



Course information 2026-27

IR1034 World History Since 1945

General information

MODULE LEVEL: 4

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

Summary

This is the level 100 course on which subsequent and more specialised courses in the area of international relations are based.

Conditions

None

Aims and objectives

1. The main aim of the course is to introduce students to some of the key developments in international history from 1945 to the end of the Cold War era, including differing historical interpretations and debates over major events and episodes.
2. By the end of the course, students will:
 - 3. • Have the ability to write critically and knowledgably about some of the major themes and issues in international history since 1945.
 - 4. • Have acquired understanding of some of the major debates and historical interpretations that have featured in areas such as the origins and conclusion of the Cold War, the role of nuclear weapons, and the formal end of European empires.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, and having completed the recommended reading and activities, students should be able to:

Explain the development of the Cold War, including the relationships between the United States, the Soviet Union, and China.

Understand the historical processes that lay behind European decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century.

Analyse key regional conflicts and crises in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Appreciate the importance during the period of such phenomena as the growth of international institutions; the nuclear arms race and nuclear proliferation; and the emerging global human rights agenda.

Employability skills

Below are the three most relevant skill outcomes for students undertaking this course which can be conveyed to future prospective employers:

communication

decision making

complex problem solving.

Essential reading

Students should refer to the reading list or subject guide for full details of useful and desirable texts once they have made their choice of topics.

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three-hour and fifteen-minute closed-book written examination.

Syllabus

The course is divided into three parts:

- **Part one: Key features of the Cold War (1945–1989)** explores the ideological, strategic and institutional dimensions of the Cold War.
- **Part two: Regional dynamics of the Cold War (1945–1989)** examines how Cold War rivalries played out in different regions, shaping local and global developments.
- **Part three: How did the Cold War end? (1980–1991)** analyses the final decade of the Cold War, focusing on leadership, diplomacy and systemic transformations.

Students will engage with key historiographical debates and primary sources to develop a critical understanding of the Cold War's significance in shaping modern global history.