Activities of International Organisations  
7 Course IR 444 / PO 242 • Fall 2018

I. COURSE OVERVIEW

1. Objectives

International organizations are a product of the evolution of international society. Their emergence is a response to the growing complexity of modern international society that requires cooperation between states to solve common and interdependent problems. According to the Yearbook of International Organizations (ed 52, 2015/2016) there are today 276 ‘conventional intergovernmental bodies’, 1785 ‘other international bodies’ and 5699 international bodies of ‘special types’, of which 812 are ‘dissolved or apparently inactive’. However, using different definitions, not all analysts agree on these numbers. Every organization has its own structure and objectives. Beyond their diversity, international organizations have in common the principles that govern their activities.

International Organizations play an important role in the development and implementation of international law. Geneva hosts many international organizations and bodies, in particular organizations that promote and protect human beings. The Activities of International Organizations course looks at six different thematic areas and the international bodies that play an important role in these thematic areas: The protection of human rights and universal treaty based mechanisms; the protection of victims of armed conflicts and the International Committee of the Red Cross; refugees and internally displaced people and the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; the maintenance of peace and security and the role played by the United Nations; disarmament and arms control and the role played by the United Nations, and the fight against impunity and the role played by international courts and tribunals. The visits to the international organisations are compulsory and form an integral part of the course, including for the purposes of the final exam. In doing so, this course also expands upon many topics considered in the Introduction to Public International Law course.

2. Methodology

The course is taught through a combination of lectures, student’s presentations, and talks by and interactions with specialists. The latter will mostly occur during visits to various international institutions located in Geneva that will complement the lectures. Classes take place on Tuesdays. You will normally have a two-hour break between the morning session and the afternoon session. The visits to the international organisations are compulsory and form an integral part of the course, including for the purposes of the final exam. It is very important to be on time, in particular for the site visits.

3. Assignments and grading criteria

a) A research paper (30%) of 10 pages maximum for two person group papers or 5 pages maximum for individual papers (Times New Roman 12, 1.5. space, excluding bibliography). There is a list of suggested topics in the syllabus, but students are encouraged to propose an issue they would like to work on, provided that the issue fits with the subject addressed in the course. The suggested topics are fairly broad and it is up to the students to find an angle they are particularly interested in. If students need help, please contact the lecturer. The paper is due on Sunday, 6pm before its presentation and to be distributed to the class. It shall be sent to all students and the lecturer by email. For the first three sessions with paper presentations, the final paper can be sent it by Sunday, 12 November 6pm. If for some reason, students need an extension, please contact the lecturer in advance so that a solution can be found. Papers will be given back during the last session before the exam.
The research paper accounts for **30% of the final grade**. A 10% penalty for any unexcused 8 hours delay in submission will be applied. The only exception to this penalty is by reason of medical illness, certified by a medical certificate provided by a doctor. In the research paper, students are to explain the issue, critically engage with it, take a position and provide adequate references.

b) **Presentation of the research paper (20%)**. The students are to present the research paper during the class: a 10 minutes presentation is to be followed by a class discussion of 10 minutes. **It is the responsibility of the presenters to prepare and animate the class discussion.** You will get feedback and the allocated points for your presentation the day of your presentation. To make this possible, please **provide to stay after class for 30 min**.

c) **A 2 hour final exam (40%)**, scheduled during the last week of the course. The exam comprises a question for each week of the class, including the visits to international organizations and students' presentations.

d) **Active participation in class (10%)**. Students are required to actively participate in the class, in particular during discussion of research papers, during the site visits (where appropriate). The active participation in class grade covers your overall contribution to the class, including by being on time to the site visits. Punctual attendance at all sessions is required.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A–</td>
<td>89 – 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85 – 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>81 – 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B–</td>
<td>77 – 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>69 – 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C–</td>
<td>65 – 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a student receives less than 60-64 for their assignments, they receive an F (fail).

4. **Penalty unexcused absences and site visits**

All site visits are a mandatory part of the course, which will consists of at least 40 contact hours over 8 weeks. Punctual attendance at all sessions is required. Sandra Krähenmann and Carla Rachmann have to be informed by email for every excused absence. There is a **penalty of 5% for any unexcused absence**.

5. **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’.

6. **Grade Appeal**

Students are entitled to appeal their grade, in accordance with the instructions distributed by BU Geneva office at the introductory session of the program.
II. COURSE SCHEDULE

Additional information on the assignments, not fully developed in the present syllabus, can be found on the Learn Blackboard page of the course, into which all students are enrolled. The compulsory readings are also posted on the Learn Blackboard page of the course. In case of access problem, please contact Alexandra Garcia or Matthew Wellington.

1. Tuesday, 16 October 2018: The Basic Principles Governing the Activities of International Organizations

*Morning session: 9:30 – 12:30 Lecture*

- Overview of course, objectives, and assignments
- Definition, international personality, rights and duties of IOs (reminder of PIL Course)
- Competencies and decision making of IOs: principle of specialty, doctrine of implied powers, voting methods

*Afternoon session: 15h15-16h45: Visit to the International Telecommunications Union*

- Briefing with Ms Maite Comas of the ITU on the works and functioning of the ITU, one of the first IOs in the world
- Arrival at reception of the ITU Montbrillant Building, (2 Rue de Varembé, close to CICG and the UN Parking) at 15h15 and bring your passport or ID for security check

2. Tuesday, 23 October: The United Nations Collective Security System for the Maintenance of Peace

*Morning session: 8:30 – 11:30 Lecture and students’ presentations*

- The UN and maintenance of international peace and security
- Adaptation of the UN to new threats to peace and security
- The fight against terrorism
- Peace-keeping and peace-building
- Students presentations:
  - Presentation no.1: The UN mission in the DRC: Peacekeeping or peace-enforcement?
  - Presentation no. 2: The Security Council and so-called foreign terrorist fighters: measures taken and their implementation.
  - Presentation no. 3: The gender dimension of international peace and security: Security Council resolution 1325 and its successors
  - Presentation no. 4: Targeted sanctions by the UN Security Council: opportunities and challenges.
  - Presentation no. 5: The role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security

*Afternoon session: 13h30 – 15h15 Visit to the UN*

- Guided tour of the UN Office in Geneva.
- Please arrive at the visitor’s entrance (“Pregny Gate”, 14 avenue de la Paix) at 13.30 with your passport or ID for security.
3. Tuesday, 30 October: The Protection of Human Rights and Existing Institutional Mechanisms

Morning session: 9:30 – 13:30: Webcast of the session of the Human Rights Committee
- Discussion of General Comment on the right to life
- In the class room, we will watch and discuss together the General Comment on the right to life currently discussed by the Human Rights Committee.

Afternoon session: 15:30-17:30; Debriefing on the morning session and students presentations
- Student presentations:
  Presentation no 6: The universal human rights system: is there a need for an international human rights court?
  Presentation no. 7: Protest movements: what is at stake and how does international human rights law protect freedom of assembly?
  Presentation no. 8: Mass surveillance online: how do human rights apply in a digital world?
  Presentation no 9: Freedom of expression in decline? What are the challenges and how does international human rights law protect freedom of expression, including press freedom?

4. Tuesday 6 November: The protection of people ‘on the move’

Morning session: 9:45 – 11:30: Visit to UNHCR
- Introductory video of the role and work of UNHCR.
- Presentation by a UNHCR speaker and Q&A session.
- Please bring passport or ID for security

Afternoon session: 14h00-17h30 Lecture and students’ presentations
- The international regime governing refugees and internally displaced persons: an overview
- Students’ presentations:
  Presentation no 10: Children fleeing gang violence in Central America: protection challenges
  Presentation no 11: The fate of internally displaced persons in South Sudan: protection and durable solution
  Presentation no. 12: Migrants or refugees? The European refugee ‘crisis’.
  Presentation no. 13: Interceptions at sea and extraterritorial processing of asylum seekers: States’ extraterritorial obligations.

5. Tuesday, 13 November 2017: The protection of people affected by armed conflict

Morning session: 9h00-12h00: Lecture, and students presentations
- Lecture: Basics of IHL
- Student presentations:
  Presentation no 14: Health care during armed conflict: challenges
  Presentation no. 15: ‘Human shields’ during armed conflict
  Presentation no. 16: The prohibition of torture during armed conflict and in the fight against terrorism
  Presentation no. 17: Engagement with armed non-state actors
  Presentation no. 18: Detention during armed conflict and in the fight against terrorism
  Presentation no 19: Sexual and gender-based violence during armed conflict.

Afternoon session: 13h45-16h00
- Presentation of the ICRC and its activities in the field
• International humanitarian law and the ICRC mandate
• Arrival at 13h45 in front of the Red Cross Museum.

6. Tuesday 20 November: Disarmament and arms control
   Morning session: 8:00 –12:15: Visit to the UN Office on Disarmament Affairs: the
   • Please note that UNODA is within UN premises. Arrive at the visitor’s entrance (“Pregny Gate”, 14
     avenue de la Paix) at 8.00 with your passport or ID for security.

   Afternoon session: 14:00-17:00: Debrief and presentations
   - Debrief
   - Students presentations:
     Presentation no. 20: Autonomous lethal weapons: should they be banned?
     Presentation no. 21: Nuclear weapons: law and policy
     Presentation no. 22: The Arms Trade Treaty regime: prevent human rights violations and violations of
       international humanitarian law by prohibiting transfers in certain circumstances.
     Presentation no. 23: Armed drones: ethical, legal and humanitarian concerns
     Presentation no. 24: Explosive weapons in densely populated areas: humanitarian concerns
     Presentation no. 25: Gendered impact of weapons in armed conflict

7. Tuesday, 27 November: The Fight against Impunity
   Morning session: 9:00-12.30: Lecture and presentations
   - The role and evolution of international criminal judicial bodies: from ad hoc tribunals to a permanent court
   - Core international crimes
   - Students Presentations:
     Presentation 26: Prosecuting incumbent head of states?
     Presentation 27: ‘Economic crimes’ under international law: the challenge of integrating economic, social
       and cultural rights.
     Presentation 28: Peace or justice? The case of Colombia
     Presentation 29: The gender dimension of transitional justice mechanisms
     Presentation 30: Environmental crimes?

   Afternoon session: 14:00-16:00: Revision Session and Briefing on Exam
   - Briefing for the exam and discussion of mock exam
   - Revision for exam: Q&A

7. Tuesday, 4 December: Exam
   - 9h00-11h00: Exam