POL 3: International Organization (2024-2025)
Convener: Dr. Alena Drieschova

Lecturers: Alena Drieschova, ad522@cam.ac.uk
           Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, mer29@cam.ac.uk
           Giovanni Mantilla, gm633@cam.ac.uk
           Mark Weller, mw148@cam.ac.uk

Supervisors: Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, mer29@cam.ac.uk
             Alena Drieschova, ad522@cam.ac.uk
             Giovanni Mantilla, gm633@cam.ac.uk
             Ian Shields, ies25@cam.ac.uk
             Mark Barrow, mdb74@cam.ac.uk
             Martin Kirsch, mlk47@cam.ac.uk
             Kate McNeil, km792@cam.ac.uk
             Liana Minkova, lgm27@cam.ac.uk
             Zikun Yang, zy301@cam.ac.uk

Aims

POL 3 (International Organisation) aims to expand students’ knowledge and understanding of cooperation and conflict in the global system, expanding on themes and concepts introduced in POL 2. It does so by focusing on coordinated attempts to address global problems—both historically and in a contemporary setting—on the many forms such coordination takes, the actors who are involved in it, and on the role of norms, ideas, and power in these processes.

The course has the following objectives:
- to develop students’ understanding of the main theoretical approaches to the study of cooperation and conflict in international politics.
- to provide students with a basic grasp of the core purposes and functions of global governance institutions and actors (such as the United Nations, the World Bank, international courts, and various non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations, private firms, or epistemic communities).
- to provide insights into the processes through which global governance operates
- to explore different issues of global governance, and highlight their key challenges

Paper Description

How can international organizations (IOs) help to address the range of global security, economic, human rights, and other problems we face today? How is power exercised over, within and by IOs? The course will analyse the role and functioning of major international institutions and IOs with the aims of (a) encouraging students to consider whether and how current patterns of international cooperation solve global problems, and (b) inviting students to assess the extent to which processes of international cooperation entrench or reduce power inequalities in world politics.

At the theoretical level, the course will introduce students to competing perspectives on IOs, variously conceived as functional instruments of states in general or of great powers in
particular, or as (semi)autonomous bureaucratic actors with interests and agency of their own.

At the empirical level, the course will explore how cooperation problems in areas of international security, trade and finance, the environment, the internet, international law and human rights are addressed by states, IOs and other international actors, including NGOs and private actors.

**Course Structure**

The paper is divided into five parts, as well as a prologue and an epilogue.

*International Organization: A Prologue* focuses on international organization before international organizations. The lectures in this part examine the demand for institutionalized co-operation in world politics, before analysing how co-operation is possible under anarchy.

I. *IR Theories – A Refresher* quickly surveys major theoretical and conceptual debates in International Relations relating to processes of international organization. It briefly revisits realist, rationalist and constructivist perspectives, which have already been discussed in POL2.

II. *Actors* lectures in this part consider the variety of different actors (states, sub-state agencies, IOs, NGOs, multi-national corporations, epistemic communities, and courts) that both create and resolve global governance problems.

III. *Processes* focuses on practices of cooperation among states and non-state actors in different areas of global politics. The focus is on such processes as development, the regulation of warfare, governmentality, and the dynamics of post-truth politics.

IV. *Topics* addresses a variety of different topics and issue areas in which global governance occurs, such as human rights, peacekeeping, the internet, and the environment.

V. *The International System in Action* provides empirical applications and theoretical discusssions of how international law operates in practices in a number of the topic areas discussed throughout the course.

*Epilogue: Looking into the Crystal Ball.* We end with reflecting on the potential for moving from global governance to global government.

**Learning Aims**

POL 3 aims to help students develop a theoretical as well as practical understanding of the major institutions that govern contemporary global affairs, the nature of the problems these institutions strive to solve, and the causes and consequences of the strategies adopted to address these problems. After completing the course, students should be able to articulate the leading theoretical explanations within the field of International Relations for why international organizations and other actors involved in global governance exist, how they operate, and how they influence the behaviour of both states and non-state actors. They should also be able to apply a range of theoretical arguments to analyse cases of international co-operation and conflict.

**Teaching and Assessment**

Students will be offered 24 lectures plus one revision lecture for the course. In addition, they will have five (5) supervisions plus one revision supervision over the course of the academic year.
Supervisions are designed to allow in-depth discussion of the major themes and topics introduced in lectures in a small group setting.

Students will submit a 1500 to 2200 (max) words essay in advance of each supervision. The list of questions for each of the five mandatory supervisions can be found at the end of this course guide. Supervisors are free to either assign an essay question for you or give you freedom to choose. Please follow your supervisor’s lead. The supervisions will usually take place around weeks 3, 5 and 8 in Michaelmas term and weeks 2 and 4 in Lent term (with precise dates and timings to be agreed with your supervisor), with the revision supervision in Easter.

**Preparation for Lectures and Supervisions**

To get the most out of the paper, students are strongly encouraged to attend all the lectures, having completed the required (CORE) readings for each lecture. The lectures and readings are designed to complement each other. A list of supplementary readings is provided for each lecture topic to enable students to broaden and deepen their knowledge of individual topics and to assist in exam preparation. Section V The International System in Action is structured differently, only a set number of background readings are available, and case-specific reading material will be distributed during the lectures.

**Assessment**

Assessment will be by written examination in Easter Term. Students will answer TWO questions. Questions will be broad and thematic, designed to encourage students to draw on and combine their knowledge of several lecture topics. A list of exam questions from the 2020/2021, 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24 exams can be found at the end of this paper guide and online on Moodle.

**Readings**

Below you will find a list of preparatory readings that you may want to consult during the summer in preparation for the course. These are grouped into two categories. The first category contains a few classic or important background texts in the field of IO. The second category is general textbooks on International Organization that you may wish to consult to gain a basic understanding of what types of IOs are out there and how they operate.

The assigned weekly readings consist predominantly of journal articles and book chapters, which will generally be available electronically from the University Library’s e-journal resources or e-books provisions.

**BACKGROUND TEXTS** (Consult all of these, if possible, during the summer break)


For part V of the course:


**RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS** (choose one or two of these to support you throughout the course).


**List of Lectures**

Lectures in Michaelmas Term will take place on the following days through weeks 1-8:

- Thursday’s at 3pm
- Tuesday’s at 11am

The first lecture of Michaelmas Term will take place on Thursday the 10\(^{th}\) of October.

Lecture’s in Lent Term will take place on the following days:

- Thursday at 3pm, week 1-5
- Tuesday at 11am, weeks 1-4

The first lecture of Lent Term will take place on Thursday the 23\(^{rd}\) of January.

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION: A PROLOGUE**

**Lecture 1: International Organization before International Organizations** (MES)

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**PART I: IR THEORIES – A REFRESHER**

**Lecture 2: Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy (MES)**

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 3: Rationalist Institutionalism** (MES)

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


PART II: ACTORS

**Lecture 4: International Organizations from a Constructivist Lens** (AD)

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


Epstein, Charlotte, ed. (2017) *Against International Relations Norms: Postcolonial*
Lecture 5: How Do International Courts Impact World Politics? (AD)

Core Readings


Recommended Readings


Lecture 6: The UN Security Council: Power and Legitimacy (GM)

Core Readings


Recommended Readings


**Lecture 7: Governance by NGOs and Civil Society (MES)**

**Core Readings**

Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Cornell University Press), Chapters 1 and 3.


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 8: Corporations and Global Governance** (GM)

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


Lecture 9: Epistemic Communities (AD)

Core Readings


Recommended Readings


**PART III: PROCESSES**

**Lecture 10: Post-Truth Politics (AD)**

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 11: Governmentality (AD)**

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 12: Making Poverty History? (AD)**

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 13: The Laws of War** (GM)

**Core Readings**


**Recommend Readings**


**PART IV: TOPICS**

**Lecture 14: Human Rights (GM)**

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 15: International Peace Keeping (MES)**

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 16: Governing the Internet (AD)**

**Core Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Lecture 17: International Environmental Politics & Climate Change (AD)**

**Core Readings**


Recommended Readings


PART V: THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM IN ACTION

You may find it useful to do some general reading on how international law works. The principal undergraduate textbook is Shaw, International Law (9th ed.). All colleges have numerous copies. You may also want to take a look at a shorter introductory text you can read in one go. Traditionally, this has been Higgins, Problems and Process: International Law and How we Use it, OUP 1995. This is still widely available and remains very good. A more recent short introduction with a policy twist is Ian Hurd, How to do Things with International Law, Princeton UP 2017.


Beyond that, you will be provided with a bundle of case-study materials for each week.

Lecture 18: Prohibition of the Use of Force (MW)

We will consider the development of the prohibition of the use of force from the League of Nations to the Briand Kellogg Pact and the UN Charter, focusing in particular on the interplay between the prohibition and the right to self-defence. We will also approach the international administration of these rules by international institutions, in particular the UN Security Council. We will test the limits of self-defence in relation to the recent military operations in Gaza.
Lecture 19: Collective Security (MW)

We will note the operation of collective security during the Cold War and then consider the case of Iraq-Kuwait of 1990/1, which led to the proclamation of the ‘New World Order.’


We will continue our discussion of the relationship between self-defence and collective security, considering the US/UK-led unlawful war against Iraq of 2003.

Lecture 21: Stretching Self-Defence and Counter-terrorism (MW)

We will consider the UK’s proposed doctrine of self-defence against terrorist threats and the doctrine of ‘unwilling and unable’ in the context of claims to the use of force in relation to allegations of terrorism emanating from foreign territory.

Lecture 22: Forcible Humanitarian Action (MW)

We will consider the differing theories in support and against the doctrine of forcible humanitarian action, culminating in the elegance of the Weller theory on the subject. We will use the case of the NATO armed action concerning Kosovo as our principal example.

Lecture 23: Forcible Humanitarian Action and Pro-democratic Action (MW)

We will continue discussing forcible humanitarian action and also consider the doctrine of democracy in international law and claims to the use of force in defence of democracy.

EPILOGUE

Lecture 24: From Global Governance to World Government? (MES)

Core Readings


Recommended Readings


Supervision Essay Questions

Supervision 1:
1. How does the assumption of anarchy affect the prospect of international cooperation? Compare and contrast how Realists, Liberals and Constructivists theorise anarchy and its consequences.

2. Are IOs a constraint on state power or a creature of it?

3. How can governmental and non-governmental international organizations become autonomous from states? Is such autonomy good or bad?

Supervision 2:
1. What explains UN Security Council decision-making on military intervention? Why do states resort to it?

2. To what extent can firms and NGOs substitute for states in addressing global problems?

3. Which role(s) do knowledge and science play in international cooperation?

4. How do international courts and tribunals shape the conduct of states and non-state actors? What factors explain their relative success or failure in doing so?

Supervision 3:
1. How can rankings shape state behaviour? Is this a positive feature of global governance?

2. Can international organizations defend and advance the interests of the poorer and weaker countries? As a general rule, do they?

3. Has the United Nations since 1945 helped to reduce the incidence of violence in world politics? In what areas has it proven more (or less) effective, and why?

4. Does human rights law make a difference to respect for human rights globally? How can be best conceptualize and observe the impact of human rights law?

Supervision 4:
1. Are (I)NGOs or states better placed to advance Human Rights norms?
2. Why is cooperation over climate change proving so difficult?

3. Has the Internet led to a more democratic or a more authoritarian international order?

**Supervision 5:**

1. Is a World State possible? Is it desirable?

2. Has the law on the use of force lost its purpose after Iraq (2003), Ukraine and Gaza?

3. What is the difference between self-defence and collective security?

4. Was the NATO intervention in relation to Kosovo lawful?
1. Has the proliferation of international organisations over the last 100 years made anarchy-centred theories like realism obsolete?

2. Is the United Nations Security Council an effective and legitimate guardian of international peace and security?

3. Are rationalism and constructivism compatible when it comes to explaining aspects of international organisation? In your answer, refer to concrete examples of organisations or laws.

4. To what extent do you agree that international law is what states make of it?

5. Can sovereign equality overcome power hierarchies in international organisations?

6. How can we explain that human rights law is both widely adopted yet unevenly applied by states?

7. Some have suggested the United States should lead a “League of Democracies” to defend contemporary global governance. Analyse the potential virtues and drawbacks of this idea.

8. Does international organisation keep up with changing times, or does it tend to stay the same? Explain why.

9. Does the increasing involvement of NGOs in global governance make solving pressing global problems harder or easier? Address with examples from at least two distinct issue-areas (e.g. international security; human rights; international political economy, etc.)

10. International organisations consistently favour peace and the rule of law, while states’ commitments to these goals is patchy. Does this mean that transferring more power from states to IOs would more effectively fulfill these goals?

11. Is the leadership of a hegemon more or less important in providing global public goods in 2021 than immediately after 1945?

12. Would the world’s poor be better off, worse off, or about the same, in a world without IOs?

13. How can the global governance of climate change be improved?
POL3 Exam Paper 2022

Candidates should answer two questions.

1. Can states be both social and rational actors at the same time? Discuss with reference to relevant theoretical debates and empirical cases in international organisation.

2. With US hegemony in decline, will global politics be less cooperative?

3. Can we assume that international organisations benefit states from the fact that states create and accept them?

4. To what extent does multilateralism secure equalized gains from cooperation?

5. Is international law unenforceable?

6. Why do international trade rules tend to enjoy greater compliance than international rules that deal with protection from atrocity?

7. Is the UN Security Council an obsolete institution?

8. Is the power and influence of NGOs and global civil society actors declining or increasing? Why?

9. Has the economic development of countries outside of Europe and North America led to more equal representation in global governance?

10. Are international organisations more effective than hegemonic states in the prevention and management of global financial crises?

11. Is a world state inevitable?

12. Does the existence of global economic and financial regulation provide evidence of the retreat of the nation-state?

13. Is the Liberal International Order good or bad for countries from the Global South?
POL3 Exam Paper 2023

Candidates should answer two questions.

1. ‘Anarchy’ is widely said to be the central organizing principle of the world order. Is this accurate, or is the present world order better described as ‘hierarchical’, ‘networked’ or ‘market-based’? (You may focus your answer on just one or all alternatives).

2. To what extent is the operation of international organizations determined by domestic politics?

3. Does a lack of credible enforcement mechanisms prevent most international organizations from being effective?

4. Are transnational non-state actors more likely to influence state policy on issues related to human, social, or political rights, than on economic and security issues?

5. Robert Keohane (1984) argues that hegemony and international institutions are functional substitutes. Do you agree, and what empirical support do you find for or against this proposition?

6. What are the chief barriers to effective UN peacekeeping, and what might be done to overcome these?

7. Why do states delegate authority to institutions? What are some of the problems that can arise in relationships between institutional ‘Agents’ and state ‘Principals’?

8. How do knowledge and power interrelate with one another in international governance dynamics? Direct attention to two theoretical perspectives and illustrate with relevant examples.

9. How do you explain the characteristic features of the contemporary climate change regime?

10. What role(s) can actors from the Global South play in the spread of international norms?

11. How can developing states defend their interests in global governance mechanisms?

12. To what extent do multinational companies and other for-profit private actors enable or constrain states’ ability to govern?

13. What explains the rise of the liberal international order?
Candidates should answer two questions

1. How does governance without government work? Pick two empirical cases to develop your arguments, such as, for example, the Internet and the issue of climate change.

2. What is the objective of critical theory in relation to problem-solving theories?

3. Can the laws of war restrain combatants? In what conditions can we expect to see greater respect for them and why?

4. Do international courts operate according to the same logic as other international organizations?

5. Is the international order likely to look the same in the future as it does in the present? Why/why not?

6. What explains the alleged ‘crisis’ of the Liberal International Order?

7. Do fears of cheating or rather distributional conflicts pose the greatest obstacle to international cooperation?

8. How do rational institutionalists and constructivists think differently about international organization before international organizations?

9. Why do authoritarian regimes sign and ratify international human rights agreements? Do these agreements make a difference?

10. Why do states outsource governance functions to private regulators, and with what consequences?

11. How does collective security work? When in history has it been effective (if at all)?

12. What are some of the most effective tools available to NGOs to affect global politics?

13. How do feminist perspectives explain the occurrence of wars? Do you find such explanations convincing, or do you prefer alternative perspectives?

14. Are epistemic communities or firms more powerful actors in international relations?