will concern major news stories from the week which are relevant to the course. The first in-class midterm will focus on the content of Sections 1 (*Introduction*) and 2 (*War*); the second will focus on the content in Sections 3 (*International Political Economy*) and 4 (*International Institutions*). The final exam will cover the entire course, with particular emphasis on Section 5 (*Wrap-Up*).

Policies:

PowerPoints be posted online. Unless otherwise stated, lectures and quiz sections will not be recorded. Personal recordings will not be allowed except as relevant for DRS accommodations. Lectures and quiz sections will take place in person.

Missed examinations due to university events may be accommodated with two weeks’ notice. Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](#). Only after written confirmation from the professor or TA should the student consider a make-up granted.

If you would like to appeal a grade, please wait 24 hours from the time you receive the grade. After reviewing your answers and the comments, provide a typed statement to the TA explaining why you believe the grade you received should be altered (why exactly more points should be given for a particular answer). This typed statement must be about the substance of the work, not

the effort you put into it or the class. Bring the work and your written concerns to the TA's office hours within one week of receiving the graded assignment for a discussion; submission of your statement beyond one week will not be considered. The TA will reread the work, reevaluate it if appropriate, and return it to the student within 2 days. The TA has the right to leave the grade as is, raise the grade, or lower the grade. If you are still dissatisfied, the above procedures will be repeated directly with the professor within 2 days of the receipt of the decision from the first regrade. The professor has the right to leave the grade as is, raise the grade, or lower the grade. If you would like to appeal the above regrades, then a similar procedure must be followed. You must provide a typed statement to the Associate Chair of the Political Science department explaining why you believe the grade (and regrades) you received you should be altered. Bring your work and your written statement to the Associate Chair within 10 days of receiving the regrade decision from the course professor. The Associate Chair will confer with relevant department faculty, reevaluate the assignment, and return it to the student within 1 week. The departmental grade appeal decision from the Associate Chair is final.

I expect you to comply with the University of Washington's policies regarding student misconduct, which can be found here: <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/student-code-of-conduct/>. Any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, when working on assignments is forbidden; use of generative AI will be considered academic misconduct and subject to investigation. All work submitted for this course must be your own. This policy exists because the assignments in this class have been designed to challenge you to develop creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills; using AI technology will limit your capacity to develop these skills and to meet the learning goals of this course. If the Community Standards & Student Conduct (CSSC) office finds you responsible for any form of academic misconduct, you will receive a 0 on the relevant assignment.

See the grade scale for this course on Canvas and below at the end of this document.

Resources and Support:

- 1) My goal is to create a learning environment that supports a diverse range of perspectives, experiences, and identities.
 - The topics that we're covering in this class are often difficult, not just intellectually but also emotionally. While I expect there will be rigorous discussion and even disagreement during our class discussions, I ask that you engage in each class meeting with care and empathy for the other members in the classroom. I will not tolerate insults; gender or racial slurs; or any other form of bullying, intimidation, or hate speech. I expect all members of this class to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of this class.
 - Please inform me early in the term if you require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. Accommodations must be established and documented with [Disability Resources for Students \(DRS\)](#).
- 2) Resources, Questions, and Communication:
 - You do not need to sign up for office hours and are welcome to drop by to talk about assignments, readings, or other course content; careers; etc.

- If you have an administrative or logistical question, please consult the syllabus first, and then email your TA if you remain uncertain. If you still do not have an adequate answer, please email the professor. Please allow 24 hours for email replies during the week, and 72 hours on the weekends.
- Students are encouraged to take full advantage of the [Odegaard Writing and Research Center](#).
- [UW Seattle Health Services](#) is available to assist students dealing with a range of health-related issues and concerns. Health care on campus is provided through the [Hall Center](#) and the [Counseling Center](#).
- For tips on how to read academic articles, I recommend resources from [Amelia Hoover Green](#) and [Leanne C Powner](#).

Schedule:

Date and Subject	Readings/Assignments
<i>Section 1: Introduction</i>	
January 6th: Why IR?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Khan, Azmat. 2021. “Hidden Pentagon Records Reveal Patterns of Failure in Deadly Airstrikes.” <i>The New York Times</i>. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/12/18/us/airstrikes-pentagon-records-civilian-deaths.html. ▪ Schwartz, Joshua A, Matthew Fuhrmann, and Michael C Horowitz. 2022. “Do Armed Drones Counter Terrorism, Or Are They Counterproductive? Evidence from Eighteen Countries.” <i>International Studies Quarterly</i> 66(3): 1–14.
January 8 th : History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS Introduction ▪ FLS ch. 1 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 1
January 13 th : Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 2 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 2 ▪ Donilon, Tom. 2025. “Grand Chessmaster: The Strategies of Zbigniew Brzezinski.” <i>Foreign Affairs</i>.
<i>Section 2: War</i>	
January 15 th : Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 3 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 3 ▪ Masters, Jonathan. 2023. “Backgrounder: Ukraine Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia.” <i>Council on Foreign Relations</i>. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia. ▪ Robinson, Kali amd Will Merrow. 2025. “Backgrounder: What is Hamas?” <i>Council on Foreign Relations</i>. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas.
January 20 th : Domestic Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 4 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 4 ▪ Weeks, Jessica L.P. 2014. <i>Dictators at War and Peace</i>. Cornell University Press. → Introduction & ch. 1

January 22 nd : International Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 5 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 5 ▪ CFR Editors. 2025. “Backgrounder: The UN Security Council.” <i>Council on Foreign Relations</i>. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-security-council. ▪ Masters, Jonathan. 2025. “Backgrounder: What is NATO?” <i>Council on Foreign Relations</i>. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-nato.
January 27 th : Non-State Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 6 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 6 ▪ Kalyvas, Stathis, and Mathew Adam Kocher. 2007. “How ‘free’ Is Free Riding in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem.” <i>World Politics</i> 59(2): 177–216.
January 29 th : Midterm	
<i>Section 3: International Political Economy</i>	
February 3 rd : Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 7 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 7
February 5 th : Financial Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 8 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 8
February 10 th : Monetary Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 9 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 9
February 12 th : Development, Causes of Disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 10 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 10 ▪ Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2012. <i>Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty</i>. Crown → ch. 1, 3
February 17 th : Development, Addressing Disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sachs, Jeffrey. 2005. <i>The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time</i>. Penguin Press. → ch. 13, 14, 15 ▪ Easterly, William. 2015. <i>The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor</i>. Basic Books. → ch. 1, 5 ▪ Banerjee, Abhijit V. and Esther Duflo. 2012. <i>Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty</i>. Public Affairs. → ch. 1, 3, 9
<i>Section 4: International Institutions</i>	
February 19 th : Law and Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 11 ▪ Inquizitive questions, ch. 11 ▪ Klabbers, Jan. 2023. <i>International Law 4th Edition</i>. Cambridge University Press. → ch. 2
February 24 th : Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 12 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 12

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dancy, Geoff, and Christopher J. Fariss. 2024. “The Global Resonance of Human Rights: What Google Trends Can Tell Us.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 118(1): 252-273.
February 26 th : Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 13 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 13 ▪ Maibach, Edward W, Sri Saahitya Uppalapati, Margaret Orr, and Jagadish Thakar. 2023. “Harnessing the Power of Communication and Behavior Science to Enhance Society’s Response to Climate Change.” <i>Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences</i> 51:53-77.
March 3 rd : Midterm	
<i>Section 5: Wrap-Up</i>	
March 5 th : Contemporary Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FLS ch. 14 ▪ Inquizitive questions, FLS ch. 14 ▪ Kolbe, Melanie. 2021. “International Migration: Patterns and Theories.” In <i>Introduction to International Migration: Population Movements in the 21st Century</i>, Routledge.
March 10 th : Challenges to IR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zvobgo, Kelebogile and Meredith Loken, 2020. “Why Race Matters in International Relations” <i>Foreign Affairs</i>. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/19/why-race-matters-international-relations-ir/. ▪ Wemheuer-Vogelaar, Wiebke, Ingo Peters, Laura Kemmer, Alina Kleinn, Luisa Linke-Behrens, and Sabine Mokry. 2020. “The Global IR Debate in the Classroom.” In <i>International Relations from the Global South</i>. Routledge. ▪ Enloe, Cynthia. 2014. <i>Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics</i>. University of California Press. → ch. 1
March 12 th : Final Exam Review	
Final Exam: March 18 th , 10:30am-12:20pm	

Grade Scale

Grade	Percent	Letter
4.0	95-100	A
3.9	93-94	A
3.8	91-92	A-
3.7	90	A-
3.6	89	A-
3.5	88	A-
3.4	87	B+
3.3	86	B+
3.2	85	B+
3.1	84	B
3.0	83	B
2.9	82	B
2.8	81	B-
2.7	80	B-
2.6	79	B-
2.5	78	B-
2.4	77	C+
2.3	76	C+
2.2	75	C+
2.1	74	C
2.0	73	C
1.9	72	C
1.8	71	C-
1.7	70	C-
1.6	69	C-
1.5	68	C-
1.4	67	D+
1.3	66	D+
1.2	65	D+
1.1	64	D
1.0	63	D
.9	62	D
.8	61	D-
.7	60	D-
0.0	<60	E