# History of Political Cultures and Civilisations

## Prof. Michele Brunelli

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

**Course aims**

The aim of the course is to introduce and explore the main historical dynamics of international relations from the Post-WW1 era, emphasising the complex nature and multi-faceted historical, socio-political and cultural heritage of the world’s various macro-regions. Students will also learn the main political transitions that led to the establishment of the bipolar system, then to its end and subsequent transition into the post-bipolar phase. To this end, the course will adopt a methodology based on an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach. The course also aims to provide students with a range of intellectual tools so that they can identify and analyse events relating to recent areas of instability and conflict (from zones in the Middle East, to others in Africa and Asia) independently and more deeply.

**Intended learning outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will have learned, understood and assimilated the main historical and political dynamics of the events that characterised 20th-century international world history, as well as the specific historical-cultural and social characteristics of certain countries and geopolitical groups outside Europe. They will be equipped to independently assess its impact on subsequent events in an autonomous way and, above all, with a number of key interpretative approaches to understanding the contemporary world.

In more detail, students will also be equipped to better understand the structural complexity and social, cultural and religious issues of some macro-regions of the 20th-century and the first two decades of the 21st century in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, and gain skills in analysing the main geopolitical dynamics, international relations and international cooperation of certain sub-regional systems.

***COURSE CONTENT***

* The complexity of extra-European societies and political cultures: Asia and Africa
* The Far East: China and Japan
* Europe in the early 20th century and the structural causes of WWI.
* The construction of the Middle East
* WW2 and the demise of the Empires
* The birth of the two Blocs and the Cold War. Its global impact
* 1979, a year of great change: Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran
* The Middle East today. Fault lines of instability and new alliances.
* Regional players: the Islamic Republic of Iran as a case study
* Regional actors: case study on North Korea
* Problems in contemporary Africa: from neo-colonialism to militant Islam

***READING LIST***

- Lecture notes and materials available in the virtual classroom.

- A. Varsori, *Storia internazionale. Dal 1919 a oggi,* Il Mulino, Bologna, 2015.

- R. Di Peri, F. Mazzucotelli, *Guida alla politica mediorientale*, Mondadori Università, Milano, 2011.

- Further information on the reading list will be made available by the lecturer in class and on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will be delivered by means of frontal lectures, placing a particular focus on comparison and the direct dialogue with students, who will be able to formulate suggestions for further study or debate on specific issues of particular interest or topicality.

During the course, there will also be seminars to focus on particular topics and testimonies from qualified individuals and specialists in the fields of history, geopolitics, diplomacy and military institutions, with a view to introducing and exploring methods and topics that are particularly relevant to the course content.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed by means of an oral exam on the following aspects of their knowledge and skills: 1) capacity to critically analyse course content, verbally reformulate and discuss the knowledge acquired through discussion of theoretical elements and case studies; 2) ability to discuss key theories and national and international methodologies; 3) ability to make links within and across multiple disciplines from a historical, political, economic and social perspective with regard to the main topics covered by the course.; 4) ability to argue and analyse.

There will be three/four questions on the whole syllabus designed to assess students’ understanding of the fundamental material and issues covered by the course. The exam is marked out of 30.

Should the number of students be particularly high, the oral exam may be replaced with a written exam. This will contain five open questions. Students will need to provide clear, well-organised, thoroughly developed and relevant responses to each question. Each question will be worth a maximum of 6/30 marks, (range: from 0 points, in case of no answer, to 6 points in case of excellent answer). In this case, too, students’ ability to make effective arguments, to analyse information and above all to make connections between different aspects of the discipline will contribute particularly to the final mark.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

As this is an introductory course designed for students in the first year, there are no specific prerequisites. Nevertheless, students are advised to revise the key events of the 20th century, using a contemporary history textbook.

Further teaching material (e.g. historical documents, either in Italian or in a foreign language, videos, documentaries, etc.) on the topics explained in class will be made available on Blackboard during the course. All students (regardless of class attendance, including the ones who have not completed university exams within the set time period) are invited to register on the Blackboard page of the course in order to receive important updates and download the teaching material.

For the thesis (final dissertation), students may agree with the lecturer on a topic related to historical, political, social, economic and/or geo-strategic issues in one of the countries in the area or within the regional or sub-regional systems covered in lectures. They may also choose to focus on theoretical aspects of international policy covered on the course.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.