

## The Activities of International Organizations Course IR 444 E • Spring 2013

### 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 (*Yearbook of International Organizations*), 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 their diversity, however, there are common principles that govern the activities of international organizations.

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 role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other non-State actors will also be analyzed.

Knowledge of basic principles of public international law is important, but not a pre-requisite, for this course 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 Tuesdays, 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 below (one topic per 2 students). A 1-point penalty per extra page will be applied (see Blackboard site for formatting rules). The paper is due on Monday at 8am before its discussion in class the next day. It shall be sent to all students by email\* (**30%** of the final grade).

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

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 BU staff. A non-certified illness will not prevent the penalty.

- 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 to the topic, i.e. 4mn per student (**18%**).
- c) A 2-hour **final exam**, scheduled at the 8<sup>th</sup> week of the course, during which 7 questions on the 7 weekly topics, including their development in the research papers, are to be answered (**42%**).
- d) **Active participation in class: 10%**. This relates to the students' active involvement in the discussions of the research papers, by asking questions of clarification, making wise comments or other valuable contributions to the debate, and responding to questions asked by the professor on these papers.

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

A : 93 – 100 %	A- : 89 – 92	B+ : 85 – 88
B : 81 – 84	B- : 77 – 80	C+ : 73 – 76
C : 69 – 72	C- : 65 – 68	D : 60 – 64

Students shall also have a look at the general penalty stated in Section 5 of the present syllabus (*infra*, p. 3).

\* Exceptionally, students making their presentation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> class could submit their papers the week after. The day before their presentation, they need only send an outline of their papers, along with any relevant primary documents.

#### 4. Course schedule

**Week 1:** Tuesday 22 October 2013

##### **THE BASIC PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

*Morning Session (10:00 – 13:00 am): Lecture*

- The origins of international organizations and their necessity in international society
- Definition, international personality, rights and duties of international organizations (a reminder of P.I.L. course)
- Competencies and decision-making of IOs: the principle of specialty and the doctrine of implied powers, voting methods
- The obligation of host States: the Swiss and US practice
- The participation of NGOs in the activities of international organizations

*Afternoon Session (3:30 – 5:30 pm): Visit to the International Telecommunications Union – [www.itu.int](http://www.itu.int)*

- Briefing with an ITU official on the works and functioning of the Organization
  - Guided visit of the *ICT Discovery* Exhibition
- Arrival at the at 3:25 pm (bring passport or ID for security check)

*Required reading (to be downloaded from Blackboard Learn):*

- ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 on Consultative Relationship between the UN and NGOs

**Week 2:** Tuesday 29 October 2013

##### **THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY AND THE UNITED NATIONS**

*Morning Session (8:00 – 11:00am): Lecture and students' presentations*

- The UN means to maintain international peace and security, including the cooperation with regional organizations
- The adaptation of the UN to new threats to peace and security
- The use of sanctions and the authorization to use force
- Peacekeeping and Peace-building Operations
- The Fight Against Terrorism

**Presentation No. 1:** UN Sanctions against Terrorism: Achievements and Failures

**Presentation No. 2:** The 2012 European Union Nobel Peace Prize: reasons and lessons for the reconciliation of ex-enemy states

*Afternoon Session (12:00 – 1:30pm): Visit to the UN Office in Geneva Le Palais des Nations - [www.unog.ch](http://www.unog.ch)*

*Arrival at the UN "Pregny Gate" at 11.45am (bring passport, or internship entrance pass to the Palais des Nations)*

**Week 3:** Tuesday 5 November 2013

##### **THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS**

*Morning Session (9:00 – 12:00am): Lecture and students' presentations*

- Historical development of human rights
  - Core international human rights instruments and categories of human rights
  - Universal human rights monitoring bodies: Charter bodies and Treaty bodies
  - Regional human rights systems and monitoring bodies
  - The role of NGOs on human rights protection
- Presentation No. 3:** Reconciling freedom of opinion and the prohibition of hate speech (religious defamation)
- Presentation No. 4:** Understanding the US' limited participation to core human rights treaties

*Afternoon session (2:00 – 4:00pm): Attendance of a human rights body session (to be confirmed)*

**Week 4:** **Thursday** 14 November 2013 (joint class with the Health track)

##### **INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS**

*Morning Session (9:00 – 12.00am): Lectures*

- The protection of the victims of forced migration: refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other peoples forced to leave their habitual residence
- Migrants health in prisons

*Afternoon Session (2:00 – 4.00pm): Briefing with officials from the International Organization of Migration*

**Week 5:** Tuesday 19 November 2013

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

Morning session (9.30 – 12.00pm): Study visit to the ICRC, [www.icrc.org/eng](http://www.icrc.org/eng) (arrival at 9.15pm)

- Introduction and ICRC Film: Panorama (15 minutes)
- The ICRC and its Activities in the Field: presentation by an official from Field Operations Department (1 hour)
- International Humanitarian Law and the ICRC Mandate, Lecture by an ICRC Legal Advisor (1 hour)

*Please note that the visit will replace the usual morning lecture. Students are then strongly advised to take notes of the successive briefings.*

Afternoon Session (2.00 – 4.00pm): Briefing on the ICRC visit and students' presentations

- ICRC visit briefings, including clarification questions from students

**Presentation No. 8:** Challenges for respecting IHL in the armed conflict in Afghanistan

**Presentation No. 9:** The Civilian Protection Mandate of UN Peacekeeping Operations

**Week 6:** Tuesday 26 November 2013

**FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURTS AND TRIBUNALS**

Morning Session (9:00 – 12:00am): Lecture and presentations

- 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:** Fight against impunity in the works of truth commissions

**Presentation No. 6:** Reconciling fight against impunity and past amnesties

Afternoon Session (2:00 – 4:00pm): Students' presentation and video projection

**Presentation No. 7:** The International Criminal Court as an anti-African institution? A dispassionate appraisal

- Video projection on the works of an international criminal tribunal, followed by discussion

**Week 7:** Tuesday 3 December 2013

**THE REGULATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS  
AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS**

Morning Session (9:00 – 12am): Lecture and presentations

- 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. 10:** The UN Principles of Responsible Investments and the Regulations of the Activities of Multinational Enterprises

**Presentation No. 11:** International Economic Organizations in the Americas: cooperation and complementarity

Afternoon Session (3:00 – 4:30pm): Visit to the WTO, [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org) - 154 rue de Lausanne, 1201 Genève – Meet at the entrance of the building at 2:45pm

**Week 8:** Tuesday 10 December 2013

Morning Session (10:00 – 11:30): Revision session

Afternoon Session (3:00 – 5:30 pm): Final Exam

- Answer to 7 questions, based on the weekly topics 1 to 7 and the corresponding students' papers

**5. Penalty**

All site visits are a mandatory part of the course, which will consist of at least 40 contact hours over 8 weeks. Punctual attendance at all sessions is required. Students will lose 1% for every late arrival and 5% for any unexcused absence.

## **6. Plagiarism**

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on the examinations or for plagiarism may be 'expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean'.

## **7. Grade appeal**

Students are entitled to grade appeal, in accordance with the instruction distributed by BU Geneva office at the introductory session of the program.