

GLS116-5: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Fall 2026

Instructor:	Zhizhen Lu	Email:	zlu@bentley.edu
Office Hour:	T 3:30-5:30 pm or by appt.	Office Location:	Morison Hall 210
Class Hour:	T 6:30-9:10 pm	Class Location:	Jennison 310

Course Description

International relations studies how the system of sovereign states has evolved into its present form and how various agents—states, firms, NGOs, advocacy groups, and international organizations—interact within the system. How do we characterize the system of sovereign states? Who are the main actors that contribute to the stability and change of the system? What motivates the interactions of these actors? Drawing on historical and contemporary events, this course introduces core concepts and theoretical approaches in international relations to explain stability and change in the international system. It also examines patterns of interaction among state and non-state actors across key issue areas.

The four sections in this course collectively address military, political, social, and economic sources of order in international relations. The first section introduces what international relations is all about and how to study it, covering basic concepts, relevant actors, and major theoretical perspectives. The second section focuses on international political economy and investigates the political processes and institutions that shape globalization, development, and international investment. The third section examines international security, including the causes of war, great-power competition, and the strategic dynamics of deterrence. The final section considers international law and norms, with a focus on how institutional designs and transnational actors can orchestrate international collaboration in a presumably anarchic world.

This course takes a systemic, empirical approach to international relations. Systemic thinking means that we seek to explain world affairs by accounting for structural features, strategic interdependency, and multi-level dynamics, rather than reducing international relations to isolated incidents or individual attributes. The emphasis on empiricism means that we evaluate our explanations and arguments based on facts and evidence, and not normative positions. Therefore, this course is neither a history class nor political commentaries on current events. Although historical and contemporary cases are frequently invoked throughout the course, they serve to advance our understanding of the underlying mechanisms in international relations.

This course also emphasizes the impact of international relations on global business operations. Multinational firms, operating in multiple jurisdictions, are increasingly exposed to geopolitics, diplomatic relationships, and global regulations. The ability to interpret world affairs and integrate international relations in business analysis is key to identifying risks and opportunities in times of rising geopolitical uncertainty. Businesses also play a significant role in shaping state policies and international institutions. This course explores how international politics affects global businesses and vice versa.

Learning Objectives

This course has the following learning objectives:

- **Substantive knowledge:** Students will gain a stronger grasp of concepts and facts, theoretical debates, and conceptual frameworks in international relations, enabling them to be informed consumers

of in-depth analyses in outlets like *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Diplomat*, *Financial Times*, and *The Economist*. They will also develop a solid intellectual foundation to pursue more advanced coursework in international relations;

- **Business nexus:** The ability to understand and explain the impact of international affairs on business operations is a valuable skill for managers, investors, and consultants in global firms. Students will develop an awareness of how key variables in international relations influence global business environments, and will demonstrate the ability to analyze such issues;
- **Analytical and presentational skills:** Students will be able to critically apply theories and frameworks in international relations to understand and analyze a range of global issues—from international conflicts to trade wars—and communicate their findings to an educated, non-specialist audience in a clear and accessible way;
- **Teamwork:** Students are expected to be active contributors in a team and effectively collaborate with peers in brainstorming, researching, presenting, and writing tasks.

Prerequisite

There is no prior coursework required.

Required Textbook

This course uses the following e-textbook accessible through Pearson's digital learning platform Revel.

McDonald, Patrick J.; Chapman, Terrence L.; Moser, Robert G. *An Introduction to International Relations: Opening the Global System* (1st Edition). Pearson. ISBN-13: 9780134632032.

The textbook is organized into short, focused modules, with two to three modules assigned each week. Revel also includes videos, interactive figures, and tools for saving notes and highlights. We will introduce the platform on the first day of class. Printed copies are available from the publisher for students who prefer a physical book.

Weekly readings may also include academic articles, news reports, and professional analyses that offer additional perspectives, applications, or cases. Students should focus on the main argument and its connection to international relations concepts.

Readings are designated as required or recommended. **Students are expected to complete the required readings before class**; this material provides the foundation for quizzes, exams, and class activities. Recommended readings offer further context and may be used selectively in discussions and assignments.

Grading

1. Reading quizzes and class participation (25%)

Each class will be a mixture of lectures, discussions, and in-class activities. I expect students to complete the required readings before our weekly meetings and come prepared to apply course concepts to cases, problems, and project-related activities. Assigned factual and conceptual content from the required readings will normally be assessed **before** class. Reading quizzes and class participation include the following two dimensions:

- *Weekly reading quizzes (20%)*: Each quiz consists of 8 multiple-choice questions worth 1 point each and 1 short-answer question worth 2 points, for a total of 10 points. Quizzes cover the required readings for the upcoming class, remain available for one week, and are due by the beginning of class. Once started, a quiz must be completed within 30 minutes. Quizzes are **open-book** but must be completed without generative AI assistance. This is an honor-system expectation: the quizzes refresh your knowledge and prepare you for the exams. The three lowest scores will be dropped.
- *Intellectual engagement (5%)*: I will grade each student's performance in class discussions and activities based on the quality of engagement. Strong contributions are relevant to the material, logically coherent, make use of the required readings and course concepts, and engage with your peers' perspectives. Participation in small-group exercises and project workshops also counts toward intellectual engagement. To make quality comments, I encourage you to organize your ideas before speaking and actively listen to others. Students who are reluctant to speak in class may compensate for limited participation by meeting with me during office hours. However, I give greater weight to in-class contributions, as I want everyone to practice public speaking in a low-stakes setting.

2. Exams (40%, or 20% each)

There will be one mid-term and one final exam, where students will complete 25 multiple-choice questions and choose 5 out of 7 short-answer questions. The exams are **not cumulative**. The mid-term exam focuses on sections one and two, and the final tests students' understanding of sections three and four.

Students are expected to complete the exam within one block, or 80 minutes. For the mid-term, we will hold a review in the first block and the exam in the second. Because our last class is devoted to the Global AI Governance Convention, final-exam review will be provided through a study guide and written materials. All exams are **open-note, closed-book, and taken in person**. Computers and other electronic devices are not allowed. Students may bring condensed notes—but not literal slides—to the exams.

3. Group project (35%)

Students will work in groups throughout the semester on a common issue: **the design of an international convention on global AI governance**. Each group will represent an assigned stakeholder, such as a major state or regional bloc, a coalition concerned with development and technology access, the technology industry, or civil society. The central task is to analyze how power, interests, institutions, and international bargaining shape the rules under which global businesses operate, rather than to offer general management advice. The project includes the following components:

- *Weekly exercise (7%)*: After each in-class exercise, groups must upload the designated output to Brightspace, due **by the beginning of the next week's class**, such as a spreadsheet, visualization, evidence table, decision matrix, or brief written synthesis. Submissions will be graded as pass/fail. There are 7 exercises in total; each is worth 1% of your total score.
- *Intermediary reports and final group position paper (13%)*: The two intermediary reports constitute 3% (1.5% each), and the final group position paper constitutes 10%.
- *Convention performance (10%)*: Presentation and negotiation memo **each** constitute 5%.
- *Blinded peer assessment (5%)*: I will create an individual assignment for **private peer assessment** of other group members over the course of the project on a scale of 0–5, which is due by

noon on December 10. Each student will receive an individual peer assessment score calculated as the average of the evaluations submitted by the other team members.

Weekly exercises will help groups research their stakeholder's interests, power, and positions while applying the course content. These exercises will produce two intermediary reports and a final group position paper as cumulative parts of the same project.

The final group position paper will state and justify the stakeholder's priorities, preferred provisions, acceptable compromises, and red lines. It will then be locked as the group's mandate. During the Global AI Governance Convention, groups will present their positions and negotiate a convention. The convention text is a collective record, not a jointly graded deliverable.

Groups may receive different procedural powers reflecting their roles. For example, states may vote or sponsor provisions, while industry and civil-society groups may propose language and shape the agenda without a final vote. All groups will be evaluated under a common, role-adjusted rubric; greater formal power does not produce a higher grade. Detailed project guidelines and rubrics will be released separately. All students are expected to contribute to the group's research, writing, and Convention preparation.

Convention performance will be evaluated based on clear and feasible proposals, consistency with the group's mandate, responsiveness to others, use of course concepts, and effective use of assigned powers. Justified concessions are allowed. Groups are not graded on theatrical performance, speaking the most, or simply "winning."

Following the Convention, each group will submit a *negotiation memo* of no more than two pages. It should summarize major proposals, responses, concessions, and outcomes; explain consistency with the group's mandate and course-based reasoning; and identify one business or geopolitical implication. It is not a revised position paper and is part of the 5% negotiation grade.

4. Extra credit: AI-use reflection memo (1%)

Students may earn extra credit by submitting a 1–2 page reflection memo by December 8 at 11:59 pm. The memo should discuss (1) what the Global AI Governance project taught them, using one concrete project or Convention experience; (2) one example of using, or choosing not to use, AI for coursework; and (3) principles they will follow when using AI in the future.

Credit will depend on specificity, candor, and attention to verification and AI's limits. The reflection must be the student's own work and may not be drafted or rewritten by AI.

Final grades are rounded to the nearest whole number, and the letter grades will be determined by the following scale:

A	95-100	A-	90-94	B+	87-89
B	83-86	B-	80-82	C+	77-79
C	73-76	C-	70-72	D+	67-69
D	63-66	D-	60-62	F	<60

Course Policies

1. Attendance

I do not ordinarily take attendance under the assumption that students are self-motivated adults who should be responsible for their educational outcomes. You are not required to notify me about individual absences. However, you should catch up with the course material if you do miss classes. **You are also responsible for any potential negative impact on your final grade due to frequent absences**, which may limit your participation in class activities, reduce your contributions to group projects, and hinder your performance on exams. That said, I will keep track of your participation in class activities and will reach out for an explanation if I notice a pattern of frequent absences. Meanwhile, missing classes also reduces the frequency of discussion participation, which will negatively impact the final participation grades.

All class assignments and exams have clear due dates, and several important activities require you to be physically present. Please plan to ensure that you will be here for mid-term and final exams, project workshops, and the Global AI Governance Convention. **Attendance at the Global AI Governance Convention is required and will be recorded** because each group's negotiation depends on the participation of the other delegations. I understand that life can be unpredictable and will do my best to be accommodating. If there is a scheduling conflict on important dates, including religious holidays, students should contact me as early as possible to work on make-up solutions. Accommodations for religious reasons will be made under the University's [Religious Observance Policy](#). For other personal requests, I will determine whether the situation warrants an extension or alternative assignment. However, last-minute communication is strongly discouraged and may not be accommodated.

2. Discussion rules

I am committed to creating a safe, equitable, and inclusive learning community where all students feel comfortable participating in discussions and peer learning. To achieve this, I expect everyone to be respectful of others both personally and intellectually. There will be zero tolerance for racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, religious discrimination, or other forms of discriminatory behavior in this class. While none of us are perfect, I expect that we will all do our best to foster a supportive learning community and grow together.

Within these guidelines, I encourage creative thinking and a diversity of opinions. There are no "stupid" questions or comments in this class, and students should feel comfortable sharing their organized thoughts in discussions without the pressure of self-censorship. If you are not speaking, it's important to keep an open mind and actively engage with your classmates' perspectives—especially when they differ from your own. Exposure to diverse ideas and participating in good-faith discussions and debates are essential for active learning.

3. Late submission

Students are expected to respect the submission deadlines as listed in the syllabus. Reading quizzes are not accepted after the beginning of the relevant class. The policy of dropping the three lowest quiz scores is intended to accommodate occasional disruptions during the semester. Students facing serious circumstances or using an approved accommodation should contact me as early as possible.

Where delayed submission of a group-project component is raised, students should reach out to me

and get my approval **at least three days before the deadline**. All group members must agree with the delay and be included in the communications. Depending on the circumstances, I may or may not approve late submission. An unapproved late submission will be **marked down at least 10 percentage points per day after the deadline**. Because the Convention is a scheduled in-class activity involving other groups, it cannot normally be made up through an individual presentation. No late submission is permitted for the extra credit memo.

4. Academic integrity

The expectation at Bentley is that students will take advantage of the opportunity for intellectual development and, in doing so, will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the standards of academic integrity. When these standards are violated or compromised, individuals and the entire Bentley community suffer. Students who engage in acts of academic dishonesty not only face university censure but also may harm their future educational and employment opportunities. For this class, that means **don't plagiarize someone else's work**. Students should be familiar with your rights and responsibilities of academic integrity as specified in the [Academic Policies and Procedures](#). The following situations are particularly tricky and worth highlighting:

- When you reference someone else's work, even briefly, you must cite it.
- Always use quotation marks and page numbers (where available) for direct quotations.
- Recycling text or results from your previous work without attribution, or submitting the same paper for multiple classes without my permission, is also considered plagiarism.
- Undisclosed or prohibited use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools may also constitute academic dishonesty. This is discussed in greater detail below.

5. Use of AI tools

I support responsible use of AI tools in this class. These tools can improve productivity but can also produce serious or subtle errors. My two basic principles are (1) do not let AI think for you and (2) always verify what it tells you.

Think of AI as a research assistant, not a teacher or substitute author. Cite and evaluate original sources rather than treating AI responses as evidence.

Examples of legitimate uses include brainstorming search terms, locating possible sources, organizing data, translating, proofreading, and testing counterarguments. Uses must follow assignment instructions, be verified, and be disclosed.

Examples of illegitimate uses include submitting AI-generated work as your own, using unverified citations, using AI on quizzes or exams, disguising plagiarism, or uploading private or confidential material. Disclosure does not make prohibited use legitimate.

Written assignments and group-project submissions other than quizzes and exams must include a brief AI-use statement identifying the tool, purpose, and verification method. If no AI was used, say so. Groups are responsible for disclosing members' AI use. **Failure to disclose AI use may be treated as an academic-integrity violation.**

6. Accommodations

Bentley University abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with

Disabilities Act of 1990 which stipulate no student shall be denied the benefits of an education solely by reason of a disability. If you have a hidden or visible disability which may require classroom accommodations, please call [Disability Services](#) at 781-891-2004 within the first 4 weeks of the semester to schedule an appointment. Disability Services is responsible for managing accommodations and services for all students with disabilities.

Miscellaneous Resources

- Please review and adhere to [Bentley's core values](#) in and out of the classroom.
- [The Bentley Library](#) provides spaces for quiet study and group collaboration, as well as computers, printers, and other equipment. Research assistance is available until 9:00 pm most nights in-person at the Reference Desk and via [email](#), phone (781.891.2300), text (781.728.0511), and [live chat](#). Reference Librarians can help you develop research questions and topics, select databases and other resources, evaluate information, and properly cite sources. Research consultations for individuals and small groups are available in-person and via Zoom by appointment. Check out the [Library's hours, services, and resources](#).
- Located on the lower level of the Bentley library (room 023), the [Writing Center](#) offers one-on-one tutoring for writing and presentations. Students are encouraged to visit at all stages of the process; they can bring a draft of a paper or come get feedback on a practice presentation. They can come in to brainstorm, work on an outline, or just discuss some initial thoughts and questions. The center's conferences are available online or in-person. While walk-ins are acceptable, the center encourage students to make appointments in advance. Hours and additional information are available on the [Writing Center SharePoint site](#). Appointments can be made [here](#).
- [The ESOL Center](#) offers online appointments for helping students strengthen their writing and English language skills. It works with international and multilingual students to provide support for course writing at any stage, documenting sources, oral presentation practice, and pronunciation/fluency enrichment.
- Please consult the [University Police's](#) guideline for emergency response and the [list of resources for medical and mental health emergencies](#).
- Bentley prohibits and does not tolerate workplace discrimination, harassment or bullying against or by anyone in our community—faculty, staff, students, or anyone else who is working on campus or visiting. Please see [equity and bias reporting forms and procedures](#) for more information.
- The [Office of Equal Opportunity and Institutional Equity](#) works to ensure that all members of the campus community flourish in a supportive and fair climate. Visit the [Interim Title IX and Gender-Based Misconduct Policy](#) website to learn more about Title IX-related resources and procedures.

Weekly Schedule and Readings

Section 1: Foundations

September 1: Theoretical thinking

What is international relations, and how do we study it? What counts as a good explanation in international relations? A key endeavor in international relations is to explain the emergence and change of order, a stable status of interactions among relevant actors. To understand international orders, we will canvas the landscape of topics in international relations, relevant actors, levels of analysis, and methodological approaches. We also discuss the importance of international relations for global businesses today.

Group assignment: Students will be assigned to one of six stakeholder groups: the United States, China, the European Union, a developing-country coalition, a global technology-industry coalition, or a civil-society and NGO coalition.

Required readings:

- The syllabus
- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 1: Studying International Relations
 - Module 2: The International System

Recommended:

- Module 3: Thinking Theoretically About International Relations
- Skim through “[Research Methods in International Relations](#)” on E-International Relations.
- Watts, Duncan J. 2014. “[Scientific Thinking in Business: More Than Technology, Businesses Need the Scientific Method.](#)” MIT Technology Review.

September 8: Rationalist theories

How do we explain interactions between actors in international relations? This week introduces major theoretical approaches that fall under the “rationalist” umbrella: realism, liberalism, and neoliberal institutionalism. Rationality in international relations simply means actors are *goal-directed*; they have specific objectives in mind and choose actions that maximize potential gains. These three approaches all assume that actors in international relations pursue their best interests, but they differ in which agents are the most important and what their best interests are. We will move beyond the paradigm debates and focus on the strengths and limitations of these theoretical approaches.

Group exercise: Map the assigned stakeholder within the global AI governance system by identifying key actors, structures, and strategic interdependencies. Then develop competing rationalist explanations for the stakeholder’s interests and likely preferences, and identify evidence that could distinguish among them.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 4: Rationalist Approaches in International Relations
 - Module 18: Domestic Politics and International Relations

Recommended:

- Module 19: Democracy in International Relations
- Dastgeer, Ghulam. 2023. “[Rationalism in International Relations.](#)” *Medium*.
- Gluck, Matt. 2023. “[What Makes a State Rational?.](#)” *Lawfare*.

September 15: Social, behavioral, and critical theories

Are actors in international relations rational? Rationalism is a contentious assumption in international relations and social sciences at large. This week introduces theoretical approaches that focus on the social structures and psychological processes in explaining international relations. Instead of seeking causal explanations, constructive and critical theorists often strive for understanding the constitutive relationships—taken-for-granted social structures that condition actors’ behaviors. The psychological approach focuses on individual decision-making processes that may depart from rationalism.

Group exercise: Analyze how identities, norms, political framing, and potentially excluded perspectives shape the stakeholder’s understanding of AI governance.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 5: Social and Psychological Approaches to International Relations
 - Module 6: Critical Approaches in International Relations

Recommended:

- Module 24: Collective Identity in International Relations
- Blencowe, Andrew. 2010. “[English School and Constructivism: a Model of Cooperation rather than Synthesis.](#)” *E-International Relations*.

Section 2: International Political Economy

September 22: The politics of economic globalization

What is economic globalization, and how did it unfold in history? What is unique about our current wave of globalization? Can globalization take its course organically? Starting with a brief history of economic globalization, we will examine how globalization is largely shaped by the political decisions of sovereign states, and how existing global economic institutions came into being and evolved under the “Pax Americana” in the post-World War II era. We will also discuss the political dilemma of globalization and the weaponization of economic interdependence.

Group exercise: Map an AI-related global production or service network and identify dependencies, choke-points, sources of political leverage, and consequences for businesses.

Intermediary report 1: Synthesize the group’s work on its stakeholder’s position, theoretical explanations, political-economic interests, and the international structures that shape and constrain it.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*

- Module 26: Global Economic Integration
- Module 34: Global Economic Integration and the State

Recommended:

- Byrne, Richard. 2020. “[Panopticons and Chokepoints.](#)” *The Wilson Quarterly*.
- O’Neil, Shannon K. 2023. “[It’s Not Deglobalization, It’s Regionalization.](#)” Council on Foreign Relations.
- Ortiz-Ospina, Esteban; Beltekian, Diana; Roser, Max. 2014. “[Trade and Globalization: How Did International Trade and Globalization Change Over Time? What Is the Structure Today? And What Is Its Impact?.](#)” Our World in Data.

September 29: Globalization and development

Does globalization promote or hinder growth in developing nations? Economic openness, in theory, benefits all as it pushes states to specialize in their most efficient tasks. However, many countries are trapped in poverty even after they opened up to trade. Still others, such as East Asian countries, industrialized rapidly with selective liberalization. This week, we discuss development models and state policies to either insulate the impact or reap the benefit of economic openness, and then explore the conditions under which globalization fosters development.

Intermediary report 1 due before class

Group exercise: Compare alternative approaches to expanding AI capacity and propose a preliminary principle concerning access, capacity-building, or differentiated responsibility.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 31: Poverty and Development
- Check out “[import substitution industrialization](#)” and “[dependency theory](#)” in Britannica.
- Ang, Yuen Yuen. 2018. “[The Real China Model: It’s Not What You Think It Is.](#)” *Foreign Affairs*.

Recommended:

- Shih Willy C. 2023. “[The New Era of Industrial Policy Is Here: Are you prepared?.](#)” *Harvard Business Review*. (Available via Bentley Library)
- Von Vacano, Diego. 2025. “[What Latin America Can Teach Trump about Tariffs.](#)” *The National Interest*.
- Lashitew, Addisu; Werker, Eric. 2020. “[Are Natural Resources A Curse, A Blessing, or A Double-edged Sword?.](#)” The Brookings Institution.

October 6: Guest speaker: Dr. Huimin Li, JHU on Global AI Governance + International investment

Why do companies choose to invest abroad? How do states attract international capital? How do global firms protect themselves from political risks in host states? This week, we start by examining the incentives for firm internationalization and the choice of different entry modes. We will also discuss the range of tools, from lowering their regulatory requirements to offering firms generous tax cuts, that states employ to get firms to invest locally. We will also introduce the obsolescing bargain in international investment and explore

how global firms can protect themselves from host-state infringement on their property rights.

The first part of the session is joined by a guest speaker [Dr. Huimin Li](#), Postdoctoral Fellow at the Data Science and AI Institute at Johns Hopkins University. She will discuss the emergence and diffusion global AI governance models.

Group exercise: Analyze a cross-border AI investment, the resulting political and regulatory risks, bargaining between investors and host states, and consequences of business influence on global AI regulation.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 29: The International Politics of Capital Flows
- Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment. 2022. [“Primer on International Investment Treaties and Investor-State Dispute Settlement.”](#)

Recommended:

- Stevenson, Alexandra. 2023. [“China Is Full of Risks. So Why Can’t Corporate America Leave?”](#). *The New York Times*
- McCaffrey, Courtney Rickert. 2020. [“How Political Risk Affects Five Areas at the Top of the C-suite Agenda.”](#) Ernest & Young.

October 13: Fall break, no class

October 20: Midterm exam

First section: Mid-term exam review

Second section: Mid-term exam

Section 3: International Security

October 27: War and the international system

What is war, and why is the study of war important in international relations? How do we explain why states go to war with one another? War not only shapes states’ internal politics but also influences the boundaries of state sovereignty and the way states interact with one another. This week introduces the definition, evolution, and determinants of war, as well as the Just War Theory. We then focus on how wars contribute to the system of sovereign states we have today. Finally, we investigate the fundamental puzzle of international conflict: why do states still resort to war, knowing that it consumes substantial resources and human lives?

Group exercise: Construct an AI-related crisis in the context of great-power competition and analyze its bargaining range, private information, commitment problems, possible signals, and consequences for the assigned stakeholder.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 7: War
 - Module 16: Organized Coercion, War and Political Order

Recommended:

- Nexon, Dan. 2013. [“War Made the State and the State Made War.”](#) *The Duck of Minerva*.
- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 8: The Origins of War, Part I
 - Module 9: The Origins of War, Part II

November 3: Security politics

This week discusses several key national security areas, including the arms race, alliances, and nuclear weapons, focusing on why and how these issues influence the power structure in international politics. We will also discuss the strategic dynamics that determine the credibility and effectiveness of deterrence and the communication of private information in crisis bargaining.

Group exercise: Develop an AI grand strategy for the stakeholder, emphasizing dual-use technologies, the security dilemma, deterrence and credibility, and possible reassurance or cooperation measures.

Intermediary report 2: Synthesize the group’s analysis of how international political and economic conditions shape the AI business environment, the role and contested responsibilities of firms in AI governance, and the resulting geopolitical implications.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 11: Military Power and Security Politics
 - Module 13: Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Deterrence

Recommended:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 14: Threats to Nuclear Deterrence: Credibility, Missile Defense, and Nuclear Proliferation
- Check out [“grand strategy”](#) and other related entries in Britannica.
- Hooker Jr., Richard D. 2024. [“Why NATO Matters.”](#) The Atlantic Council.

Section 4: International Law and Norms

November 10: International collaboration through formal enforcement

How do we explain (non)compliance of states with international laws in a presumably anarchic world? While international treaties and laws have enforcement mechanisms, they are often considered toothless and in conflict with national sovereignty. For this reason, international laws should be self-enforcing—that is, states only comply when doing so aligns with their incentives. This week, we will examine the challenges

in orchestrating international collaboration and potential institutional design solutions to mitigate these problems.

Intermediary report 2 due before class

Group exercise: Design an international AI arrangement addressing membership, decision-making, delegation, monitoring, enforcement, and flexibility, and draft preliminary Convention provisions.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 21: Global Governance
 - Module 22: International Law

Recommended:

- Hathaway, Oona; Shapiro, Scott J. 2026. “A World Without Rules: The Consequences of Trump’s Assault on International Law.” *Foreign Affairs*.
- Southey, Safia K. 2025. “Duterte, Netanyahu, and Putin: The ICC’s Power Play.” *OpinioJuris*.
- Wolfe, Robert; Saluste, Maarja; Hoekman, Bernard; Mavroidis, Petros C.; Fiorini, Matteo. 2019. “WTO Dispute Settlement And the Appellate Body Crisis: Insider Perceptions And Members’ Revealed Preferences.” Centre for Economic Policy Research.

November 17: Norms and transnational advocacy

Can international cooperation happen without formal enforcement? Norms are important because they are taken-for-granted rules that regulate state behavior. Transnational advocacy groups, including NGOs, international organizations, think tanks, and private companies, play a key role in creating and propagating these norms that constrain harmful behavior and push for collective state action in addressing global problems.

Group exercise: Identify an AI-related norm to promote, defend, reinterpret, or resist, and develop a strategy for advocacy, coalition-building, and public justification.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 23: International Norms
 - Module 25: Global Civil Society and Transnational Actors

Recommended:

- Carrington, Damian. 2024. “Satellite to ‘Name And Shame’ Worst Oil And Gas Methane Polluters.” *The Guardian*.
- Rohwer-Kahlmann, Malte. 2017. “UN Global Compact: Is Big Business Saving the World?.” DW.
- Keusch, Thomas. 2024. “How NGO Activism Can Move the Dial for Sustainability.” INSEAD Knowledge.

November 24: Global regulatory governance

How can the behavior of transnational actors whose operations span national borders be governed? Inter-

national cooperation is critical to narrowing the “governance gaps” in an era of globalization. This week discusses the creation and distributional consequences of global regulations through two prominent issue areas: the environment and financial transparency.

Group exercise: Stress-test the emerging Convention’s implementation, monitoring, sanctions, stakeholder participation, distributional consequences, and possible loopholes, and revise the group’s proposed provisions.

Final group position paper: Present the stakeholder’s final mandate, proposed provisions, compromises, and red lines, supported by evidence and course concepts.

Required readings:

- *Opening the Global System*
 - Module 30: International Organizations in the Global Economy
 - Module 33: Environmental Politics

Recommended:

- Reimer, Stephen. 2022. “[Authoritarian Abuses: The Weaponisation of Anti-Financial Crime.](#)” Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

December 1: “Global AI Governance Convention”

Final group position paper due on Monday, November 30, at 12:00 pm.

Group project: Present the stakeholder’s public position and proposed language, and negotiate the Convention with the other delegations while operating under the locked final group position paper.

Negotiation memo: Summarize the group’s proposals, responses, concessions, outcomes, and course-based reasoning.

December 8: Reading day, no class

Negotiation memo and Extra-credit AI-use reflection memo due at 11:59 pm.

December 15: Final exam at 6:30 pm

First section: Final exam review

Second section: Final exam