

**Yonsei International Summer School 2025**  
**Global Challenges and International Relations Today**  
**Period 2 (11:00-12:40)**

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MTWR: tba  
Room: tba

Dear student: this is a draft syllabus. It is intended to give you a good idea about this course – the content, readings, assignments, expectations, grading philosophy and related matters. While it is a close approximation of the final syllabus, be aware that minor changes will be made between now (November, 2024) and the actual start of the course (early July, 2025). If you have any specific questions about the course, feel free to contact the instructor at [krishna@hawaii.edu](mailto:krishna@hawaii.edu)

**Course Description and Goals:** “International Relations” (IR) may be defined as the study of relations between nation-states. Its typical concerns include topics such as national security; war and peace; diplomacy and foreign policy; migration and refugees; interstate economic relations; ‘terrorism’; climate change and global environmental challenges; and a host of other, related issues. As you can see, the subject of International Relations is vast, in fact, it is planetary in scope. A six-week introductory course has to strike a balance between adequate coverage of the main concerns of the discipline, and a somewhat more in-depth analysis of one or two select themes of contemporary importance to show how various perspectives from within IR might analyze those themes or issues. And, of course, as with all introductory courses, one significant ambition of the course will be to intrigue and interest the student sufficiently that they will want to come back for more.

The first half of the course will seek to introduce the discipline, and the different perspectives that inform the way the discipline is understood and taught. Accordingly, this section of the course will entail looking at chapters from a selection of introductory IR text-books and analyze how they portray or understand the discipline- as well as to highlight the differences between such perspectives, and the important political and other consequences of such differences in perspective. Broadly speaking, this first half of the course divides itself into mainstream and critical perspectives on the discipline, with the former being more attentive to and largely dominated by scholars from the developed, affluent western nations, and the latter in large part more concerned with issues that matter to the nations, peoples, and races that predominate in the Global South.

The second half of the course will concern itself with two contemporary issues: global inequality and the conflict in Israel/Palestine. This year’s Nobel laureates in Economics were Daren Acemoglu, James Robinson and Simon Johnson, and in their many works they offer a compelling explanation for why some countries have succeeded in the domain of economic development while most have failed. One could argue that the explanations offered by Acemoglu, Robinson and Johnson clearly reflect the dominance of a mainstream IR perspective on how the world is organized, and what factors are important or primary in explaining economic success or failure in nation-states. In contrast to their view, there is a rich literature from within IR that draws from critical theories that emphasize the history and the contemporary legacies of colonialism, racism and militarism in explaining how and why global inequality emerged and is sustained and reproduced. The second contemporary issue that we will look at in this course is that of the conflict in Israel/Palestine. Again, we will contrast mainstream and critical perspectives in seeing how IR understands the history/ origins of the conflict in that region, and how to get out of the current impasse, most tragically reflected in the situation in Gaza.

The goals of this course are quite straightforward: it is to introduce you to the sub-discipline of IR, to spark your interest in contemporary affairs, and to provide you with the intellectual and analytical tools to understand how the world came to be how it is today, and where it might be headed in the decades to come.

**Course Prerequisites:** There are no college-level prerequisites and the course is ideally suited for all undergraduates – from freshmen and sophomores, to juniors and seniors. An interest in contemporary affairs – reflected in habitually watching the news or getting information about our world on-line or through podcasts- and a desire to know more about how nation-states interact with each other and why there is so much inequality and conflict in the world is really all that is needed.

**Course Requirements:** Given the way the course is structured, the readings for the first half of the course (the first three weeks) will largely be chapters on different topics within IR drawn from some of the most popular text-books that are used to instruct the discipline at the undergraduate level. In the second half of the course, we will read book-chapters, journal articles, and other material pertaining to the two main thematic issues we examine in depth: global inequality and Israel/Palestine. All the readings for this course will be combined into a reading package for this course will be made available to all students at the beginning of the semester. It will be arranged on a day-by-day basis for each of the six weeks: please consult this syllabus to make sure you know what the assigned reading for the next class is and be prepared for the same. You are expected to do the readings **prior** to our class meetings and come prepared to participate in class discussions and ask questions and raise pertinent issues.

**Course Evaluation:** You will have a mid-term exam and a final exam, each worth 45% for a total of 90% of the final grade; and the remaining 10% will come from attendance and class participation. The mid-term exam will cover the first three weeks of the course and the final will cover the second half of the course. Each of these exams will run 100 minutes in length and will consist of short answer and essay responses to the questions posed. As per Yonsei rules, attendance will be taken every class, and anything beyond 3 unexplained absences will result in your being downgraded.

**Grading Policy:** A six-week course with full college credit is, by necessity, densely packed and highly demanding. I urge you to stay abreast of the readings and participate fully from the beginning. There simply is not enough time in such a short course to fall behind and then hope to catch up or recover lost ground through a frantic last-minute burst of work. While Yonsei does not restrict me in terms of the number of A's, B's etc. that I can give out, as a rule, if you do the readings regularly, engage in meaningful class participation, do your best on the exams, and put in a sincere effort throughout the course, you should do fine.

**Instructor Profile:** See <http://www.politicalscience.hawaii.edu/faculty/krishna.html> for more information.

## **Weekly Schedule:**

### **Week One:** (June 30- July 3):

June 30: Introduction to course, the syllabus, expectations, protocols, exams, attendance, participation and related matters.

July 1-3: we will read select chapters covering the various aspects of mainstream IR from the following works: Stephen McGlinchey, Foundations of International Relations; Stephanie Lawson, International Relations; and John Baylis, Steve Smith et.al., The Globalization of World Politics: an introduction to International Relations.

**Week Two:** (July 7, 8, 9 and 10): in this week, we will look at a number of works that introduce the discipline by paying greater attention to the history of colonialism, racism and western domination of the interstate system; gendered and queer perspectives on the world; the history of the emergence of inequality; and the role of multilateral institutions today in the persistence of such political and economic inequality.

Readings: we will be reading selected chapters from the following works: Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss, eds., Global Politics: A New Introduction; Robbie Shilliam, International Relations and Non-Western Thought: imperialism, colonialism, and investigations of global modernity; Alina Sajed and Randolph Persaud, eds., Race, Gender and Culture in International Relations: Postcolonial Perspectives; and Richard Devetak and Anthony Burke, An Introduction to International Relations.

**Week Three:** (July 14-17): During the course of this week, we will look at some examples of influential essays/ excerpts that may be regarded as ‘classics’ within the discipline. Some of the essays we will read during this week will include: Robert Cox, Power, Production and World Order; Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations; Cynthia Enloe, Bananas, Beaches and Bases; Carol Cohn, Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals; John Mearsheimer, The Great Delusion: liberal dreams and international realities; Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy; Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth.

**July 21 (Mon): Mid-Term Exam: In class. Worth 45% of final grade.**

**Week Four:** (July 22-24): We get into the conflict in Israel/ Palestine and look at least two contrasting perspectives on analyzing the historical and contemporary issues therein: one that emphasizes strategic and geopolitical concerns from a western perspective, and the other that looks at the conflict from within a framework of settler colonialism and neocolonialism. Some of the readings we will read include: Edward Said, The Question of Palestine; Rashid Khalidi, The Hundred Year War on Palestine; Stephen Salaita, Inter/nationalism: decolonizing native America

and Palestine; Alan Dershowitz, The Case for Israel; and Anita Shapira, Land and Power: the Zionist resort to force 1881-1948.

**Week Five:** July 28-31: In the course of this week, we will look at explanations for the origins and persistence of global inequality. We will read, among others, Daren Acemoglu and James Robinson, Why Nations Fail: the origins of power, poverty and prosperity; Angus Deaton, The Great Escape: health, wealth and the origins of inequality; Onar Ulas Ince, “Saving Capitalism from Empire: Uses of Colonial History in New Institutional Economics”; Ha-Joon Chang, The Bad Samaritans.

**Week Six:** Aug 4, 5, 6:

Aug 4: continuing and wrapping up the discussion on the origins of global inequality and competing explanations for its persistence.

Aug 5: Recapping the course: going over the main themes and concerns; and a review of the second half before the final exam.

Aug 6: Final Exam: In Class - worth 45% of the final grade.