

REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (MIPA)

(See also General Regulations and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula)

These regulations apply to candidates admitted to the Master of International and Public Affairs in the academic year 2026-27 and thereafter.

Any publication based on work approved for a higher degree should contain a reference to the effect that the work was submitted to the University of Hong Kong for the award of the degree.

Admission requirements

IPA 1. To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the Master of International and Public Affairs, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations and the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
- (b) shall hold a Bachelor's degree of this University or a qualification of equivalent standard from this University or another comparable institution accepted for this purpose;
- (c) for candidates who are seeking admission on the basis of a qualification from a university or comparable institution outside Hong Kong of which the language of teaching and/or examination is not English, shall satisfy the University English language requirement applicable to higher degrees as prescribed under General Regulation G2(b); and
- (d) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.

IPA 2. An application for exemption from the above requirements shall be considered on a case by case basis.

Qualifying examination

IPA 3.

- (a) A qualifying examination may be set to test candidates' formal academic ability or their ability to follow the courses of study prescribed. It shall consist of one or more written papers or their equivalent.
- (b) Candidates who are required to satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination shall not be permitted to register until they have satisfied the examiners in the examination.

Award of degree

IPA 4. To be eligible for the award of the degree of Master of International and Public Affairs, candidates

- (a) shall comply with the General Regulations and the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula; and
 - (b) complete the curriculum as prescribed in the syllabuses and satisfy the examiners in accordance with the regulations as set out below.
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Period of study

IPA 5. The curriculum shall normally extend over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study. Candidates shall not be permitted to extend their studies beyond the maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or four academic years of part-time study, unless otherwise permitted or required by the Board of the Faculty.

Completion of curriculum

IPA 6. To complete the curriculum, candidates

- (a) shall satisfy the requirements prescribed in TPG 6 of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
 - (b) shall follow courses of instruction and complete satisfactorily all prescribed written work of 8 courses as prescribed in the syllabuses;
 - (c) shall complete and present a satisfactory capstone project on a subject within the approved fields of study; and
 - (d) shall satisfy the examiners in all prescribed courses and in any prescribed form of examination.
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Capstone project

IPA 7. Candidates shall complete a capstone project in accordance with the regulations set out in the MIPA Programme. The title of capstone project shall be submitted for approval by December 1 of the final academic year of study and the capstone project shall be submitted by not later than May 31 of the final academic year of study. Candidates shall submit a statement that the capstone project represents their own work.

Assessment

IPA 8. Candidates shall be assessed for each of the courses for which they have registered, and assessment may be conducted in any combination of continuous assessment of coursework, written examinations and/or any other assessable activities. Only passed courses will earn credits.

IPA 9. Candidates shall not be permitted to repeat a course for which they have received a passing grade for the purpose of upgrading.

IPA 10. Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners at their first attempt in not more than half of the number of courses, not including the capstone project, taken in any semester, may be permitted to make up for the failed course(s) in the following manner:

- (a) undergoing re-assessment/re-examination in the failed course to be held no later than the end of the following semester (not including the summer semester); or
- (b) re-submitting failed coursework, without having to repeat the same course of instruction; or
- (c) repeating the failed course by undergoing instruction and satisfying the assessments; or
- (d) for elective courses, taking another course in lieu and satisfying the assessment requirements.

IPA 11. Candidates who have failed to present a satisfactory capstone project may be permitted to submit a new or revised capstone project within a specified period.

IPA 12. Candidates who are unable because of their illness to be present at the written examination of any course may apply for permission to present themselves at a supplementary examination of the same course to be held before the beginning of the following academic year. Any such application shall be made on a form prescribed within seven calendar days of the first day of the candidate's absence from any examination. Any supplementary examination shall be part of that semester's examinations, and the provision made in the regulations for failure at the first attempt shall apply accordingly.

IPA 13. There shall be no appeal against the results of examinations and all other forms of assessment.

IPA 14. Candidates who

- (a) are not permitted to present themselves for re-assessment/re-examination in any failed course(s) or to repeat any failed course(s) or take another course in lieu under Regulation IPA 10; or
- (b) have failed to satisfy the examiners in any course(s) at a second attempt; or
- (c) are not permitted to submit a new or revised capstone project under Regulation IPA 11; or
- (d) have failed to submit a satisfactory new or revised capstone project under Regulation IPA 11; or
- (e) have exceeded the maximum period of registration may be required to discontinue their studies.

Grading system

IPA 15. Individual courses should be graded according to the following grading system:

<i>Grade</i>		<i>Standard</i>	<i>Grade Point</i>
A+	}	Excellent	4.3
A			4.0
A-			3.7
B+	}	Good	3.3
B			3.0
B-			2.7
C+	}	Satisfactory	2.3
C			2.0
C-			1.7
D+	}	Pass	1.3
D			1.0
F		Fail	0

Classification of awards

IPA 16. On successful completion of the curriculum, candidates who have shown exceptional merit may be awarded a mark of distinction, and this mark shall be recorded in the candidates' degree diploma.

SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (MIPA)

CURRICULUM

Most of the elective courses are taught in the evening or Saturdays or Sundays. Some courses may be offered in a 4-week-long intensified format in addition to the usual 12-week format. To receive the award of Master of International and Public Affairs, candidates have to complete 48 credits of courses (3 or 6 credits each and a capstone project (12 credits), with a total of 60 credits. The 48 credits of courses include 2 compulsory courses, 4 elective courses plus the equivalent of 2 courses from the following options:

- (a) Two more courses (elective or FLEX); or
- (b) Overseas study/internship (equivalent to one or two FLEX courses); or
- (c) Graduate exchange programme with George Washington University (GWU), the Elliott School of International Affairs (students will have to take 9 credit hours of coursework at GWU to fulfil the U.S. residency requirement, with the understanding that 3 credit hours of coursework at GWU is equivalent to 1 MIPA FLEX course);
- (d) Graduate exchange programme with Seoul National University (SNU), Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS); or
- (e) Graduate exchange programme with Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva (GIIDS).

Compulsory courses

Candidates shall complete all courses from the following list:

- POLI6004. Theories of international relations (6 credits)
- POLI6006. International political economy (6 credits)

Capstone experience course (Compulsory)

Candidates shall complete the course from the following list:

- POLI6031. Capstone project (12 credits)

Elective courses

Candidates shall complete 24-36 credits of elective courses from the following list:

- POLI6005. International organizations (6 credits)
- POLI6007. International relations in the Asia-Pacific (6 credits)
- POLI6008. Understanding global problems: theory and practice (6 credits)
- POLI6010. Chinese foreign policy (6 credits)
- POLI6029. War and armed conflict: philosophical issues (6 credits)
- POLI6032. International law (6 credits)
- POLI6033. Cross-Taiwan Strait relations (6 credits)
- POLI6035. War and strategy (6 credits)
- POLI6036. Special topics in international relations (I) (6 credits)
- POLI6037. Special topics in international relations (II) (6 credits)
- POLI6038. Special topics in international political economy (I) (6 credits)
- POLI6039. Special topics in international political economy (II) (6 credits)
- POLI6040. Special topics in Asia Pacific international relations (I) (6 credits)
- POLI6041. Special topics in Asia Pacific international relations (II) (6 credits)
- POLI6042. Special topics in global and regional governance (I) (6 credits)
- POLI6043. Special topics in global and regional governance (II) (6 credits)

POLI6044.	World energy issues: international political economy and security (6 credits)
POLI6045.	The politics of global inequality (6 credits)
POLI6046.	Political and sovereign risk assessment (6 credits)
POLI6047.	Law, politics and the international system (6 credits)
POLI6048.	International security: History and Global Perspectives (6 credits)
POLI6049.	Epistemics of international relations (6 credits)
POLI7009.	Governance and policy in international organizations (6 credits)
POLI7011.	Global information wars (6 credits)
POLI7012.	Comparative politics of modern Southeast Asia (6 credits)
POLI7013.	International development (6 credits)
POLI7014.	International relations and the Middle East (6 credits)
POLI7015.	Introduction to research methods in international relations (6 credits)
POLI7016.	Causal inference in international affairs (6 credits)
POLI7017.	Politics and security on the Korean Peninsula (6 credits)
POLI7018.	Armed nonstate governance (6 credits)
POLI7019.	Workshop on survey and survey-experimental research (3 credits)
POLI7020.	Political risk analysis and forecasting (3 credits)
POLI7021.	Comparative politics in western countries (3 credits)
POLI7022.	Workshop on comparative case studies (3 credits)
POLI7023.	Nuclear politics (6 credits)
POLI7024.	International organization practicum (6 credits)
POLI7025.	The political economy of technology (3 credits)
POLI7026.	Qualitative methods in social science research (3 credits)
POLI7027.	ASEAN and regional cooperation in Southeast Asia (6 credits)
POLI7028.	War and Peace: Theoretical Perspectives (6 credits)
POLI7029.	Risk assessment of global conflicts (6 credits)
POLI7030.	Europe-China relations (3 credits)

FLEX courses

Candidates are allowed to complete not more than 12 credits of FLEX courses from the following list:

POLI6021.	Overseas study at Peking University: “Current issues in China’s international relations” (6 credits)
POLI6023.	Overseas study at Johns Hopkins University: SAIS programme (6 credits)
POLI6024.	Overseas study at Johns Hopkins University: SAIS programme (12 credits, 2 courses equivalent)
POLI6030.	Overseas study at George Washington University: U.S. foreign policy summer programme (6 credits)
POLI6034.	Overseas study at Seoul National University: Seminar on area studies – East Asia in the modern world (6 credits)
POLI6052.	Summer Overseas Study of International Relations in East and Southeast Asia (6 credits)

Candidates are required to pay additional costs to take the above overseas study courses (POLI6021, POLI6023, POLI6024, POLI6030, POLI6034 and POLI6052).

FLEX courses can also be chosen from the selected courses offered by the following offering units subject to the entry requirements and the approval of the respective Programme Directors:

- (a) Faculty of Law, HKU
- (b) Department of Politics and Public Administration, HKU (Master of Public Administration Programme)
- (c) School of Future Media, HKU

MIPA students may have to pay appropriate course fees as decided by the offering units for

these FLEX courses from the Faculty of Law and the School of Future Media. The offering of these FLEX courses will be announced in appropriate timing before course enrolment.

The compulsory courses will be offered every year. The elective courses listed above will not necessarily be offered every year; from time to time, depending on the exigencies of staffing, additional courses may be offered while the above courses may be offered in different years of study. Candidates should consult the Department to find out which courses are being offered in any given year.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Compulsory Courses

POLI6004. Theories of international relations (6 credits)

This survey course is designed for graduate students and offers a rigorous introduction to the main debates and theoretical perspectives of international relations: *what do we know about international conflict and international cooperation? Is the state the most significant actor in international affairs today? Can theory inform us about the actual day-to-day of international politics?* Students will familiarize themselves with a variety of theoretical perspectives; however, the course will not manage to cover in depth and breadth each theoretical approach to International Relations theory. It is most likely that you will leave the course with more questions than answers.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6006. International political economy (6 credits)

This course studies the international political economy. How do economic and political forces interact in the international arena? How do these interactions shape the outcomes experienced globally, nationally, and by individual citizens? We address these questions in this course. We begin by sharpening our thinking technologies: grasping the key analytical paradigms used in IPE, and developing the methodological awareness that we need in order to consume IPE research. Equipped with the tools to understand IPE, we next turn to its substance. Substantive topics include international trade, global capital flows, financial crises, multinational production, climate change, international movements of people, and the performance of different national economies in the global economic system. We conclude by reflecting on ethical dilemmas, the future of the global political economy, and how that future affects us individually and collectively.

Assessment: 60% coursework, 40% examination

Capstone Experience Course

POLI6031. Capstone project (12 credits)

The capstone project enables students to integrate what they have learned from the MIPA Programme and demonstrate their ability to analyze critical issues in international relations and public affairs. Students will work in small groups and complete a research project. A topic is selected in consultation with relevant teaching staff in September and the title of the capstone project is submitted for approval by December 1 of the final academic year of study. The project is then researched and written and submitted for examination by May 31 of the final academic year of study.

Assessment: 100% coursework

Elective Courses

POLI6005. International organizations (6 credits)

This course provides a general survey of the development of international organizations. It begins with the philosophical and theoretical foundations of international organizations. This toolbox is then used to explain the role of the main international institutions in specific policy domains, including international security, trade, finance, human rights and environment. For each of those domains, the course analyses the construction of the global policy problems, the international organizations established at addressing them, the way in which policies are negotiated and decided within those institutions, and their ability to solve the problems that motivated their creation. Special emphasis is given to exploring the roles and functions of the United Nations, and its affiliated organizations. Attention will also be given to regional organizations such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and European Union (EU). Students will complete the course with a deeper understanding of the both similarities and differences between international organizations and their effective contribution to the governance of global politics.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6007. International relations in the Asia-Pacific (6 credits)

This course is a survey of international relations in the Asia Pacific region. Instead of providing a comprehensive examination of the history, culture, and national policies of countries in the region, it mainly addresses four issues here: What are major trends in regional IR? What is the source of conflict in the region? What are the common interests that unite peoples and states of the Asian Pacific? How does the region organise itself? It explains dynamics and patterns of regional international relations in a broad geopolitical and geoeconomic context. Topics in discussion include major powers' role in the region, the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan Strait, ASEAN, Southeast Asia and regional institution-building.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6008. Understanding global problems: theory and practice (6 credits)

This course aims to critically explore some of the major challenges confronting an international community that is faced with unprecedented levels of global interdependency and escalating power asymmetry. The class will provide a detailed analysis of the issues at stake, providing students with the intellectual grounding necessary to critically evaluate many of our most pressing global problems and their proposed solutions. While the list of controversies changes each semester, some past questions have included: Are genetically modified foods crucial to the fight against hunger? Is U.S. hegemony a force for global (in)stability? Is globalization inherently "anti-religious"? Was NATO intervention in Kosovo justified? In exploring these and other controversies, the course will combine perspectives from the academic literature with those of practitioners, including senior diplomats, representatives from non-governmental organizations, government officials, and corporate executives.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6010. Chinese foreign policy (6 credits)

This course examines China's evolving role in international politics and investigates basic questions about China's foreign relations: Is China's history relevant for its contemporary foreign policies? Can the United States and China successfully accommodate each other, or will China's growing role in world politics result in tension and conflict? Do China's military, political, and economic activities abroad help or hurt the interests of other states and societies? This course addresses these and other puzzles through a survey of China's historical and contemporary foreign relations. The first third of the course focuses on historical Chinese foreign relations. The remaining two thirds turn to contemporary issues in the study of Chinese foreign policy.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6029. War and armed conflict: philosophical issues (6 credits)

This course provides a thorough introduction into the moral issues of war and armed conflict, with a focus on current debates in just war theory, and in particular on such controversial issues as "the moral (in)equality of soldiers", the principle of discrimination, terrorism, torture, guerrilla warfare and humanitarian intervention.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6032. International law (6 credits)

This course is taught under the assumption that most of the students are not majoring in public international law. It begins with an introduction to the study of international law, its sources, subjects, and its relations with domestic laws. It is then followed by a number of topics including, state sovereignty over territory and jurisdiction, immunities and treaties, UNCLOS, use of force and peaceful settlements of disputes, human rights and humanitarian laws, economic and environmental laws, etc. The course is mainly composed of two parts: lectures and class discussions. As an integrated part, the discussion session demands everyone's active participation. A list of international legal issues and/or cases shall be distributed in advance and "mock chambers" of ICJ or other judicial bodies shall be formed by the students from time to time to render decisions or give advisory opinions on the legal questions concerned.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6033. Cross-Taiwan Strait relations (6 credits)

This course will explore the historical background and contemporary dynamics of the relationship across the Taiwan Strait, and introduces relevant theoretical concepts and analytical tools in studying cross-Taiwan Strait issues. The Taiwan problem has been a defining issue for China and its rise towards a great power in world affairs. The convergence and divergence between Taiwan and the mainland have troubled the Chinese nation for centuries. The course will examine the historical origin of the Taiwan problem and how cross-Strait relations have evolved since the late 19th century. In studying the evolving Taiwan problem, particular attention will be given on the role of the United States in shaping cross-Strait relations. In studying contemporary dynamics, the course will focus on the issues of economic integration, political dialogues, mutual confidence building, and people-to-people exchanges in the development of cross-Strait relations.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6035. War and strategy (6 credits)

Chinese strategist Sun Zi declared: “War is a matter of vital importance to the state; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it should be thoroughly studied.” Complying with Sun’s exhortation this course provides a composite introduction to the theory and practice of modern warfare based upon the precepts of Strategic Studies. It considers the complex relationship between politics and strategy, and the evolution of strategic thought, through focusing on the application of land/air/naval/space/cyber power. It also exposes questions of nuclear deterrence, revolutionary technologies, irregular warfare and terrorism. Through this course students will gain both conceptual and practical knowledge of warfare, and hone their critical and analytical faculties through the examination of complex strategic problems.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6036. Special topics in international relations (I) (6 credits)

This course is designed to explore a selected area or a set of selected issues in international relations studies. The course applies different theoretical approaches to enhance students’ understanding of the changing international order and environment, the future prospects for international conflict and cooperation, international security, and current problems of world politics.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6037. Special topics in international relations (II) (6 credits)

This course is designed to explore a selected area or a set of selected issues in international relations studies. The course applies different theoretical approaches to enhance students’ understanding of the changing international order and environment, the future prospects for international conflict and cooperation, international security, and current problems of world politics.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6038. Special topics in international political economy (I) (6 credits)

This course applies different theoretical approaches to important historical and contemporary empirical issues in the study of international political economy. Different from the general survey course POLI6006 International Political Economy, this course examines a set of special topics in international political economy. It examines more recent theoretical developments and applies comparative approaches to real world economic issues. Previous background in the study of international relations and international political economy is helpful but is not a requirement.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6039. Special topics in international political economy (II) (6 credits)

This course applies different theoretical approaches to important historical and contemporary empirical issues in the study of international political economy. Different from the general survey course POLI6006 International Political Economy, this course examines a set of special topics in international political economy. It examines more recent theoretical developments and applies comparative approaches to real world economic issues. Previous background in the study of international relations and international political economy is helpful but is not a requirement.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6040. Special topics in Asia Pacific international relations (I) (6 credits)

This course examines a set of selected topics in the study of Asia Pacific international relations. Different from POLI6007 International relations in the Asia-Pacific, this course focuses on special topics in the study of Asia-Pacific international relations, such as regional stability and cooperation, regional institutions and multilateralism, traditional and non-traditional security issues, regional conflict management and resolution, major powers' foreign policy towards the region, and international relations in Northeast Asia or Southeast Asia.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6041. Special topics in Asia Pacific international relations (II) (6 credits)

This course examines a set of selected topics in the study of Asia Pacific international relations. Different from POLI6007 International relations in the Asia-Pacific, this course focuses on special topics in the study of Asia-Pacific international relations, such as regional stability and cooperation, regional institutions and multilateralism, traditional and non-traditional security issues, regional conflict management and resolution, major powers' foreign policy towards the region, and international relations in Northeast Asia or Southeast Asia.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6042. Special topics in global and regional governance (I) (6 credits)

This course examines current scholarly debates relating to the interdisciplinary study of global and regional governance in the context of globalization. The current wave of globalization has created opportunities and challenges for governance at both global and regional levels. This course introduces students to the study of a set of selected issues in global and/or regional governance. It examines competing perspectives on globalization, global governance, regionalization, and regional governance. It explores the sources and consequences of globalization and regionalization as well as the key actors, institutions, regimes, and norms of global and regional governance.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6043. Special topics in global and regional governance (II) (6 credits)

This course examines current scholarly debates relating to the interdisciplinary study of global and regional governance in the context of globalization. The current wave of globalization has created opportunities and challenges for governance at both global and regional levels. This course introduces students to the study of a set of selected issues in global and/or regional governance. It examines competing perspectives on globalization, global governance, regionalization, and regional governance. It explores the sources and consequences of globalization and regionalization as well as the key actors, institutions, regimes, and norms of global and regional governance.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6044. World energy issues: international political economy and security (6 credits)

This course examines the interaction of global energy concerns with economic and geopolitical issues, with a focus on petroleum. Energy has been central to the formulation of national strategies, regional security dynamics, great power politics, and the macroeconomic stability. The class begins by providing an overview about oil in international security and political economy, and then examines the role of oil in geopolitics and economy in regions such as the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and East Asia in more detail. The classes will involve in-depth discussions about many of current international issues including Russian relations with Ukraine, wars and conflicts in the Persian Gulf, the recent Iran nuclear deal, as well as China's growth and its diplomacy where the political economy of oil has been a major factor. The course also looks at other current energy issues such as the shale oil boom, the future of nuclear power, and the impact of energy on the environment.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6045. The politics of global inequality (6 credits)

This class explores several questions surrounding the importance of income inequality. Why have some countries grown rich while others have not? Why are some societies more equal than others? Is wealth inequality the only type of inequality? Does inequality even matter? This class examines these questions by studying the political economy of growth and inequality. The main goal of this course is to understand both the causes and the consequences of income inequality. To this end, this course will draw from a variety of theoretical perspectives including economics, political science, psychology, and sociology to examine the sources of inequality and what can be done about it.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6046. Political and sovereign risk assessment (6 credits)

This course will assess political and sovereign risk models from an academic, governmental, and business perspective. The course will introduce both quantitative and qualitative models of political and sovereign risk analysis within the framework of theories of international political economy (IPE). The course will apply these models to the sovereign debt crisis of the 1980s, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, and current issues within the global economic order. Students will learn how to analyze and present contemporary international risk assessments that integrate theoretical models, historical experience, financial market constraints, economic realities, and political exigencies.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6047. Law, politics and the international system (6 credits)

This course examines the complex interaction between law, politics and power in international relations. It asks whether international law can tame power politics and, if so, how? The course comprises two broad strands. Firstly, students will be introduced to the concept of international law. What is it? Where does it come from? And, critically, how is it enforced? We will then build on those foundations by analysing key issues in contemporary international relations, including human rights, the use of force, international criminal justice, and state secession. Taking specific cases, such as the NATO intervention in Libya, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the conflict against ISIS in Syria, we will examine the challenges of building an international order that is both just and stable. Upon completion of the course, students will have a deep understanding of both the possibilities and limits of international law as a tool for resolving conflict and mediating power in international relations.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6048. International security: History and Global Perspectives (6 credits)

This course surveys the field of international security. It starts by examining international relations theory to provide students with frameworks through which they can analyze international security issues objectively and critically. Then it will overview origins of modern wars among countries and discuss tools that the international community and individual states can use to prevent and end conflicts. The course will also examine current topics in international security, such as the rise of China and its impact on international security, maritime security, nuclear proliferation, threats from cyber warfare and artificial intelligence, and humanitarian intervention.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6049. Epistemics of international relations (6 credits)

How do we know what we know in international relations (IR)? What are the epistemic underpinnings of IR? What assumptions underlie our knowledge about IR, how factual are our "facts", and how valid are our theories and evidence? This seminar explores these questions from the historical, institutional, sociological, constructivist, methodological and causal-inferential perspectives. The goal is to develop a deeper understanding of where our IR knowledge comes from and the fallibilities of what we think we know. The seminar is designed for students with strong academic interest in specialized and in-depth study. Students are expected to read intensively and contribute fruitfully to seminar discussions.

Pre-requisite: POLI6004. Theories of international relations

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7009. Governance and Policy in International Organizations (6 credits)

Governance is about managing complex policymaking processes. It refers to the formal and informal interactions between stakeholders that have different perspectives on how to address the most pressing problems we face. The range of stakeholders with an interest in today's significant policy problems is vast. For instance, mitigating and adapting to climate change requires action by governmental and non-governmental stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global levels. Tackling policy problems that have international dimensions requires the coordination of multiple government agencies within states, different levels of government, non-state actors, which include corporations, civil society organizations and think tanks, as well as international organizations and agencies. This complexity is magnified in today's interconnected world, as policymaking in one region of the world can have significant effects elsewhere. This course covers the concepts, theories and methods required to understand governance and policymaking processes that have significant international dimensions.

The course reviews the structure and functioning of several international organizations (including the United Nations, the European Union and ASEAN), as well as the role of states (including a range of established and emerging countries) and non-state actors (including corporations, civil society groups, and think tanks). The course will apply this knowledge to recent case studies of governance and policymaking from the fields of international security, trade and finance, environment and climate change, health, migration and digital technologies.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7011. Global information wars (6 credits)

With new information technologies, states and citizens around the world fight escalated information wars against one another: Governments restrict or contaminate domestic information flow with censorship and propaganda; political and business elites operate domestic or international information campaigns to manipulate public opinions; citizens organize collective actions with new information technologies. In these information wars, who are the players? What are their interests? And what are their strategies? By reading classic and frontier research on political behavior and communication from a comparative perspective, this course introduces students to social scientific findings on how states, elites, and citizens shape the global information environment with new technologies. The first part of the course introduces the behavioral foundations of global information warfare. The second part examines information warfare in domestic politics of both democratic and authoritarian countries. The third part examines information wars in international political economy, with a focus on international online influence operations of governments, tech giants, and the civil society.

Eligibility: Students who have taken POLI6042 in 2021-22 are not allowed to take this course.
Assessment: 100% coursework.

POLI7012. Comparative politics of modern Southeast Asia (6 credits)

This course covers comparative politics of modern Southeast Asia, with a focus on political transformations in the region since the Cold War. The course provides a historically grounded approach to understand the formation of Southeast Asian states as well as the contemporary dynamics of political changes in the region. It starts by reviewing the impact of colonialism and historical trajectories in the region. We then delve deep into specific Southeast Asian countries, overviewing key political events and important leaders, tracing logics of political contestation, and providing a foundation to understand the structures of governments. After the specific country studies, we will focus on a few specific issues and challenges pertaining to the region, such as economic development, political regimes and governance, and regionalization.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

POLI7013. International development (6 credits)

Developing countries, sometimes collectively referred to as the “Global South,” have been consistently marginalized yet strategically important in international relations throughout modern history. This course examines the intersection of development and international politics in three parts: the major development bottlenecks faced by developing countries; the role of powerful states and international institutions in shaping the field of global development; and several frontiers in international development including the rise of “emerging donors,” Chinese development finance and China-U.S. coexistence in the Global South, global public health, and climate change. The course will familiarize students with a wide range of political science and other social science research on international development. It will also introduce students to a diverse set of conceptual and methodological research approaches in political science and international relations.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7014. International relations and the Middle East (6 credits)

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) plays a key role in international relations. This course explores the reasons behind and the consequences of this fact. Topics covered include the role of oil, the formation of ideologies such as Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the war on terror, the Arab uprisings, and more. By employing the conceptual toolbox of International Relations (IR), we will also assess whether dominant IR perspectives facilitate or hinder a comprehensive understanding of MENA's position within the international order. A central challenge in studying MENA, as with other regions of the Global South, is the tension between autonomy and external influence. To what extent have the peoples of MENA been able to shape their own histories? What types of states, economies, and ideologies have emerged from the region's complex and often violent contemporary history? The course makes use of a combination of textbook readings, academic papers, and other learning materials, such as videos and podcasts. Studying and engaging with the provided learning content will be essential for a successful outcome. Coursework includes a mid-term essay, reading presentations, and a final quiz.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7015. Introduction to Research Methods in International Relations (6 credits)

This course introduces the empirical methods commonly used in international relations to answer political questions and explains why these methods matter. We begin by exploring how data and information are used in the social sciences broadly, and in international relations specifically. We then examine strategies for overcoming obstacles to reliable knowledge about the political world—such as experimentation, quantitative analysis (including statistics), and qualitative case studies. This course will prepare you to engage more deeply with these methods in future coursework.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

POLI7016. Causal Inference in International Affairs (6 credits)

Effective implementation of projects and programs is central to international and public policy. The success of infrastructure, education, agriculture, and other initiatives—whether by governments or international organizations—depends on understanding if similar interventions worked elsewhere and how to improve effectiveness in new contexts. This course trains students to design and conduct rigorous programme and policy evaluations using statistical analysis and causal inference methods. It focuses on retrospective evaluations, enabling students to assess real-world impacts. Through practical questions—e.g., did rural roads increase agricultural output? Did labour standards improve worker rights?—students apply rigorous data analysis, design evaluation plans, conduct regression analysis, and write policy research proposals. Core methods include randomized controlled trials (RCTs), difference-in-differences (DiD), regression discontinuity (RDD), instrumental variables (IV), and matching. The course has two parts: the first covers foundational statistical concepts; the second focuses on causal inference and applications from academic case studies. Assessment includes participation, tests, and graded assignments. A key assignment requires students, in pairs, to develop an impact evaluation plan for a real-world policy or development project. These tasks foster critical thinking, methodological application, and the ability to assess the policy relevance of programme outcomes.

Assessment: 60% coursework, 40% examination

POLI7017. Politics and security on the Korean Peninsula (6 credits)

This course explores the complex political and security dynamics of the Korean Peninsula. As the world's only divided nation still technically at war—governed by an armistice rather than a peace treaty—Korea represents both a persistent challenge and a potential opportunity for the international community. On one hand, North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and repeated threats of military action against South Korea and the United States remain urgent global security concerns. On the other hand, many scholars argue that meaningful cooperation between the two Koreas could yield significant economic and diplomatic benefits.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

POLI7018. Armed Nonstate Governance (6 credits)

Across the world, the lives of millions of people are shaped in profound ways by armed nonstate actors: from rebel groups, to mafias, to warlords, and street gangs. This course will analyze the systems of governance that these groups produce, examining how and why violent nonstate actors acquire and exercise power over territory, markets, institutions, and civilian populations. Students will learn to appreciate the major challenges that armed nonstate actors pose to States and State order. However, students will also come to understand how and why State and armed nonstate actors collaborate towards shared goals, producing perverse political synergies with wide-reaching consequences. Examining cases from contexts as diverse as Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa, students will become familiar with the burgeoning inter-disciplinary research on armed nonstate governance, a subject with important implications for political science and international relations scholarship.

Assessment: 70% coursework, 30% examination

POLI7019. Workshop on survey and survey-experimental research (3 credits)

This half-course introduces students to the logic and practice of survey and survey-experimental research in international relations. Specifically, it covers the foundations and design of social scientific surveys and survey experiments, and their practical applications. The purpose of the workshop is pragmatic—it seeks to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to design a survey or survey-experimental project in a collaborative workshop setting. The course will also examine the issues and challenges that a student might face in conducting survey and experimental research, and the possible ways to address these challenges.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7020. Political risk analysis and forecasting (3 credits)

This course will introduce students to the analysis of political risk. It will explore the various aspects of political risk that affect the interests of governments, businesses, and international organizations, and highlight how the nature of risk varies across countries and regions and time periods. Students will learn different methods for measuring political risk, apply these techniques to real-world cases, and use different techniques to present their findings, including scenario planning, base cases, risk maps, and probability sets. The primary goal of the course is to equip students with in-depth knowledge and practical experience in assessing political risk and presenting this information both in written form and through oral presentation.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7021. Comparative politics in western countries (3 credits)

This course examines democratic governance in established Western democracies, focusing mainly on Western Europe and North America. The course investigates how democratic institutions and processes are being reshaped by economic globalization, technological transformation, and societal change. The theory of promissory representation is central to course. Promissory representation is distilled in the idea that political parties make commitments to voters during elections and are held accountable for fulfilling those promises in government. We examine how economic integration into global markets constrains governing parties' ability to deliver on campaign promises, creating tensions between democratic accountability and the realities of governing in an interconnected world. Students will explore critical contemporary challenges facing Western democracies that arise partly from these tensions, including the rise of populist movements, and changing party competition dynamics. The course analyzes how political parties across the ideological spectrum have adapted their electoral strategies in response to globalization constraints, sometimes resorting to populist rhetoric or deliberately vague policy commitments to maintain electoral viability. The course also addresses emerging policy challenges including the regulation of Artificial Intelligence, climate change responses, and migration management. This approach provides students with sophisticated tools for understanding where Western democracies stand today and where they may be headed as they grapple with tensions between democratic governance and global economic integration.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7022. Workshop on comparative case studies (3 credits)

This half-course introduces students how to conduct case studies in their research design, and will cover conceptions of causality and strategies of case selection. Students will learn how to apply comparative case study methods for both theory building and theory testing. It will include topics such as the difference between qualitative and quantitative designs, the specificities and challenges of comparative case studies, methods of case selection, and process tracing, etc.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7023. Nuclear politics (6 credits)

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the politics and theories related to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the role of nuclear energy and technology. Core topics of this course include the basics of nuclear weapons, nuclear strategies, and deterrence theory. Students will examine these issues within historical and theoretical frameworks, drawing on both conceptual and empirical perspectives to better understand the evolution of nuclear politics and strategy.

This course also examines the development of nuclear dynamics across both the Cold War and post-Cold War eras, with particular emphasis on the strategic rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Despite the Cold War's conclusion, nuclear security continues to pose urgent challenges. Numerous contemporary international crises remain closely tied to nuclear-related concerns, including North Korea's nuclear crisis in the early 1990s, the 1998 nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, and the implications of nuclear weapons in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Throughout the semester, students will engage with key academic literature in political science and history, focusing on nuclear politics and international security. Students will engage in various academic activities, including reading, critiquing, presenting, and debating scholarship from leading journals.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7024. International organization practicum (6 credits)

International institutions and organizations are important actors in the practice of international relations. Major debate persists over whether and the extent to which these organizations shape international politics by changing the incentives of state and non-state actors and performing unique functions in world politics, or whether these agencies simply reflect the interests of their member states. This course complements academic coursework on the study of international institutions and organizations by embedding students within actual organizations as interns, volunteers, or team members. It provides real-world, hands-on experience and insight into how international organizations actually work in practice.

Pre-requisite: Must have taken or currently be enrolled in either POLI6005 or POLI7009

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7025. The political economy of technology (3 credits)

This half-course explores the interplay between technology and politics. In an era of rapid technological advances (e.g., artificial intelligence, automation), technological change is poised to be a key catalyst for societal disruption and an avenue for intensifying geopolitical competition. This course examines these contemporary challenges by reviewing historical, theoretical, and empirical research in international and comparative political economy. Key topics include the impact of automation on labor markets and politics, the geopolitics of technology, the (big) tech economy, and industrial policies and the green transition. The course aims to enable students to critically analyze the drivers and consequences of technological change.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7026. Qualitative methods in social science research (3 credits)

This short course is designed to develop students' abilities to undertake qualitative research, with a focus on developing causal explanations with qualitative methods. The course will introduce students to the method of process tracing, and will teach students how techniques including interviewing, ethnographic approaches, and archival research, can be employed to collect original qualitative data for analysis. The course will adopt a workshop format, providing students with the opportunity to get hands-on practical experience using these techniques.

Please Note: while this course complements the topics covered in POLI7022, it can be taken independently.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI7027. ASEAN and regional cooperation in Southeast Asia (6 credits)

This course examines the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a regional organisation, focusing on its institutional design, decision-making processes, and substantive areas of cooperation. The course is structured in two parts. The first part introduces students to the concepts and theories needed to analyse regional organisations, including theories of regionalism, the norms and institutional features often grouped under the "ASEAN Way," the organisation's institutional architecture from the Bangkok Declaration to the ASEAN Charter, the concept and practice of ASEAN centrality, and how ASEAN compares with regional organisations elsewhere. The second part turns to substantive cooperation, examining how ASEAN operates across key policy domains: economic integration and trade, political-security cooperation, human rights and (non-)democratic governance, and non-traditional security challenges including disaster management, transboundary environmental issues, and digital governance and artificial intelligence. Throughout the course, students engage with recent scholarship that moves beyond culturalist accounts of ASEAN to analyse the organisation's performance using the tools of comparative politics and international relations.

Assessment: 70% coursework, 30% examination

POLI7028. War and Peace: Theoretical Perspectives (6 credits)

This course aims to understand the conditions for war and peace in international relations. Throughout the course, students will examine causes of war, the outcomes and consequences of war and solutions to prevent or limit war. Students will be able to apply the factors that promote or mitigate international conflict and should be able to apply these factors in examining real world scenarios and assessing the prospect of future conflict in troubled areas.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

POLI7029. Risk assessment of global conflicts (6 credits)

This course introduces a general analytical framework and heuristics for understanding contemporary issues in international politics and assessing risk levels of interstate conflict. The course is structured into three major parts: the motivations of conflict, the resources available to states, and finally, how the motivations of conflict and available resources converge to form a policy space containing possible options for the manifestation of the underlying conflict

motivation.

Assessment: 50% coursework, 50% examination

POLI7030. Europe-China relations (3 credits)

This half course will introduce students to the history, politics and economics of the relationship between the countries of the European Union (EU) and China. The goal is to produce a nuanced and fair understanding of each side's perception of the other. Whilst the course is multidimensional and historically sensitive, it aims to be practical in the sense of clearly identifying the potentials and pitfalls of the Europe-China relationship moving forward in a fractured and post-unipolar world. Students are required to engage in academic readings and undertake case-study research by themselves.

Assessment: 60% coursework, 40% examination

FLEX Courses

POLI6021. Overseas study at Peking University: "Current issues in China's international relations" (6 credits)

The course will explore the major foreign policy issues that are confronting China in recent years. These issues include China and globalization, China and regional security, China's relations with US, China's relations with Europe, China's relations with Japan, and China and international environmental protection. It will be jointly taught by renowned Chinese foreign policy scholars at Peking University and practitioners and specialists based in Beijing.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6023. Overseas study at Johns Hopkins University: SAIS programme (6 credits)

The School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) summer programme provides students from across the United States and abroad an opportunity to enrol in excellent courses taught in a condensed form. Courses offered include American foreign policy since World War II, global issues: drugs, crime and terrorism, principles and practices of conflict management, strategy and policy, international monetary theory, international trade theory. Students are required to take one SAIS course.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6024. Overseas study at Johns Hopkins University: SAIS programme (12 credits)

The School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) summer programme provides students from across the United States and abroad an opportunity to enrol in excellent courses taught in a condensed form. Courses offered include American foreign policy since World War II, global issues: drugs, crime and terrorism, principles and practices of conflict management, strategy and policy, international monetary theory, international trade theory. Students are required to take two SAIS courses.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6030. Overseas study at George Washington University: U.S. foreign policy

summer programme (6 credits)

This two-week intensive course examines how U.S. foreign policy is made, the history that informs it, the political culture that sustains it, and the ideas and interests that drive it. Taking full advantage of its location in downtown Washington, DC, the programme features visits to key institutions that influence American foreign policy as well as lectures by leading scholars and experts from government, think tanks, international organizations, non-profit organizations, the media, and foreign embassies. More information is at www.gwu.edu/~usfsp
Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6034. Overseas study at Seoul National University: Seminar on area studies – East Asia in the modern world (6 credits)

This course is intended to make students familiar with the contemporary issues related to the East Asian countries, ranging from trade disputes and soft powers to financial problems. Taking an historical approach and using key theoretical perspectives, students will learn how the East Asian region has been coping with policy challenges and how East Asian regional order has evolved into its current forms.

Assessment: 100% coursework

POLI6052. Summer overseas study of international relations in East and Southeast Asia (6 credits)

Embark on an immersive exploration of East or Southeast Asia's dynamic international relations through this summer overseas study programme. This course will be offered in rotation in a different East or Southeast Asian country, pending availability and cooperation with a university in a particular country. It offers a comprehensive examination of the region's geopolitical landscape, historical conflicts, and emerging global roles. Students will engage with topics such as regional security, economic integration, cultural diplomacy, and the impact of major powers on regional politics. Based in a key East or Southeast Asian city, the programme combines academic rigor with experiential learning. Participants will attend lectures by distinguished experts from a local university, visit international organizations/local NGOs, and engage in cultural exchanges. On-site learning experiences include visits to historic landmarks that will enrich students' appreciation of East or Southeast Asia's political trajectory. By the end of the course, students will gain a deeper understanding of international relations in the East or Southeast Asian context and develop cross-cultural communication skills essential for careers in diplomacy, international business, and global advocacy.

Assessment: 100% coursework
