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Course title:	International Relations and Contemporary Politics
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	4

Course description

This course is designed for students interested in understanding global issues and actors in a time of fast-moving political and social change. Students will learn the evolution of today's international system as well as key issues and actors in contemporary politics. To learn how to assess these developments critically, the course will introduce the students to the main theories of International Relations (IR).

The field of IR studies the functioning of the international system and deals with the nature of the changing relations between states and with non-state actors. This course starts with discussing the classical theories of IR from Realism to contemporary attempts of theoretical bridge-building. Next, the course will deal with current political debates against the backdrop of the changing international system. Among others, topics to discuss include the role of the United Nations, the state of the world economy, and challenges to globalization. The course continues with examining the role of emerging powers such as China and Russia as well as non-state actors and key issues in contemporary IR such as terrorism or the environment; the goal is to discuss IR theories in the current political context. Finally, the course concludes with a reflection on the prospects for international politics.

In this course, students will learn political concepts and theories through lectures. To compare international political phenomena, each student has to introduce a current issue or actor in a short oral presentation. The students are expected to discuss theoretical questions about the political world in working groups making use of the current news on international politics. In addition, students will learn and practice how to voice their opinion and persuade their audience in an academic essay. Finally, the students will gain insight into daily international politics and IR research through field trips and meetings with IR scholars and international policy experts.

Student profile

The course is designed for students with different academic backgrounds and a general interest in international politics.

Prerequisites

There are no specific prerequisites for this course.

Course requirements

All students are expected to attend and participate actively in class discussions of all readings and daily news. This means students should be prepared to a) summarize, evaluate and

assess critically the significance of the readings, and b) provide information and discuss current topics of international politics.

Each student has to sign up for a short oral presentation. Presentation topics will be distributed at the first day of class.

In a final exam, students have to write a short essay in which they discuss a current issue of international politics applying a theory of IR. We will practice how to write an essay in class.

Grading

Participation: 40%

Oral presentation: 30%

Final Exam (essay): 30%

Reading

A course reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, July 16, 2019	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting Started • Introducing the field of IR • Current trends in international politics
Friday, July 19, 2019	Theories of IR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern classics: Realism, Liberalism & Co. • Contemporary theories & theoretical bridge-building • Academic essay writing: How to voice your opinion
Tuesday, July 23, 2019	Evolution of the international system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European powers & two World Wars (1815-1945) • Cold War, Bipolarity & Decolonialization (1945-1990) • Field Trip: Epoch tour 1945-1994 at German Historical Museum
Friday, July 26, 2019	IR theories in context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multilateralism & the United Nations • Institutions & structures of the world economy • Field Trip: Discussion with government representative
Tuesday, July 30, 2019	New powers in international politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regionalism: European Union, ASEAN & Co. • The emergence of the BRICS • Field trip: Exhibition visit & simulation at Europa Experience
Friday, August 2, 2019	Key issues in international politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorism & the war on terror • Environmental & climate politics • Field trip: Discussion with expert on global climate politics

Tuesday, August 6, 2019	<p>Contemporary debates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multinational enterprises, NGOs & Co. • Social & cultural aspects of globalization • Field trip: Lobby tour in Berlin's government quarter
Friday, August 9, 2019	<p>Review and prospects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final exam: Essay • Brexit, Trump & Co.: Reflections on a populist backlash

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.