UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Institutionalisation of the International System

Code: 102258
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Law	OT	4

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the end of this document.

Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites for this course, but prior exposure to Public International Law is highly recommended.

Proficiency in English, both spoken and written, is essential. This course is taught entirely in English, so a minimum B2 level is required for effective participation and comprehension.

The course will be taught from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Objectives and Contextualisation

This course aims to provide students with a deep understanding of the origin, development, functioning, and current relevance of international organizations and their role in shaping the international system. By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- Critically analyze the functioning of organizations operating in the international sphere, including their historical evolution and fundamental theoretical frameworks.

- Acquire in-depth knowledge of the United Nations system, evaluating its structure, principal organs, and its impact on current international affairs.

- Identify and comprehend the various substantive areas (economic, environmental, social, cultural, security) in which international organizations carry out their activities, and their contribution to global governance.

- Assess the role and influence of international organizations in addressing global challenges and promoting international cooperation.

- Develop critical thinking, research, and analytical skills to navigate the complexities of the institutionalized international system.

Competences

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- Apprehending the necessary mechanisms in order to know, assess, and apply the legislative reforms as well as to follow the changes produced in a concrete subject.
- Arguing and laying the foundation for the implementation of legal standards.
- Demonstrating a sensible and critical reasoning: analysis, synthesis, conclusions.
- Identifying and solving problems.
- Identifying, assessing and putting into practice changes in jurisprudence.
- Identifying, knowing and applying the basic and general principles of the legal system.
- Identifying the underlying conflicts of interest in disputes and real cases.
- Managing bibliographic and documentary resources: databases, browsing, etc.
- Memorising and utilising legal terminology.
- Present information in a way that is appropriate to the type of audience.
- Searching, interpreting and applying legal standards, arguing every case.
- Students must be capable of demonstrating the unitary nature of the legal system and of the necessary interdisciplinary view of legal problems.
- Students must be capable of learning autonomously and having an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Working in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary fields.

Learning Outcomes

1. Applying an interdisciplinary and integrated vision of the legal problems in an international environment.
2. Assessing legislative changes and reforms in a context of plurality of systems.
3. Assessing the underlying conflicts of interest in the legal problems proposed in an international environment.
4. Building a legal reasoning or discourse in the field of Public International Law, Private International Law and European Union Law.
5. Demonstrating a sensible and critical reasoning: analysis, synthesis, conclusions.
6. Identifying and assessing the changes and evolution of jurisprudence in a context of plurality of systems.
7. Identifying and knowing the basic contents of every stipulated speciality.
8. Identifying and solving problems.
9. Managing bibliographic and documentary resources: databases, browsing, etc.
10. Memorising and using the specific terminology of Public International Law, Private International Law and European Union Law.
11. Present information in a way that is appropriate to the type of audience.
12. Seek out, interpret and apply legal provisions related to Public Internacional law, Private International Law and European Union Law.
13. Students must be capable of learning autonomously and having an entrepreneurial spirit.
14. Working in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary fields.

Content

I. THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM.

Lesson 1. Origin, general theory and functions of international organizations

Introduction. Historical evolution. Concept and types of international organizations. Theories of international organizations. Distinction from other international actors. Forms of participation. Role and functions of international organizations in international society today.

Lesson 2. Structure, financing and decision-making of international organizations

The constitutive treaty: powers and competences. Structure. Main manifestations of subjectivity (treaty making power, ius legationis, responsibility, etc.). International agents and their status. Financing systems. Decision-making process.

Lesson 3. The acts of international organizations

The internal normative function. The external normative function. Interpretation and dispute settlement mechanisms. Supervisory powers. Sanctions.

II. UNITED NATIONS

Lesson 4. Genesis and functions of the United Nations

Background. Nature of the Charter and its legal reform. Purposes and principles. Its role in current International Society

Lesson 5. Structure, members and finance

Structure. The member condition and other forms of participation. Suspension and loss of membership. The financing system.

Lesson 6. The principal organs of the United Nations

The Security Council: its role with special reference to the maintenance of international peace and security. The General Assembly. The ECOSOC and its relations with the General Assembly, the Economic and Regional Commissions. The organizations of the United Nations system. The Secretary. The ICJ. The Council of Fiduciary Administration.

III. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONALIZED COOPERATION IN SPECIFIC AREAS

Lesson 7. International economic cooperation

Background. Purposes and principles of international economic cooperation. Institutions and bodies involved in this area of cooperation. Its current role in international society.

Lesson 8. Development cooperation and the environment

Background. Purposes and principles of development cooperation and the environment. Institutions and bodies involved in this area of cooperation. Its current role in international society.

Lesson 9. Cooperation in socio-cultural matters

Background. Purposes and principles of socio-cultural cooperation. Institutions and bodies involved in this area of cooperation. Its current role in international society.

Lesson 10. Cooperation in international security

Background. Purposes and principles of safeguarding international security. Institutions and bodies involved in this area of cooperation. Its current role in international society.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			

Theory	22	0.88	1, 4, 7, 6, 10, 14, 2
Work in the classroom (discussion and resolution of practices, comments, debates, simulations of trials ...)	22	0.88	1, 4, 5, 9, 7, 6, 10, 8, 13, 14, 3
Type: Autonomous				
Work and study outside the classroom	101	4.04	1, 4, 5, 7, 10, 8, 13, 14, 3

This course employs a continuous assessment method that emphasizes active student engagement. Compulsory attendance is a cornerstone of this approach, as the learning process is highly interactive and built around in-class participation.

The methodology is designed to foster a deep and practical understanding of the course material through a variety of engaging activities. These will include:

- Debates: Encouraging critical thinking and the articulation of reasoned arguments.

- Simulations: Providing hands-on experience and a practical understanding of complex scenarios.

- Participatory Questionnaires: Facilitating immediate feedback and gauging comprehension of key concepts.

- Group and Individual Presentations: Developing communication skills and the ability to synthesize and convey information effectively.

- Text Analysis: Enhancing analytical reading skills and the interpretation of relevant literature.

- Case Studies: Applying theoretical knowledge to real-world situations and problem-solving.

These activities will be conducted in both group and individual formats

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Class participation	40%	2	0.08	1, 4, 5, 9, 7, 6, 10, 8, 13, 14, 3
Debate (compulsory)	20%	1	0.04	1, 12, 4, 5, 9, 7, 10, 8, 13, 14, 2, 3
Oral exposition (Compulsory)	20%	1	0.04	1, 4, 5, 9, 7, 10, 11, 8, 13, 14, 3
Simulation (compulsory)	20%	1	0.04	1, 4, 5, 9, 6, 8, 13, 14, 3

1. Assessment

Continuous Assessment

A. Compulsory Practical Assignments (60% of Final Grade) This component comprises three mandatory assignments, each weighted at 20% of the final grade:

- Negotiation Simulation in a UN Body (20%)

- Critical Analysis of a Situation or Case from an International Organization or Tribunal (20%)

- Preparation of a Report/Essay Related to an International Organization (20%)

Attendance at activities designated as compulsory is mandatory. The possibility of retaking or completing assignments on alternative dates will only be accepted in cases of unforeseen absence during the course, duly justified by supporting documentation (e.g., medical certificates, administrative or judicial summons, etc.).

B. Complementary Activities (40% of Final Grade) Throughout the academic period, various complementary activities will be proposed that will contribute to the final grade. These include, but are not limited to:

- Active participation in class sessions.

- Giving short oral presentations.

- Critical analysis of international news.

- Writing short essays on contemporary controversies.

- Preparing annotated summaries of additional readings.

- Creating educational multimedia products (e.g., posters, podcasts, videos).

- Bibliographic research on emerging topics.

- Etc.

General Continuous Assessment Policies

Eligibility for Assessment: To be considered eligible for continuous assessment, students must have completed activities with a combined weight representing at least 2/3 of the total course grade. Otherwise, the grade will be "Not Assessable."

Re-assessment (Resit Exam): Students who do not achieve a minimum grade of 5.0 in the continuous assessment system may take a resit exam covering all course content. The maximum grade obtainable in this resit exam is 5.0. Access to this exam requires prior submission of all compulsory practical assignments. No additional re-assessments will be offered if this exam is not passed.

Single Assessment

The option of a single, comprehensive assessment is offered, subject to Faculty approval. This assessment will take place on the date set by the Faculty for the final exam and will consist of the following elements:

a) Written Exam (40%): A test designed to evaluate the theoretical concepts developed during the course.

b) Case Study Resolution (40%): Assessment based on the resolution of a practical case study that will be provided at the beginning of the course, with questions posed on the day of the exam.

c) Preparation and Oral Defense of a Poster (20%): Creation, presentation, and oral defense of a poster analyzing a current news story or event by applying concepts discussed in the course.

Note: The eligibility criteria for "Not Assessable" and "Re-assessment" grades are the same as those applied to the continuous assessment pathway.

1. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In the context of this course, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is permitted exclusively for support tasks. This includes, but is not limited to, bibliographic or information searches, stylistic correction of texts, translations, or the generation of preliminary ideas. If these tools are used, clear identification of the parts of the work generated with this technology, specification of the tools used, and the inclusion of a critical reflection on the influence of AI on the process and the final outcome of the activity are required.

Lack of transparency in the use of AI in any assessable activity will be considered a breach of academic integrity. Such conduct may result in a partial or total penalty to the activity's grade, or more severe sanctions in serious cases, in accordance with current university regulations.

1. Academic Integrity

Any act of copying on an exam will result in a grade of 0 for the entire course. Any work containing plagiarism will receive a 0 for the specific assignment and an official warning. Repeated instances of such conduct will lead to suspension from the course.

1. Calendar

A detailed calendar with specific dates for all assessable activities will be accessible on the virtual campus before the start of teaching sessions. Generally, compulsory practical assignments will be due at the end of each thematic module.

Bibliography

Basic Bibliography (Recommended)

To follow the course, it's recommended to have at least one of the following manuals, which will serve as a fundamental basis for understanding the theoretical content. The most recent available editions have been prioritized:

- Díez de Velasco Vallejo, M. (2023). Las Organizaciones Internacionales. Tecnos.

- Pastor Ridruejo, J. A. (2023). Curso de Derecho Internacional Público y Organizaciones internacionales . Tecnos.

Complementary Reference Texts

These key texts expand the understanding of the topics.

- Abbott, K. W., & Snidal, D. (2000). Hard and Soft Law in International Governance. International Organization, 54(3), 421-456.

- Barnett, M., & Finnemore, M. (2004). Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics. Cornell University Press.

- Bjola, C., & Kornprobst, M. (2020). Understanding International Diplomacy: Theory and Practice (4th ed.). Routledge.

- Charlesworth, H., & Chinkin, C. (2000). The Boundaries of International Law: A Feminist Analysis. Manchester University Press.

- Crawford, J. (2014). Chance, Order, Change: The Course of International Law. General Course on Public International Law. Hague Academy of International Law.

- Crawford, J. (2014). The InternationalLaw Commission's Articles on State Responsibility: Introduction, Text and Commentaries. Cambridge University Press.

- State responsibility - Analytical Guide to the Work of the International Law Commission

- Fassbender, B., & Peters, A. (Eds.). (2022). The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law. Oxford University Press.

- Held, D., & McGrew, A. (2007). Globalization/Anti-Globalization: Beyond the Great Divide. Polity Press.

- Klabbers, J. (2022). An Introduction to International Institutional Law (4th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

- Krisch, N. (2014). The Decay of Consent: International Law in an Age of Global Public Goods. American Journal of International Law, 108(1), 1-45.

- Krisch, N. (2021). Autonomy and Authority in International Law. Cambridge University Press.

- Peters, A. (2021). International Law: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press.

- Slaughter, A.-M. (2004). A New World Order. Princeton University Press.

- Wallensteen, P. (2015). Peace Research: 50 Years of Conflicts and Peace. Routledge.

- Zwingel, S. (2016). Gender and International Organizations: A Critical Study. Routledge.

Key Digital Resources

The following links provide direct access to primary sources, databases, and relevant analyses for the study of international organizations. It's recommended to explore their content regularly.

- UN Audiovisual Library of International Law:https://legal.un.org/avl/

- Collection of publications from the International Law Commission (ILC):https://legal.un.org/ilc/

- Bayefsky.com:http://www.bayefsky.com/bystate.php

- United Nations (UN)

    Official website:https://www.un.org/es/

- United Nations Treaty Collection:https://treaties.un.org/

- International Court of Justice (ICJ) page:https://www.icj-cij.org/en

- UN Digital Library:https://digitallibrary.un.org/

- UN Documentation Research Guide:https://research.un.org/en/docs

- UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR):https://www.ohchr.org/

- OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs):https://www.unocha.org/

- International Labour Organization (ILO):https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--es/index.htm

- World Health Organization (WHO):https://www.who.int/es

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):https://www.acnur.org/

- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization):https://www.unesco.org/es

- European Union (EU)

    Official website:https://european-union.europa.eu/index_es

- EUR-Lex:https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=es

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain

- Spanish Representation to International Organizations: https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/PoliticaExterior/OrganismosInternacionales/Paginas/OrganismosInterna

Websites of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Amnesty International:https://www.amnesty.org/en/

- Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC):https://www.iccnow.org/

- Freedom House:https://freedomhouse.org/

- Human Rights Watch:https://www.hrw.org/

- Index on Censorship:https://www.indexoncensorship.org/

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):https://www.icrc.org/

- International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW Asia Pacific):https://iwrawap.org/

- Minority Rights Group International:https://minorityrights.org/

- Save the Children:https://www.savethechildren.org/

- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT):https://www.omct.org/en/

Periodicals and Think Tanks (Recommended for staying current)

These resources are useful for staying up-to-date on current developments in international law and international relations, offering diverse analyses and perspectives.

- ASIL Insights (American Society of International Law):https://www.asil.org/insights

- Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI):https://www.cigionline.org/

- Chatham House (The Royal Institute of International Affairs):https://www.chathamhouse.org/

- Council on Foreign Relations (CFR):https://www.cfr.org/

- Diplomacy & Foreign Policy at LSE (London School of Economics):https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/diplomacy/

- EJIL: Talk! (European Journal of International Law):https://www.ejiltalk.org/

- European Journal of International Law (EJIL):https://ejil.org/

- Foreign Affairs:https://www.foreignaffairs.com/

- Global Justice Blog (Centre for Global Justice, University of London): https://blogs.lshtm.ac.uk/globaljustice/

- International Crisis Group:https://www.crisisgroup.org/

- Just Security:https://www.justsecurity.org/

- Opinio Juris:http://opiniojuris.org/

- Project Syndicate:https://www.project-syndicate.org/

- Security Council Report:https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/

- The Conversation (International Affairs section):https://theconversation.com/global-affairs
- The Globalist:https://www.theglobalist.com/

Software

The course does not require any specific software

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this link. To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	English	second semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	English	second semester	morning-mixed