

Department: International Relations Faculty: Social Sciences

Course Title: International Organisations (MA, Compulsory)

Number of Credits: Four

Course Objectives:

This course examines the nature and scope of international organisations (IOs), specifically within the context of the contemporary era of global governance. First, it provides an introduction to the historical evolution of IOs as well as relevant theoretical approaches in International Relations used to study IOs. Second, the course examines processes that constitute the work of, and at, IOs, including multilateral diplomacy, rule making and implementation, and provision of services. Third, it seeks to identify and assess contemporary challenges as well as new trends vis-à-vis the role of IOs in global politics.

Case studies are used to bring focus to the topics of discussions. Even as United Nations occupies the centre-stage here, other entities such as the International Labour Organization, the World Trade Organization and the International Criminal Court are also examined as illustrative examples. Importantly, the course looks at the oft-times fraught relationships of developing countries with institutions of global governance. While seeking to eschew simplistic North-South dichotomies, it nevertheless highlights the matrices of power that organise the international.

Course Structure:

Unit I: Understanding IOs

1) Introduction

This introductory discussion examines prevalent definitions of international organizations, and presents an overview of both the historical evolution of IOs as well as the main theoretical approaches employed in their study in IR.

2) States and IOs

Spotlight: UN Conferences

The primary puzzle here relates to the participation of sovereign states in supra-state entities. While the principle of equality of states is prevalent in IOs, the particular interests of, and limitations faced by, states from the Global South are also discussed.

3) IOs as Bureaucracies

Spotlight: Environmental Convention Secretariats

An alternative approach to understanding IOs is to focus on the bureaucracies that are responsible for the everyday work. The source of the power of these secretariats and their impact on governance are examined.

4) Power in Global Governance

Spotlight: Gendering Power

Contemporary IR recognizes the multiple ways in which power is employed in world politics, of which coercion is only one. An understanding of these networks of power relations is particularly important in contemporary world politics wherein multiple international actors such as states, IOs and NGOs are active, and social categories such as gender, race and class continue to be relevant.

Unit II: Processes & Politics

5) Multilateral Diplomacy

Spotlight: The United Nations

Multilateralism is a defining feature of IOs. Paying particular attention to the UN, the key components of multilateral diplomacy and its evolution in recent decades is discussed.

6) Decision-making

Spotlight: The Rome Statute

States use IOs as forums to develop policy mechanisms on internationally relevant issue areas, and occasionally delegate such responsibilities to IOs. Development of agreements and treaties is determined not just by voting rights, but also by negotiations between actors (oft-times behind-the-scene). These processes are discussed here.

7) Implementation and Compliance

Spotlight: Trade and Development

International policy mechanisms have limited value if states do not comply with treaty agreements and conventions. Enforcement and managerial approaches are discussed as two possible ways to secure compliance.

8) Serving Constituencies

Spotlight: Health Governance

While organizations such as the UN are intergovernmental bodies, these are understood to serve not just states (i.e. governments) but people as well. The role of IOs as actors in this regard is highlighted here.

Unit III: Contemporary Concerns

9. Evaluating IOs

Spotlight: The UN Security Council

Not least because of the unrepresentative nature of international entities (in principle or in practice), there are concerns regarding the legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness of IOs. Possible ways to evaluate the role of IOs in world politics are examined.

10. Partners Old and New

IOs are increasingly looking to partner with regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations. Understanding this network of actors in global governance is important in order to recognize the strengths and limitations of IOs.

11. Global North vs Global South?

The discussion is organized as a debate on the question of whether IOs primarily help fuel the dominance of powerful countries, especially those from the West and associated with the Global North. At the same time, the limitations of rigidifying the North-South divide are also presented.

12. South Asia: Challenges & Opportunities

The concluding discussion focuses on contemporary concerns of South Asia vis-à-vis IOs, particularly with regard to participation of South Asian countries in global governance.

Reading suggestions:

Abbott, Kenneth W. and Duncan Snidal (1998), “Why States Act Through Formal

Archer, Clive (2001), *International Organizations*, Third Ed. (London and New York: Routledge), Chapter 1.

Barnett, Michael and Raymond Duvall (2005) (eds.), *Power in Global Governance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Barnett, Michael and Martha Finnemore (1999), “The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations”, *International Organization* 53(4): 699-732.

Hurd, Ian (2011), “Theorizing International Organizations: Choices and Methods in the Study of International Organizations,” *Journal of International Organizations Studies* 2(2): 7-22.

Karns, Margaret P. and Karen A. Mingst (2009), *International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance*, 2nd Edition, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner).

Meyer, Mary K. and Elisabeth Prugl (1999) (eds.), *Gender Politics in Global Governance* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield), pp. 197-209.

Smith, Courtney, B. (2006), *Politics and Process at the United Nations: The Global Dance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner), Chapter 7.

Weiss, Thomas G., Tatiana Carayannis and Richard Jolly (2009), “The ‘Third’ United Nations”, *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 15(1): 123-142.