

International Security

Code: 104475
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
International Relations	OB	2

Contact

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Teachers

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites

The course is taught in English, and all the instructions, exams, and documents related to the course's organization and development will be in English. Most of the readings are also in English. Therefore, students are expected to have a good knowledge of this language.

Although no formal prerequisites are mandatory, the program is designed for students with a general knowledge of contemporary international political history and a general background on the main theories and concepts of the academic discipline of International Relations. Also, students are expected to follow international news through quality sources actively.

Objectives and Contextualisation

Course description

This course is designed to offer a general introduction to the meaning, key concepts, and relevant issues in contemporary international security studies. The course introduces students to different theoretical approaches which present different ways for theorizing security; and it assumes a broader perspective on security, not only of what security is and the means to achieve it, but also whose security should be guaranteed or promoted, what is to be secured, and how securing is performed.

Focusing on traditional and non-traditional security issues, the course seeks to provide students with the theoretical tools and empirical basis to have a better understanding of the complexity of contemporary security issues. Traditional approaches to international security will be critically contrasted with new perspectives on security (including human security, global security, security governance, comprehensive security, among others).

The course is divided into five parts. After an introductory session, the first part, "Analytical framework", includes the following topics: Thinking about international security, Defining security, and Evolution of war, and different forms of interstate violence. Part II, "Theorizing international security: 'classical' approaches", reviews four key classic ways to approach and analyze international security matters: Realism, Liberalism, Structuralism, historical materialism, and Peace studies. In Part III, "Theorizing about international security: contemporary approaches", the students will be introduced to more recent ways for studying and analyzing international security issues, through: Social constructivism and securitization studies, Human security and development, and Critical and Feminist approaches to security. Part IV reviews the evolution of traditional and non-traditional international security challenges. Depending on the evolution of the course, some of the following topics will be examined in detail: the impact of international organized crime, climate change, the environment, international security, and the implications of scientific and technological developments. The fifth part of the program includes: students' presentations on key security issues in different regions of the world, and a closing session to highlight some of the key challenges for international security studies.

A typical class will involve a combination of lecturing, collective discussion of assigned texts, analysis of relevant international security events, and identifying the possible policy implications of the different conceptual approaches used to analyze international security issues.

Course objectives

The course is intended to help students to be able to:

- Discuss and appraise the various meanings ascribed to international security in the academic and policy worlds.
- Obtain a general understanding of the challenges of providing security both in theory and in the policy world.
- Apply key international security approaches and concepts to particular security events in international relations and demonstrate an understanding of both traditional and new sources of insecurity.
- Relate theoretical approaches to international peace and security, apply them to contemporary security problems, and address the "pros" and "cons" of various methods to achieve global security.
- Reflect critically on the key security issues arising in the contemporary world.
- Develop basic skills to critically analyze, evaluate, and write security policy.

Competences

- Analyse cases and phenomena in the international sphere and interpret different political texts using contemporary political theories.
- Analyse the behaviour of international actors, both state and non-state.
- Analyse the challenges to international security including the conditions that promote peace and generate conflicts and the evolutionary of international security architecture.
- Analyse the production and implementation of public policies related to the international sphere, in particular foreign policy and security and defence policy.
- Analyse the structure and operation of international institutions and organisations (political, economic, military and security, environmental, development and emergency aid) both in the universal and regional spheres, with particular emphasis on the European Union, from either real or simulated cases.
- Apply quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques in research processes.
- Identify data sources and carry out rigorous bibliographical and documentary searches.
- Identify the main theories of international relations and their different fields (international theory, conflicts and security, international politics, etc.) to apply them in professional practice.

- Make changes to methods and processes in the area of knowledge in order to provide innovative responses to society's needs and demands.
- Produce and prepare the presentation of intervention reports and/or proposals.
- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Use metatheoretical data to argue and establish plausible relation of causality and establish ways of validating or rejecting them.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analyse public policies in specific countries, in particular foreign policies, and understand the traits of continuity and change in historical perspective.
2. Analyse the behaviour of different actors in the main topics and problems related to international security, international conflicts and the promotion of peace.
3. Apply different theories and focuses to the analysis of the main problems related to security, foreign policy and armed conflict and the promotion of peace.
4. Apply quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques in research processes.
5. describe the evolution of international security.
6. Evaluate the conditions that lead to international peace and those which make it more difficult.
7. Identify and analyse some of the key challenges in international security and international conflicts from a multidimensional perspective.
8. Identify data sources and carry out rigorous bibliographical and documentary searches.
9. Identify the main institutions with competences and working in international security, international conflicts and the promotion of peace and analyse the specific importance of these.
10. Make a reasoned application of different contemporary political theories to phenomena related to international security, international conflicts, foreign policies of the main states and the promotion of peace.
11. Produce and prepare the presentation of intervention reports and/or proposals.
12. Propose new experience-based methods or alternative solutions.
13. Propose new ways to measure success or failure when implementing ground-breaking proposals or ideas.
14. Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
15. Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
16. Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
17. Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
18. Use metatheoretical data to argue and establish plausible relation of causality and establish ways of validating or rejecting them.
19. Use tools for the analysis of foreign policies and apply them to real and simulated case studies.
20. Weigh up the risks and opportunities of one's own ideas for improvement and proposals made by others.

Content

Contents. Course structure

Introductory session. Brief presentation of the objectives, contents, and assessment of the course.

Part I. Analytical framework

1. Thinking about international security
2. Defining security.
3. The evolution of war and different forms of interstate violence

Part II. Theorizing about international security: "classical" approaches

4. Realism
5. Liberalism
6. Structuralism and historical materialism
7. Peace studies

Part III. Theorizing about international security: "Contemporary" approaches

8. Social constructivism and securitization studies
9. Human security and development
10. Critical and feminist approaches to security.

Part IV. Traditional and non-traditional international security challenges

11. Depending on the evolution of the course, at least two of the following topics will be reviewed in detail.
 - Competition among great powers: implications for international security
 - The impact of transnational organized crime on global security
 - Climate change, the environment, and international security

Part V. Students' presentations and Conclusions

12. Students' presentations on key security issues in different regions of the world.
 - Africa: Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa
 - Europe: Western and Eastern Europe
 - Asia: Central Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia
 - Americas: North, Central, South, and the Caribbean
13. Conclusions: challenges for the future of international security studies.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
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Type: Directed

Directed activities in the classroom with the support of ICT	45	1.8	2, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 17, 6
Seminars and practical sessions in small groups	4	0.16	10, 4, 21, 7
Type: Supervised			
Tutorships for the preparation of essays, exams and group projects	4	0.16	4, 11, 16, 19
Type: Autonomous			
Autonomous studying hours, preparation of essays, seminars, exams	90	3.6	2, 10, 4, 11, 5, 8, 7, 9, 17, 16, 14, 15, 6

Activities and Methodology

The workload for the students of this course is divided into different types of activities, each with a specific number of working hours.

- Directed activities. These activities are done under the direction of the instructors and include: lectures (with the support of information and communications technologies) and debates during class, seminars, and practical sessions in small groups to discuss different case studies and the diverse empirical examples included in the program.

- Supervised activities. Each student carries out these activities outside the classroom and according to a work schedule designed, supervised, and evaluated by the instructors. These activities include tutorships to prepare for essays, exams, and group projects.

- Autonomous activities. These are all the activities the students perform on their own and according to the requirements for successfully passing the course, such as autonomous studying hours, and preparation of essays, seminars, and exams.

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

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

Continuous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Group project	30%	2	0.08	2, 1, 10, 21, 11, 7, 20, 12, 13, 16, 14, 15, 19
Individual exercise	20%	2	0.08	1, 3, 10, 4, 18, 11, 8, 7, 9, 17, 16, 6
Midterm exam (topics 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 y 7)	40%	2	0.08	2, 3, 10, 5, 7, 9, 17
Participation in debates and other activities	10%	1	0.04	2, 11, 7, 16, 15

Assessment

The evaluation includes the following four parts:

1. Participation in class and other activities (10% of the grade).
2. Individual exercise (20% of the grade).
3. Group project (30% of the grade: 20% written paper, and 10% oral presentation of preliminary findings).
4. Midterm Exam including topics 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 (40% of the grade). Important: there is no final exam for this course.

Group Project.

The group project will consist of a paper and an oral presentation of the preliminary findings. The objective is to provide a deeper understanding of key contemporary security issues. This paper will include some of the analytical tools learned during the course. The draft versions of the papers will be presented orally to the whole group at the end of the semester.

Depending on the total number of students registered for the course, the groups will be formed by 4-6 students.

Further instructions will be provided during the first part of the course.

Important considerations

To pass the course, obtaining a grade of at least 5,0/10 in the midterm exam will be necessary, but not sufficient. Once this minimum grade of 5,0 is attained, the course's final grade will result from adding the grades obtained in the other activities.

Once the course's final grade is equal to or above 5,0, the student will receive a passing grade.

If the student completes more than 50% of the activities to be evaluated, this cancels the possibility of receiving a "NOT EVALUABLE" grade.

The date of all evaluable activities will be announced with enough time in advance. This will allow students to prepare and complete all the assigned tasks.

The students who do not pass the midterm exam on the first opportunity will have the chance to re-take it at the end of the semester, on the day specified by the Faculty for the compensatory evaluation. The individual exercise, the final group project, and other in-class activities cannot be re-taken or resubmitted on a different date from the one established by the lecturers. Extraordinary circumstances, such as significant health problems or other unforeseen personal situations, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Comprehensive evaluation

The procedure and the period for requesting the "Comprehensive Evaluation" for the whole course will be indicated by the Academic Office of the Faculty. The Comprehensive Evaluation will take place at the end of the term, on the day the Faculty sets for the course's final exam.

The Comprehensive Evaluation of the course will consist of a written exam (60% of the grade) and two practical activities (20% each). Important: To pass the course, a minimum grade of 5/10 must be obtained in the written exam part of the Comprehensive Evaluation. However, in the event of failing the written exam, you will have the chance to retake this test on the date set by the Faculty for the compensatory evaluation of the course. Please note that the practical activities of the Comprehensive Evaluation cannot be resubmitted.

The content to be evaluated in the written exam will include topics 1 to 7 of the course's Teaching Guide (Syllabus) and the mandatory texts for each subject. The required texts will be those assigned for the 2025-26 academic year.

If the student completes more than 60% of the activities to be evaluated, this cancels the possibility of receiving a grade of "NOT EVALUABLE".

The revision of the grades will follow the same procedure as for the continuous evaluation.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Restricted Use: In this course, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is permitted solely for specific purposes, such as brainstorming initial ideas, initial information search, grammar and style correction, and translations. Students must indicate which parts of the work have been generated using AI tools, identify the tools used, and include a critical reflection on the role and impact of these technologies in the learning and assessment process. Failure to disclose the use of AI will be considered a breach of academic integrity. It may lead to a partial or total loss of marks for the activity, or other academic sanctions as applicable. We invite you to reach out to the lecturers if you have AI uses in mind that you are unsure will comply with the rules, so that we can give feedback in advance. If we determine their usage exceeds the established boundaries, we may request that you redo some or all of the assignment to comply with the rules.

Academic integrity and original work are essential for rigorous and honest learning. These principles not only ensure fair assessment, but also promote critical thinking, intellectual autonomy, and ethical responsibility in academic work. All of these elements reinforce mutual trust and consolidate a community based on respect and honesty.

Plagiarism and cheating

Plagiarism and cheating are very serious offenses. These could result in a failing grade for the assigned task/exercise.

Please review the "Guia sobre Com Citar i Com Evitar el Plagi"(in Catalan), prepared by the Facultat de Ciències Polítiques i de Sociologia: <https://www.uab.cat/doc/GuiaCitesiPlagiEstudiants>

Also check the guides prepared by the Libraries Service of the UAB (Servei de Biblioteques):

- "How to cite and create your bibliography", available at:
<https://www.uab.cat/en/libraries/rcc/how-to-cite-prepare-bibliography>

- "Com citar i elaborar la bibliografia", available at: <https://www.uab.cat/ca/biblioteques/ccb/citacions-bibliografia>
- "Cómo citar y elaborar la bibliografía", available at:
<https://www.uab.cat/es/bibliotecas/ccc/citaciones-bibliografia>

Bibliography

Bibliography

The key texts for this course are:

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Hough, P., Malik, S., Moran, A., Pilbeam, B., & Stokes, W. (2021). International security studies. Theory and practice. 2nd edition. Taylor & Francis. Alternatively, other editions can be consulted.

Neack, Laura (2017). National, international, and human security: A comparative introduction. Rowman & Littlefield. *Electronic version available at UAB libraries*.

Williams, Paul D. (2018). *Security Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge. 3rd edition. Alternatively, other editions can be consulted.

Other highly recommended readings are:

Baylis, John, Wirtz, James, & Gray, Colin (Eds.). (2016). *Strategy in the contemporary world*. 6th edition Oxford University Press.c Alternatively, other editions can be used.

Browning, Christopher S. (2013). *International security: a very short introduction*. OUP Oxford.

Dannreuther, Roland (2013). *International Security: The Contemporary Agenda*. Polity press. 2nd edition. Alternatively, other editions can be consulted.

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Soriano,Juan Pablo (2021). "Los estudios de seguridad: orígenes, evolución, herramientas y debates en curso", en R. Grasa y C. Rodríguez (coord.). *Ciencia Política y Relaciones Internacionales: un mundo y una disciplina en proceso de cambio*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional y aDistancia, UNAD.

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General recommended bibliography on international security

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Recommended academic journals on international security and international relations

- American Political Science Review
- Anuario Internacional CIDOB
- British Journal of Political Science
- British Journal of Politics & International Relations
- Bulletin of Latin American Research
- China Quarterly
- Chinese Journal of International Politics
- Conflict Management and Peace Science
- Cooperation and Conflict
- Colombia Internacional
- European Journal of International Relations
- European Journal of Political Research
- European Political Science Review
- Foreign Affairs
- Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica
- Foreign Policy Analysis
- Geopolitics
- Global Society
- International Affairs
- International Feminist Journal of Politics
- International Organization
- International Political Science Review

- International Security
- International Studies Quarterly
- International Studies Review
- Journal of Conflict Resolution
- Journal of International Relations and Development
- Journal of Modern African Studies
- Journal of Peace Research
- Journal of Strategic Studies
- Latin American Politics and Society
- Mediterranean Politics
- Nueva Sociedad
- Pacific Review
- Política Exterior
- Review of International Studies
- Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional
- Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals
- Revista Electrónica de Estudios Internacionales
- *Revista Española de Derecho Internacional*
- Security Dialogue
- Security Studies
- Terrorism and Political Violence
- The Political Quarterly
- World Policy Journal
- World Politics

Software

Students are expected to have the basic knowledge of the most common computer programs for the elaboration of texts, tables, and charts as well as for the search of specialized information on the Internet.

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
(SEM) Seminars	51	English	first semester	afternoon
(TE) Theory	51	English	first semester	afternoon