# International relations

## Prof. Enrico Fassi; Prof. Ibrahim Al-marashi

First part: *Prof. Enrico Fassi*

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

The course aims to provide students with analytical tools to understand the main features of the international political system. Starting with the investigation of its primary constitutive elements and players, the course will address typical topics of international relations – e.g. peace, war and change – as well as some top issues of today’s international political agenda: terrorism, democracy, development. The course will also focus on International Relations theories, presenting the discipline’s main theoretical approaches and applying them to the analysis of specific topics and cases.

*Knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

– know the main theories of International Relations;

– understand the functioning of the international political system and its interactions with the economic and institutional systems;

– analyze the foreign policy choices of state actors and identify the role of non-state actors.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

– recognize and master the linkages among the fundamental questions around which the discipline is articulated;

– assess which level of analysis offers the best prospects for investigation with respect to the single problem faced and how to move through the levels;

– use the historical, economic and political knowledge in the direction of the profitable interaction with the theories of International Relations;

– draw links between theory and practice, past and present, expectations and reality;

– develop a critical sense to move between the different theoretical approaches.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Introduction: *Understanding International Relations*

– The emergence of the global system of states.

– Theories of International Relations: Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Marxism, Feminism.

– The analysis of foreign policy.

– War and its causes.

– Pathways to interstate peace.

– Power, politics and world economy.

– Non-State actors and challenges to sovereignty.

– The Environment.

– Different visions of an emerging international order.

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

The syllabus includes:

a. Lecture notes.

b. Handbook: J. Grieco-G. J. Ikenberry-M. Mastanduno, *Introduction to International Relations. Enduring questions and contemporary perspectives,* Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2022 (3nd edition).

c. Additional suggested readings: R.H. Jackson-G Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015 (6th edition). [especially, Chapters 3-9].

Attending students should focus on a. and b. and will be informed of any additional article provided in class. Non-attending students can substitute a. with c.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will consist mostly of lectures, based on power point presentations. Thematic seminars may also be included – requiring a more active participation by the students – as well as experts and practitioners’ talks, and documentary or movies screenings. In case the evolution of Covid-19 pandemic does not allow teaching in presence, online lectures and distance learning will be guaranteed. Channels and modalities will be communicated in due time to all students.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Full-time and distance-learning students will be assessed through a written exam graded 31/30. The test will include multiple choice and open-ended questions on the themes covered by the handbook (*b.*). The exam is aimed at assessing the students’ ability to both accurately report on the theories and empirical aspects covered by the program, and provide articulated answers on themes of particular relevance. For attending students, the final grade will be given by the weighted average of the two modules’ tests. For non-attending students, there will be a single written exam combing the two tests.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

A basic backgound of international history and political science concepts is recommended.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at *http://docenti.unicatt.it/ita/enrico\_fassi/*, or on the Faculty notice board.

*In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.*

Second part: *International Relations case studies: ISIS, the Pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, and the future* (*Prof. Ibrahim Al-Marashi)*

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

The coronavirus crisis demonstrates how diseases are political as well as biological, exacerbated by geopolitical tensions between China and the US and states closing their borders in the face of a transnational threat.

We will examine how to apply IR theories to conceptualize the coronavirus pandemic as a geopolitical and geo-economic crisis, affecting regional and domestic politics, particularly in the Asia, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Latin America, and analyze strategies of cooperation on the multinational, national and local levels, as well as rivalries, particularly between China and the US, NATO and Russia.

*Knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

– Apply the main theories of International Relations to phenomenon ranging from pandemics to digitalism

– Understand the functioning of Non-State Actors, from Al-Qaida, ISIS to Doctors without Borders

– Understanding the functioning of multilateral institutions from NATO to the World Health Organization (WHO)

– analyze the foreign and domestic policy choices of state actors in managing pandemics and public health

– analyze the foreign and domestic policy choices of state actors such a Russia in its decision to invade Ukraine

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

– assess which level of analysis offers the best prospects for conceptualizing the state, foreign policy, and threats, from revisionist states, terrorist groups, and the environment

– understand the impact of disease and terrorism on the EU and Mediterranean, particularly Italy, as a sub-system, and its relations to the wider international system;

***COURSE CONTENT***

– IR Theories and Terrorism, particularly ISIS

– Applying Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Marxism, Feminism to war in the 21st century.

– Pandemics, the UN and the WHO

– Environmental, Biopolitics, Human Security, and Health Security

***READING LIST***

Given the recent and evolving nature of this topic, there are no academic books section on Blackboard. I will assign a set of articles prior to the module. The core reading, however, is below:

[Stephen M. Walt](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-11-01/isis-revolutionary-state#author-info), “ISIS as Revolutionary State New Twist on an Old Story”, Foreign Affairs, [November/December 2015](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CMonica.Grassi%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CVXRAAUDS%5CNovember%5CDecember%202015). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-11-01/isis-revolutionary-state>

Stephen M. Walt, “The Realist’s Guide to the Coronavirus Outbreak”, Foreign Policy, March 9, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/09/coronavirus-economy-globalization-virus-icu-realism/>

Basrur, R., Kliem, F. “Covid-19 and international cooperation: IR paradigms at odds”. *SN Soc Sci* 1, 7 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-020-00006-4>

Stephen M Walt, “The Ukraine War Doesn’t Change Everything”, Foreign Policy, April 2022. https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/13/ukraine-war-realism-great-powers-unipolarity/

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will consist mostly of lectures, based on power point presentation. It may also include thematic seminars – in which an active participation by the students is required – documentary screenings, and talks given by experts. In case the evolution of Covid-19 pandemic does not allow teaching in presence, online lectures and distance learning will be guaranteed. Channels and modalities will be communicated in due time to all students.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

There will be a written examination for both full-time and distance-learning students, graded 31/30. This test combines multiple choice questions and open-ended questions, both based on the course’s syllabus. In this way it will be possible to evaluate both the overall preparation of students over large portions of the program, and their ability to elaborate articulated answers on themes of particular relevance. Students are required to attend each class and to read the assigned reading and actively participate in class discussion. The classes will emphasize specific parts and trends in the reading, but all reading material forms part of the final assessment.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.*

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)