



Course information 2026-27

IR2085 International Organisations

General information

MODULE LEVEL: 5

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

MODE: Locally Taught and Independent Learner Route Only (not available for Online Taught students).

Summary

This course builds on the foundations laid by the prerequisite course IR1011 Introduction to international relations. It offers a comprehensive introduction to the theory and practice of international organisations, with particular reference to role of formal international organisations. International organisations to be discussed range from the League of Nations to the United Nations, from the World Bank to the World Trade Organization, from the European Union to the African Union, from NAFTA to ASEAN, and from NATO to the International Criminal Court.

Conditions

Please refer to the relevant programme structure in the EMFSS Programme Regulations to check:

- where this course can be placed on your degree structure; and
- details of prerequisites and corequisites for this course.

You should also refer to the Exclusions list in the EMFSS Programme Regulations to check if any exclusions apply for this course.

Aims and objectives

The course seeks to give students an understanding of the major theoretical and empirical aspects of the role of international organisations in international politics, including, inter alia, their impact on:

- the practice of international cooperation and conflict,
- the maintenance of international peace and security,
- the management of international economic relations,
- the promotion of international environmental standards,
- the prosecution of international crimes,
- and related matters of concern to international society.

Learning outcomes

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

- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the core literature on international organisations.
- Engage with this literature critically by developing their own argumentation.
- Explain the main theoretical approaches and empirical issues in the study of international organisations.
- Write clearly, effectively, and subtly about these issues.

Employability skills

Below are the three most relevant employability skills that students acquire by undertaking this course which can be conveyed to future prospective employers:

1. Communication
2. Complex Problem Solving
3. Adaptability & resilience

Essential reading

For full details please refer to the reading list.

Hurd, Ian International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) first edition [ISBN 978-0521768344]

Armstrong, David, Lorna Lloyd and John Redmond International Organisation in World Politics. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004) third edition [ISBN 978-1403903037]

Karns, Margaret P. and Karen A. Mingst International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2015) third edition [ISBN 978-1626371514]

Assessment

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

Syllabus

The course seeks to give students an understanding of the major theoretical and empirical aspects of the role of international organisations in international politics, including, inter alia, their impact on the practice of international cooperation and conflict, the maintenance of international peace and security, the management of international economic relations, the promotion of international environmental standards, the prosecution of international crimes, and related matters of concern to international society. International organisations to be discussed range from the League of Nations to the United Nations, from the World Bank to the World Trade Organization, from the European Union to the African Union, from NAFTA to ASEAN, and from NATO to the International Criminal Court.

- Origins of international organisations: why do IOs such as the Organisation of American States emerge?
- Development of international organisations: what goes on within IOs such as the United Nations?
- Effects of international organisations: what difference do IOs such as the International Monetary Fund make?
- Pathologies of international organisations: when do IOs such as the European Union go wrong?