

PS 2201 History of International Relations (I) (國際關係史一)

Fall 2025

Instructor: Min-Hua Huang
Class Time & Location: Wed 10:20-12:10, SSB 401
Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description

This course aims to provide students with a historical foundation for understanding the development and evolution of contemporary international relations. It focuses on how modern Western colonialism emerged and spread, ultimately dominating the global imperialist rivalries that followed the Industrial Revolution, leading to the two World Wars and shaping the genealogical context of the current international system. The first semester begins with the medieval period (5th–15th centuries), exploring Western concepts of monarchy, religion, and world order, with a particular emphasis on the theme of war and peace. It also covers the trajectory of modern political development in Western Europe. The second semester starts with the two World Wars, examining inter-state warfare in the modern era and the formation and evolution of the postwar sovereign state system, culminating in the prevailing paradigms of contemporary international relations. The course aims to cultivate students' literacy in international affairs through this historical framework.

Course Objective

Students are expected to develop an understanding of the origins and evolution of the contemporary sovereign state system, as well as how the development of modern states has shaped and transformed the functioning of international relations. Throughout this course, students will gain a deep insight from the historical perspective on the evolution of international relations within the broader context of world history.

Learning Outcome

- Understand the political legitimacy of the Western medieval period
- Comprehend the issues of war and peace among ancient Western monarchies
- Explain the significance of religious conflicts in international relations
- Understand the origin, functions, and impact of the modern sovereign state system

Course Requirement

There are three requirements for enrolled students. First, weekly attendance is required, and it accounts for 10% of the final grade. Two unexcused absences are allowed without discounting the grade. Second, a mid-term in-class exam (40%) will be held on Week 10 (Nov 5). Third, the final group project will be due by Week 16 (50%) in both forms of oral presentation (ppt required) and written essay (within 10 pages). The maximum number of group members is five.

Textbook

Knutson, Torbjorn L. (2016). *A History of International Relations Theory*, 3rd Edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic
Week 1	09/03/25	Introduction
Week 2	09/10/25	History and International Relations
Week 3	09/17/25	Religion and International Relations
Week 4	09/24/25	Renaissance Politics
Week 5	10/01/25	Reformation Politics I: Technology
Week 6	10/08/25	Reformation Politics II: Just War
Week 7	10/15/25	Reformation Politics III: Sovereignty
Week 8	10/22/25	Absolutist Politics I: Thirty Years War
Week 9	10/29/25	Absolutist Politics II: An Interstate System
Week 10	11/05/25	Midterm Exam
Week 11	11/12/25	Enlightenment Politics I: Popular Sovereignty
Week 12	11/19/25	Enlightenment Politics II: Nature of the Interstate System
Week 13	11/26/25	Ideological Politics I: Spectrum of Ideologies
Week 14	12/03/25	Ideological politics II: Ideology and World Politics
Week 15	12/10/25	Colonialism & The Two Great World Wars
Week 16	12/17/25	Final Exam