

Foreign Policy and International Relations in a Globalized World

Professor: **Carl Rihan**
Session: **July 2026**
Language of instruction: **English**
Number of hours of class: 12,5



Objective of the Course

This course provides a foundational introduction to International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), with a particular focus on factors determining the political behavior of States and how the latter operate within the contemporary Global Order. Designed as a course for students interested in pursuing undergraduate studies in international affairs, political economy, or global governance, the course combines theoretical grounding with applied analysis of current global challenges.

Building upon concepts introduced in the Master Classes, the course examines the historical foundations of the modern international system and the evolution of key theoretical approaches to international politics and foreign policy. It then explores how concepts such as anarchy, sovereignty, power, macroeconomic stability, and institutions, continue to structure State behavior in a rapidly changing and fast-paced global environment.

The second part of the course adopts a thematically-driven approach, and focuses on a set of cutting-edge issues that are shaping international politics and decision-making. Particular attention is paid to the effects of multipolarity, nuclear weapons, the transformation of global markets following the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges facing international organizations and the global financial architecture, as well as the growing impact of digital technologies, algorithmic governance, and artificial intelligence on international relations and security.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to engage critically with contemporary debates and are expected to develop the analytical skills required to assess foreign policy options and formulate informed policy recommendations.



Summary

Since the end of the Cold War, the international system has undergone profound transformation. The post-1990 era has been marked by the expansion of globalization and global interdependence, alongside growing political volatility driven by the shift

from unipolarity toward multipolarity, the resurgence of great-power competition, trade and technology conflicts, widening inequalities, demographic change, transnational extremism, and increasingly complex security as well as multifaceted security threats.

Within this context, States are shaped, shape, and face mounting pressures to preserve, adapt, or challenge the existing international order, thereby making the study of international relations and foreign policy essential to understanding contemporary global affairs.

This course thus introduces students to the theoretical foundations of international relations and foreign policy analysis, to the key mechanisms that impact State behavior, and to the pathways through which States and global actors seek to influence international politics. It examines the nature of the contemporary international order, the functioning of international organizations and global governance, and the political economy of globalization in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Particular attention is devoted to emerging challenges linked to digital transformation, including cybersecurity, algorithmic governance, surveillance, artificial intelligence, and autonomous weapons systems. The course concludes with the preparation of the Petit Oral with a particular focus on real-world applications.



Organization of the course

Session 1: Security Studies and Geopolitics in a Multipolar World

This session introduces the core concepts of security studies and geopolitics as foundational pillars of international relations and foreign policy. It examines the theoretical foundations of international relations and proceeds to analyze the international system by focusing on power, security dilemmas, deterrence, alliances, and the balance of power. Classical realist insights are combined with analytical cost-based and game theoretic models and contemporary perspectives to analyze how States perceive threats, pursue security, and respond to shifts in the distribution of power. The session uses the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a central case study to explore decision-making under conditions of uncertainty.

Readings: Baylis et.al., *The Globalization of World Politics* (Oxford, 2022), ch. 3-6

Session 2: International Political Economy, Globalization, and Post-Pandemic Transformation

This session examines the international political economy as a key dimension of global order and foreign policy. It analyzes the historical evolution of globalization, the intensification of trade and financial flows, the various theoretical currents within macroeconomics, and the role of States as drivers, regulators, and disruptors of the global economy. Building on debates surrounding inequality, development, and power, the session focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political-economic implications of frameworks such as the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the World Economic Forum's *Great Reset* roadmap. Students thus assess how internal and external economic determinants, including monetary stability, public finance, and the balance of payments, affects State behavior.

Readings:

- Baylis et.al., *The Globalization of World Politics* (Oxford, 2022), ch. 7, 16, 18
- Extracts from the UN Agenda 2030 (2013), World Economic Forum, *The Great Reset* (2021).

Session 3: Global Governance, International Organizations, and the Global Financial Architecture

This session focuses on global governance and the role of international organizations in managing transnational challenges. It examines how cooperation emerges under conditions of anarchy and how institutions seek to regulate economic flows, security externalities, and technological disruption. Particular attention is paid to the governance of global finance, including sanctions regimes, cryptocurrencies, central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), as well as global actors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Bank of International Settlements (BIS), global investment and sovereign funds on global financial and monetary stability. The session critically assesses the impacts of such mechanisms on geopolitical rivalry and multilateral consensus, and vice-versa.

Readings:

- UNECA. (2024). *The IMF and the future of the Global Financial Architecture*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 18 November 2024.
- Recommended reading: Gwainedepi et.al. (2024) *Reform of the global financial architecture in response to global challenges*. European Parliament, June 2024

Session 4: Algorithmic Governance, Surveillance, and Digital Power

This session examines the political implications of the digital revolution for international relations and foreign policy. It focuses on algorithmic governance, surveillance technologies, digital sovereignty, as well as on the control of data and infrastructure as emerging sources of power. The session explores how States and non-state actors deploy digital tools to govern populations, shape behavior, and project influence domestically and internationally. It also addresses tensions between security, efficiency, and individual rights, as well as the challenges posed to international norms.

Readings:

- Dunleavy, P. et.al. (2006). "New Public Management Is Dead – Long Live Digital Era Governance." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 16(3): 467–494
- Djeflal, C. et.al. (2022). *Role of the state and responsibility in governing artificial intelligence: A comparative analysis of AI strategies*. *Regulation & Governance*, 16(4), 1023–1043

Session 5: Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Autonomous Weapons Systems

This session focuses on data science, machine learning, and artificial intelligence as transformative forces in security and foreign policy. It introduces students to the foundations of data science and machine learning, the fundamental structures of artificial intelligence, the development of autonomous weapons systems, and the use of algorithms in intelligence, targeting, and strategic decision-making. Ethical, legal, and strategic debates surrounding human-machine interaction, accountability,

escalation risks, and arms control are explored. The session shall therefore situate AI competition within broader geopolitical rivalries and assess its implications for deterrence, stability, and the future of warfare.

Readings:

- Crootof, R. (2015), "The Killer Robots Are Here: Legal and Policy Implications," *Cardozo Law Review* 36, mainly Parts III and IV.
- Scharre, P. *Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018),



Bibliography

A reading booklet shall be communicated to you at the start of class. Technical and/or optional readings shall be communicated to you via the Moodle course.



Requirements for validation

Students will be assessed on their participation in class throughout the programme (20% of the grade) and on an oral exam: the Petit Oral (80% of the grade). The Petit Oral will take place on the Thursday of the second week of the programme. It will consist of a group presentation on a determined topic and a written presentation. A specific time will be dedicated to questions.



Professor's Biography

Carl Rihan is an Associate of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, specializing in economic stabilization, institutional risk, and policy evaluation. He is an adjunct professor of economics and data science at the Catholic University of Lille, international security at SciencesPo Lille, and teaches business management at Ecole Jeannine Manuel. With more than twelve years of experience in the field of governance and policy, Carl is the author of *Coup in Damascus: Syria and the Birth of Arab Military Rule* (2025) as well as of *Governance Cooperation in a Conflict-Affected Setting* (2024).

