Activities of International Organisations
Course IR 444 / PO 242 • Fall 2016

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.

The *Activities of International Organizations* course analyses these basic principles and looks at the daily working of international bodies 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 international disarmament and arms controls. While examining the functions of the relevant intergovernmental bodies in these activities, the growing role of non-governmental organizations and actors will also be analysed. 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 Wednesdays. 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. Compulsory readings that introduce the topic of the week are posted on the Learn Blackboard site.

3. Assignments and grading criteria
   a) A research paper (30%) of 5 pages maximum (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 paper is due on Thursday, 6pm, the week before its presentation and to be distributed to the class as well. It shall be sent to all students and the lecturer by email. The research paper accounts for 30% of the final grade. A 10% penalty for every 8 hours the submission of the paper is late will apply. 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 minute presentation is to be followed by a class discussion of 20 minutes.

   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.
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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 100 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>89 – 92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85 – 88</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>81 – 84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>77 – 80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
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<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 for missing site visits
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.

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. In case of access problem, please contact Alexandra Garcia or Matthew Wellington.

1. Wednesday, 19 October 2016: The Basic Principles Governing the Activities of International Organizations

Morning session: 9:00 – 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
- Participation of NGOs in activities of IOs (for background information, browse the website of the UN NGO branch, http://csonet.org)

Afternoon session: 14:15-15:30: Visit to the International Telecommunications Union (Place des Nations, Tram No 15, stop ‘Nations’). Bring your passport or ID for security check
- Briefing with an ITU official 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) at 14:15 and bring your passport or ID for security check

Required reading

2. Wednesday, 26 October, 2016: Protection of Victims of Armed Conflicts and the ICRC

Morning session: 9:15-12:15: Visit to the ICRC
- Presentation of the ICRC and its activities in the field
- International humanitarian law and the ICRC mandate
- Please note that the visit will replace the lecture and you are strongly advised to take notes of the Briefing. We will have a debrief on the ICRC visit the following week.
- Arrival at 9:15 in front of the Red Cross Museum

Required reading


Morning Session: 9:00 – 13:00: Attendance of session of the Committee on Elimination of Violence against Women
- Examination of the report of Switzerland
- Arrival at Palais Wilson at 9 am, bring passport or ID for security check

Afternoon session: 14:30-17:30 Briefing on the morning session and students presentations
- Q and A on the morning session and the ICRC visit
- Overview of international human rights system
• Comparison international human rights and international humanitarian law
• Student presentations:
  Presentation No 1: The universal human rights system: is there a need for an international human rights court?
  Presentation No. 2: Human rights abuses in the mining sector: do private companies have human rights obligations?
  Presentation No. 3: Mass surveillance online: how do human rights apply in a digital world?

Required reading:


Morning session: 9:00 – 12:30: 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.4: The UN mission in the DRC: peace-keeping or peace-enforcement?
  Presentation no. 5: The Security Council and so-called foreign terrorist fighters: The measures taken by the Security Council and their implementation
  Presentation no. 6: The gender dimension of international peace and security: Security Council resolution 1325
  Presentation no 7: Targeted sanctions by the UN Security Council: Opportunities and challenges.

Afternoon session: 14.00 – 15.30 Visit to the UN
• Guided tour of the UN Office in Geneva.
• Please arrive at the visitors entrance (“Pregny Gate”, 14 avenue de la Paix) at 14.00 with your passport or ID for security.


5. Wednesday, 16 November, 2016: International Protection of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Morning Session: 9:45 – 11:30: Visit to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Rue de Montbrillant 94:
• 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: 14:00 – 18:00: Lecture and students’ presentations
➢ The international regime governing refugees and internally displaced persons: an overview
➢ Extract movie: ‘Well-founded fear’
➢ Students’ presentations:
  Presentation no 8: Children fleeing gang violence in Central America: protection challenges
  Presentation no 9: The fate of internally displaced persons in South Sudan: protection and durable solution
  Presentation no 10: Migrants or refugees? The European refugee ‘crisis’.
  Presentation no. 11: Interceptions at sea and extraterritorial processing of asylum seekers: States’ extraterritorial obligations.
6. Wednesday, 23 November 2016: 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 16**: Prosecuting incumbent head of states: the case of the Kenyan Uhuru Kenyatta before the ICC
  - **Presentation 17**: ‘Economic crimes’ under international law: the challenge of integrating economic, social and cultural rights.
  - **Presentation 18**: Peace or justice? The case of Colombia
  - **Presentation 19**: The gender dimension of transitional justice mechanisms

**Afternoon session: 14:30-18:00: Discussion and Briefing on Exam**

- Discussion with Thomas Unger, co-director of the Master on Transitional Justice at the Geneva Academy and special advisor to the UN Special Rapporteur on Truth, Justice, Reparations, guarantees of non-recurrence
- Briefing for the exam and discussion of mock exam

**Required readings:**


7. Wednesday, 30 November, 2016: Disarmament and arms control

**Morning session: 9:15-11:15: Visit to UNIDIR**

- Presentation of UNIDIR and its activities by John Borrie, Chief of Research
- Please note that UNIDIR is within the UN premises, so we meet at the UN visitors’ entrance at 9:15 and bring your passport or ID for security check.

**Afternoon session: 14:00-17:30: Lecture and presentations**

- Overview of the international institutions and mechanisms governing disarmament and arms control
- Selected issues of disarmament and arms control
- Students presentations:
  - **Presentation no. 12**: Autonomous lethal weapons: should they be banned?
  - **Presentation no. 13**: Nuclear weapons: modernization or complete disarmament?
  - **Presentation no. 14**: The Arms Trade Treaty regime: prohibiting irresponsible transfers that perpetuate conflict and human rights violations.
  - **Presentation no. 15**: Armed drones: ethical, legal and humanitarian concerns
- Revision for exam: Q&A

**Required reading**

8. Wednesday, 7 December, 2016

Morning session: 9:00 - 11:00: Final exam