

Middle East International Relations

Code: 104477
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
International Relations	OT	4

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Teachers

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Teaching groups languages

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

Prerequisites

No specific prerequisites

Objectives and Contextualisation

The basic objectives of the course are:

- To situate the study of the region's international relations within the general framework of the social sciences, integrating analyses that consider both historical and systemic perspectives focused on structures and processes;
- To apply the fundamental concepts of the academic discipline of International Relations to the context of the MENA region;
- To acquire the appropriate analytical skills to be applied to the international relations of the Middle East and North Africa;
- To become familiar with the global processes that have shaped contemporary international society and how these affect the MENA region;
- To identify the main actors, resources, and processes that have shaped the political, economic, social, and ideological reality of the region;
- To express and defend orally and in writing their views on the most relevant international issues affecting this region.

These objectives will be addressed through academic readings, group discussions, case analyses, and research projects, with the aim of providing students with a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the region's international relations

Competences

- Analyse international society and its structure and understand its importance for real-life problems and professional practice.
- Analyse the behaviour of international actors, both state and non-state.
- 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.
- Learn and analyse the impacts of the globalisation process on domestic political systems and on the behaviour of the political actors and the public.
- Make changes to methods and processes in the area of knowledge in order to provide innovative responses to society's needs and demands.
- 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 develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
- Take account of social, economic and environmental impacts when operating within one's own area of knowledge.
- Use different tools for analysing the contemporary international system and its functional and regional or geographical subsystems.
- Use metatheoretical data to argue and establish plausible relation of causality and establish ways of validating or rejecting them.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analyse processes of decision-making, drawing up and implementing Spanish foreign and security policies.
2. Analyse the functioning of decision-making in real and simulated case studies in the different areas of economic governance in the European Union.
3. Analyse the historical and comparative roles of the different actors in the large regional areas.
4. Analyse the indicators of sustainability of academic and professional activities in the areas of knowledge, integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions.
5. Analyse the operation of international regional and functional subsystems, their structure and dynamics and the probable evolutionary trends.
6. Analyse the policies and responses to the impacts of globalisation, identifying differences and similarities in each of the states of the regional subsystems studied.
7. Apply analytical tools of behaviour of actors in each of the regional subsystems (Middle East Latin America, Eastern Asia) and the operational subsystems (European Union, economic governance) studied in the subjects.
8. Apply quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques in research processes.
9. Be familiar with the basic bibliography on historical evolution of regional and governmental systems in the countries of reference for the subject.

10. Critically evaluate the impacts of globalisation in different areas: security, environment, human rights, migrations and peace.
11. Demonstrate knowledge of theoretical trends and classical and recent analytical approaches to international relations.
12. Describe the characteristics of each of the regional subsystems studied, signs of historical and comparative change and continuity and the role played by the different national and non-national actors in each subsystem.
13. Describe the international order: anarchy versus order, national society and transnational society.
14. Describe the main elements that characterise international global society (1945-2000).
15. Identify data sources and carry out rigorous bibliographical and documentary searches.
16. Identify the factors of change and continuity and the main trends in Spanish foreign and security policies, and their relationship with the international, European and Atlantic organisations with which they interact.
17. Identify the main international institutions and organisations in each regional subsystem (Middle East, Eastern Asia, Latin America) and analyse for them the roles and actions, in line with the subject.
18. Identify the social, economic and environmental implications of academic and professional activities within the area of your own knowledge.
19. Make a brief comparison of national and/or regional cases within the same international and/or regional framework.
20. Make a critical comparison of the evolution of the large regional areas that are covered in the subject.
21. Make adequate use of the theory and concepts of international relations (Hobbesian, Grotian and Kantian thought).
22. Make comparisons between the evolution of governmental systems within a supranational regional area.
23. Make comparisons between the levels of regional autonomy within a state.
24. Propose new experience-based methods or alternative solutions.
25. Propose new ways to measure success or failure when implementing ground-breaking proposals or ideas.
26. Propose viable projects and actions that promote social, economic and environmental benefits.
27. Propose ways to evaluate projects and actions for improving sustainability.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
31. Use metatheoretical data to argue and establish plausible relation of causality and establish ways of validating or rejecting them.
32. Weigh up the risks and opportunities of one's own ideas for improvement and proposals made by others.

Content

International Relations of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

PART I. THE REGION AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

Topic 1. The region as a regional subsystem

- International Relations and Area Studies: approaches and tensions
- Disputed geographies and terminologies (Arab/Islamic World, MENA/WANA, Middle East, Maghreb/Mashreq, Euro-Mediterranean, Levant, Arabian Peninsula, etc.)

- Shared features (and their transformation): geography, history, societies, cultures, lifestyles, authoritarianism...
- The region as a regional subsystem

Topic 2. Minorities: Ethnicity and sectarianism

- Features of Islam: sharia and legal sources, the Islamic umma, Islam and politics, schisms in Islam: Sunni, Shiite and others
- Judaism and Eastern Christianity (Coptic, Maronite, Assyrian)
- Political instrumentalization of minorities (e.g. Maronites, Yazidis, etc.)
- Sectarian systems and quota politics (e.g. Lebanon and Iraq)
- Rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and "sectarianism"

Topic 3. The importance of the transnational element in the digital era

- The usefulness of constructivism
- Sovereignty and transnational challenges
- Pan-Arabism and the new Arabism
- Islam as a transnational identity: the *umma*, Islamic solidarity and pan-Islamism
- The case of Kurdistan

Topic 4. Political Islam: the major mobilizing ideology

- From Islamism to Salafism: categories, ideology (Islamic state, sharia and gender issues), and nuances
- Debate on post-Islamism and movement moderation (e.g. Algeria's civil war in the 1990s and Tunisia after the Arab Spring)
- Al Qaeda and the global war on terror
- Daesh and the building of a proto-Islamic state

Topic 5. High levels of armed conflict

- Limits of realism and conventional geopolitics
- Mapping regional conflict: data, actors, evolution
- Military spending, arms trade, and the military-industrial complex (e.g. Israel)
- Nuclear factor: Israel and Iran
- Forced migration due to resource appropriation, war and climate change: population movements, asylum and refugees

Topic 6. Weak cooperation: regionalism and institutions

- Liberal theory and the study of the region
- Regionalism and regionalization
- Weak and vertical economic interactions (e.g. the Euro-Mediterranean project)

- The Arab League and other regional IOs: potential and limits

PART II. IDENTITY AND THE (COLONIAL) OTHER

Topic 7. Orientalisms and postcolonial perspectives

- Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1978) and critics
- Knowledge, power structures, and global hierarchies
- Moral empires: the 3 Cs, slavery, and saving women vs. Islamic decolonial feminisms
- Colonialism, postcolonialism, and contemporary representations

Topic 8. Towards colonization

- Control (and appropriation) of land
- Construction of the modern state
- The fate of Muhammad Ali's Egypt (1805-1848) and the Ottoman Empire's decline: no great powers allowed in the region
- Mechanisms facilitating colonization (production relations, reforms, loans and debt, capitulations and protection, minorities, limited military interventions, etc.)

Topic 9. Colonialism and the struggle for independence

- Colonial expansion and the formation of empires (British, French, Spanish, Italian): competition and collaboration among colonial powers
- Function of colonies for metropolises
- Alliances with local elites and relations with the colonized population
- Resistance and the fight for independence through subaltern studies: the paradigmatic case of Algeria

Topic 10. Settler colonialism

- The concept of settler colonialism: definition and implications
- The figure of the settler
- Zionism and the occupation of Palestine
- Western Sahara: pending decolonization

PART III. REGIONAL ORDER AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM (1945-2025)

Topic 11. The complexity of the Cold War in the region

- Strategic value of the region and global energy change (oil)
- Rise of the U.S., global interests, and the USSR's southern border
- Regional power structure: multipolarity and polycentrism
- Regional powers: Cold War actors and intraregional competition
- Proxy wars and local roots of conflict

Topic 12. End of the old colonial order: towards the Suez War (1946-1956)

- Insertion of the region into global capitalism
- Newly independent states and typologies based on elites and resources: rentierism, distributive policies, and welfare
- Entry into the Cold War (USSR in Azerbaijan, Truman Doctrine, etc.) and Soviet containment (Baghdad Pact to CENTO)
- Arab and oil nationalism and internal contestation: Egypt's Free Officers (Nasser) and Mossadegh's Iran (1953)

Topic 13. Blocs and revolutions: regional polarization (1956-1974)

- Revolutions and coups in the Arab world: Iraq (1958), Syria (1961-63), Algeria, North Yemen (1962), South Yemen (1967), Libya (1969)
- Radicalism and anti-imperialism: 60s-70s movements and the Tricontinental project
- Egypt vs. Saudi Arabia: struggle for regional leadership and intervention in North Yemen (1962-70)
- Defeat of 1967: blow to pan-Arabism, rise of Islamism, and Israel's new role as U.S. ally
- Superpowers and the Cold War: strategic penetration and proxy wars

Topic 14. Intensification and end of the Cold War (1974-1989)

- Rise of Saudi Arabia (oil, finance, support for conservative Islam)
- Iranian Revolution (1978-1979): shifts in alliances and Iran-Iraq war
- Local wars with major regional impact (Lebanon and Western Sahara)
- Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and the mujahideen
- Social unrest: *infitah*, neoliberalism, and bread riots

Topic 15. Post-Gulf War and unipolar order (1991-2001)

- Second Gulf War and consolidation of U.S. military presence
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
- Normalization with Israel: Oslo I (1993) and II (1995), and Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs)
- Free trade zones: European Union and U.S.

Topic 16. Global war on terror and regional restructuring (2001-2011)

- High U.S. military interventionism: the impact of 9/11
- From Afghanistan (2001) to the Iraq invasion (2003)
- Daesh and the international coalition
- Rise of Iran as a regional power and the "Axis of Resistance"
- Neoliberalism, politically driven capitalism, and neopatrimonialism

Topic 17. Arab Spring and regional fragmentation (2011-2015)

- Arab Spring, popular mobilization, counter-revolution and consequences

- Moderate Islamism vs. (jihadist) Salafism
- Libya and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)
- Major powers in the region: U.S., Russia (Syria), and China as economic actor

Topic 18. Regional conflicts and reordering (2015-2025)

- *Omnibalancing*, shifting alliances
- Interventions by regional and international powers: Libya, Syria, Yemen...
- Continuity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Abraham Accords (2020), Gaza genocide (2023-), and internal Israeli struggles
- Neoliberal enclaves and global elites

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Courses	50	2	5, 2, 3, 6, 7, 20, 19, 11, 14, 13, 9, 22, 12, 17, 30, 28, 29, 21, 10
Type: Supervised			
Readings and written work	34	1.36	5, 2, 4, 3, 6, 7, 8, 31, 20, 12, 15, 18, 17, 32, 27, 24, 25, 26, 10
Type: Autonomous			
Readings	45	1.8	5, 2, 3, 6, 7, 20, 19, 11, 14, 13, 9, 22, 12, 17, 21, 10

In order to achieve the planned objectives, this course focuses on theoretical and practical classes. The readings and activities suggested by the teaching staff propose an orderly and coordinated development of the subject's contents with the aim of facilitating the assimilation and understanding of the contents.

- Readings
- Lectures
- Written assignment
- Participation in discussions / debates / activities

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

Exam	50	4	0.16	4, 3, 6, 31, 20, 19, 11, 14, 13, 9, 12, 17, 24, 29, 21, 10
Participation in classroom exercises	15	9	0.36	2, 7, 16, 23, 32, 25, 26, 29, 21
Practical exercise	35	8	0.32	5, 1, 8, 31, 22, 15, 18, 27, 30, 28, 10

The continuous assessment will consist of :

A) Tests (50% of the final grade):

2 tests, each representing 25% of the final grade (50% total).

B) Practical work (35% of the final grade):

Delivered in two parts (40% + 60% of the practical grade, respectively).

C) In-class exercises (participation) (15% of the final grade):

Supplementary exercises related to the explained content, done in groups during class and uploaded to the Virtual Campus.

Students who complete at least 70% of the exercises will automatically receive these points.

Those who do not reach this percentage will have to answer an additional question about the exercise content in the second partial exam.

SINGLE ASSESSMENT

Students who request it properly and on time may opt for a single assessment consisting of:

- a) Test (40%)
- b) Essay (20%)
- c) Question about the practical work (25%)
- d) Question about the materials of the exercises done in class and available on the Virtual Campus (15%)

This exam will take place at the end of the semester.

If a minimum score of 5 out of 10 is not achieved, it can be retaken at a later date.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

For this course, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is allowed exclusively for support tasks such as bibliographic or information search, text correction, or translations. Students must clearly identify which parts were generated using this technology, specify the tools used, and include a reflection on how these influenced the process and the final result of the activity.

Lack of transparency regarding the use of AI in this assessed activity will be considered academic dishonesty and may result in partial or total penalty on the activity's grade, or more severe sanctions in serious cases.

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Software

No special 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	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed