The Activities of International Organizations

1. Course Overview

International organizations are products of the evolution of international society. Their emergence is a response to the growing complexity of the modern international society, which necessitates cooperation between States to solve common and interdependent problems. According to a 2004 record (http://www.uia.org/statistics/organizations/types-2004.pdf), there are in the world 246 intergovernmental organizations, 1717 other international bodies, and 5387 intergovernmental bodies of special types. Each of these organizations has their own structure and objectives. Beyond the diversity of international organizations, however, there are common principles that govern their activities.

The International Organizations course analyzes these basic principles and looks at the daily workings of international bodies active in five main areas - the maintenance of international peace and security, the protection of human rights, the fight against impunity, the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the regulation of international economic relations. While examining the functions of the relevant intergovernmental bodies in these activities, the growing complexity of the modern international society, which necessitates cooperation between States to solve common and interdependent problems.

Knowledge of basic principles of Public International Law is essential for this course, but not a pre-requisite, since it expands upon many topics considered in the Introduction to Public International Law course.

2. Methodology

Teaching is through a combination of lectures, students’ presentations, talks by and interactions with specialists during visits to the various international institutions located in Geneva. Classes are scheduled on Thursdays, with three hours of lecture and in-class discussions in the morning, and two hours study visits to international organizations in the afternoon.

3. Assignments and grading criteria

a) A research paper of 5 pages maximum, excluding the bibliography, on a topic chosen from a list established by the professor (one topic per 2 students). The paper is due on Tuesday at 9am before its discussion in class: 30% of grade.

This shall be an academic paper, based on strong arguments and relevant references (footnotes & bibliography).

A 1-point penalty per extra page (see Blackboard course site for formatting rules) and a 10% penalty per 8 hours of late submission of the paper will be applied. The only acceptable excuse is illness duly certified by a medical doctor and/or BU staff. This last penalty is automatically applied and could be removed if the medical excuse presented by the concerned students is acceptable.

b) A 30mn class discussion of the paper topic, during which its authors have to answer questions asked by the participants, after a 8mn oral introduction (4mn per student): 18%

c) A 2 hour final exam, during which 7 questions on the first 7 weekly topics, including their development in the research papers, are to be answered: 42%

d) Attendance and participation: 10%. The attendance criterion includes continuing presence and arrivals on time, both for the morning lectures and the afternoon field visits, with a 1-point penalty per late arrival. As for the participation, it requires students to actively take part in discussions, by asking questions to classmates presenting their research paper, based on the careful reading of such a paper.

The final grade, from A to F, is the total percentage of the assignments, with the following equivalence:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100 %</td>
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<td>89-92</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-64</td>
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<td>F</td>
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4. Course schedule

**Week 1:** Thursday October 20, 2011

**The Basic Principles Governing the Activities of International Organizations**

**Morning Session:** Lecture (9-12am)
- The origins of international organizations and their necessity in international society
- Definition and international personality of international organizations (a reminder of the PIL course)
- Legal consequences of the international personality: functional protection, treaty-making power, privileges and immunities, duty to respect international law and international responsibility, obligation of host States (CH & US)
- Competencies of international organizations: the principle of specialty and the doctrine of implied powers
- Decision-making: initiative, voting rights and methods
- The Scope of the Participation of Civil Society in International Institutions

**Afternoon Session:** Visit to the UN Office in Geneva Le Palais des Nations (2–4pm), [www.unog.ch](http://www.unog.ch)
- Arrival at the UN “Pregny Gate” at 1.45pm (bring passport, or entrance pass for those doing internship in a UN System body)

Required reading (to be downloaded from Blackboard):
- The Swiss Host State Bill of 22 June 2007
- ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 on Consultative Relationship between the UN and NGOs

**Week 2:** Thursday October 27, 2011

**The Maintenance of International Peace and Security and the UN**

**Morning session:** Lecture and students’ presentations (9-12am)
- The UN Collective Security Mechanism, including the cooperation with regional organizations
- The adaptation of the UN to new threats to peace and security
- Basic Principles of Peacekeeping and Peace-building Operations
- The Fight Against Terrorism: Achievements and Legal Limits

**Presentation No. 1:** Ten years of US-NATO-UN actions in Afghanistan: legitimacy, achievements and exit strategy

**Presentation No. 2:** International organizations and the restoration of peace in Somalia

**Afternoon Session:** Visit to the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN Office in Geneva, Rue de Varembé 9-11, [http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/topics/intorg/un/unge.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/topics/intorg/un/unge.html)

Selected documents:
- Uniting for Peace Resolution: A/RES/377 (V) of 3 November 1950 + ICJ *Wall* Advisory Opinion
- SC Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004) on international terrorism and non-proliferation of WMD
- UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13)
- UN World Summit 2005 Declaration, adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the 60th anniversary of the United Nations, New York, GA Res. 60/1, 16 September 2005

**Week 3:** Thursday November 3, 2011

**The Protection of Human Rights and Existing Institutional Mechanisms**

**Morning Session:** DVD projection, discussions and presentations (9-12am)
- The core international human rights instruments
- The categories of human rights
- The UN human rights monitoring bodies (Charter bodies and Treaty bodies)
- The regional human rights monitoring bodies: the European, American and African systems
Presentation No. 3: Individual access before human rights treaty bodies
Presentation No. 4: The US participation to core human rights treaties: reasons for limited participation and motivation of the reservations


Selected Documents:
- The Charter of the United Nations: Articles 1 and 55
- The International Bill of Human Rights (UDHR 1948, ICESC 1966, and ICCPR 1966)
- GA Resolution 60/251, 15 March 2006, establishing the Human Rights Council
- Documents relating to the Universal Periodic Review of the USA, November 2010 (see Blackboard)

Further Reading:
- J. Steiner, “International Protection of Human Rights”, in M. EVANS, 753-782

Week 4: Thursday November 10, 2011

FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

Morning Session: Lecture and presentations (9-12am)
- History of the international involvement in the fight against impunity and collective reactions to atrocities
- The role and evolution of international criminal judicial bodies: from ad hoc tribunals to a permanent Court
- Other institutional mechanisms involved in the fight against impunity

Presentation No. 5: Ending impunity of heads of State: the El-Bashir case before the ICC and subsequent controversies

Presentation No. 6: Achieving peace while doing justice: the mechanisms of post-conflict justice

Afternoon Session: Visit to the World Organization against Torture, www.omct.org (to be confirmed)

Selected Primary Documents:
- ICTY, Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic a/k/a "Dule", (Decision on the Defence Motion for Interlocutory Appeal on Jurisdiction), Appeals Chamber, 2 October 1995
- SC Resolution on the referral to the ICC of the situation in Darfur: S/RES/1593 (2005), 31 March 2005

Week 5: Thursday November 17, 2011

THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF ARMED CONFLICTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)

Morning Session (9.30-12am): Visit to the ICRC, www.icrc.org/eng (arrival at 9.15)
- Introduction and ICRC Film: Panorama (15 minutes)
- International Humanitarian Law and the ICRC Mandate, Lecture by an ICRC Legal Advisor (1 hour)
- The ICRC and its Activities in the Field: presentation by an official from Field Operations Department (1 hour)

References:
- UN Secretary-General Bulletin on the ‘Observance by United Nations Forces of International Humanitarian Law’ (ST/SGB/1999/13)

Afternoon session (2-4.30pm): Briefing on the morning visit and students’ presentations

Presentation No. 7: The Status of Prisoners of War in the light of Hamdan v. Rumsfeld case
Presentation No. 8: The Civilian Protection Mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO)
Week 6: Thursday November 24, 2011

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Morning Session: Lecture and presentations (9-12am)

➢ Voluntary and forced migration of people: an overview
➢ Situation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world
➢ Definition and basic rights of the refugees
➢ The problem of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and international protection of their human rights

Presentation No. 9: The Procedures for Refugees Admission in the United States of America
Presentation No. 10: The Challenge of Respecting Asylum Seekers’ Rights and Refugee Law in the Fight against Illegal Immigration

Required Reading:

▪ The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998

Afternoon Session: Visit to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2pm - 3.30 pm), www.unhcr.org

Week 7: Thursday December 1, 2011

THE REGULATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

Morning Session: Lecture and presentations (9-12am)

➢ The various forms of international economic relations
➢ Basic principles of international economic relations
➢ Overview of international economic institutions: Universal and Regional Economic Entities
   ▪ Universal Organizations devoted primarily to economic matters (IMF, BIRD, CNUCED, WTO, etc.)
   ▪ The various forms of regional economic unions or associations (EU, EFTA, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, Andean Pact, ASEAN, SAARC, ECOWAS, COMESA, EAC, SADC, IGAD, etc.)

Presentation No. 11: The ICSID and the Protection of International Investment
Presentation No. 12: The WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism and the Protection of Free Trade

References

▪ Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (Marrakech April 1994), at www.wto.org
▪ List of web site addresses of relevant international organizations, governments and academic institutions
▪ Web-page relating to UN activities on economic and social development: www.un.org/esa

Afternoon Session: Visit to the International Telecommunications Union (2pm-4.30pm), www.itu.int (to be confirmed)

Week 8: Thursday December 8, 2011

Morning Session: Review session

Afternoon Session: Final Exam (3pm-5pm)

▪ Answer to 7 questions (on the weekly topics 1 to 7 and the papers developing them)