

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
POLITICAL SCIENCE 341 – THE UNITED NATIONS AND GLOBAL ISSUES
FALL 2019
DR. SCOTT WATSON

The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations sets out lofty and ambitious goals for this international organization, including reaffirmation of fundamental human rights, saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and maintaining conditions of justice and respect for international law. Its contemporary supporters view the UN as the primary entity through which states and non-state actors can achieve these goals; for others it stands more as an indicator of failure than success. The goal of this course is to examine the history of the UN, its institutional makeup, the politics of its key agencies, and its role in addressing key global challenges. The goal of the course is to help students understand the organization and the forces that shape cooperation and conflict at the global level.

The course is divided into four sections. In the first, the course explores the historical, political and philosophical foundations of the United Nations, and its evolution over the past seventy five years. In this section, we will also briefly cover theoretical approaches to international cooperation that can help explain how the UN addresses, or fails to address, global issues. This discussion builds on, and expects students to be familiar with, the theoretical traditions of IR (taking POLI 240 beforehand is therefore strongly encouraged). In Section two, the course turns to the key institutions of the UN, examining each in greater detail. The UN is a large body, composed of multiple entities, subsidiary bodies, programmes and funds, with diverse mandates, organizational structures and decision-making mechanisms. Rather than aim for a comprehensive analysis of the UN covering all of these bodies, this course will focus on a few key institutions. The third section examines the diplomatic and decision-making processes at

the UN. In the fourth and final section of the course, we will look more closely at the UN's response to important global issues, and at the future of the UN itself.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this class, you should be able to identify the historical origins of, and the contemporary challenges facing, the United Nations. You should be able to formulate your arguments, in written and oral form, in relation to the relative success of the United Nations in achieving its intended purposes across a range of cases/issues.

The course is designed to help students achieve knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Structure and processes of the United Nations
- Factors that encourage and impede international cooperation
- The practice of diplomacy
- Evaluate and Critique contemporary practices of global governance
- Read carefully academic and biographical texts
- Listen to, and exchange ideas with peers

Administrative Details

Lectures TWF 12:30-1:20

Location Cornett A129

Office Hours Wednesdays 2:00-3:00, or by appointment

Contact DTB A348, phone 250-853-3528, email sdwatson@uvic.ca

Texts and Readings

All listed readings are required, and additional readings outside of the textbook will be available through the Uvic library. The course has one required textbook, which is available in the bookstore:

Karen A. Mingst, Margaret P. Karns, and Alynna J. Lyon, *The United Nations in the 21st Century*, 5th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2017). The schedule of topics and readings refer to this text as 'MKL'.

We will also rely a great deal on The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations, edited by Sam Daws and Thomas Weiss, (Oxford University Press, 2008) which is available electronically through the UVic library. The schedule of topics and readings refer to this text as 'DW'.

The course also requires the purchase of one additional text for the critical book review essay. You may choose one of the following three, all of which are available in the bookstore:

1. Samantha Power, *Chasing the Flame: One Man's Fight to Save the World* (New York, Penguin Books, 2008).
2. James Traub, *The Best Intentions: Kofi Annan and the UN in the Era of American World Power* (New York, Picador Press, 2007)
3. Brian Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1991)

Course Requirements and Expectations

Mid-Term Exam	25%
Critical Book Review Essay	30%
Participation	10%
Final Exam	35%

The **Mid-Term exam** is worth 25 percent of your grade and will be held in class on Friday, October 11.

The critical **book review essay** is worth 30 percent of your grade, must be 12 pages in length and is due in class on Friday, November 22. At their core, all three books are about the United Nations, and about individual people who have had an influence on the organization. In this book review you are required to assess the contributions and limitations of the United Nations, as well as the contributions and limitations of the individuals whose lives are chronicled. This is different from many book reviews that merely summarize content, and from critical book reviews that ask you to assess the accuracy or novelty of historical claims, or the intention of the author in writing the review. This book review requires neither – rather, in this book I would like you to set aside questions of historical accuracy/contribution and author’s intention, and focus on what the book reveals about the practices of the United Nations, and the individuals who labour to see it succeed. Your book review should answer the question: “What does this book reveal about the strengths and limitations of the United Nations in resolving global challenges?”

All students should be **active participants** in class; assessment is based on attendance, in-class participation, and online discussion through Coursespaces. I will post a weekly topic for discussion (related to the readings) and you will have the opportunity to post your informed and researched thoughts. Discussion topics on Coursespaces will remain open for contributions for two weeks.

The **final exam** is a take home exam, worth 35% of your grade. The due date is Friday December 13th, and exams must not exceed five pages in length (12 pt font, double spaced). The exam will be distributed, and students will hand them in, via Coursespaces. I will provide further instructions during the last week of class.

Students must complete all assignments in order to get credit for the course. Students are expected to attend all classes, do all assigned readings for the course, and come

prepared to discuss the readings. Any student who attends fewer than 60 percent of class sessions will not get credit for the course.

I use the qualitative criteria associated with each letter grade as set out in the University of Victoria Calendar.

PERCENTAGE GRADING SCALE

Passing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
B+	6	77 – 79	Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
Failing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
F	0	0 – 49	Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.
N	0	0 – 49	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.

<https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-01/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html>

The Learning Environment:

The UVic Calendar states that “The University of Victoria is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and productive learning

environment. All members of the university community have the right to experience, and the responsibility to help create, such an environment". For more information on UVic's policies on the learning environment, consult the Calendar:

<https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-09/general/policies.html>

Given the range and contested nature of issues discussed in this course, students will express a diversity of viewpoints, including some that may differ widely from one's own. In this class, I seek to create an environment in which all perspectives should be analyzed critically in a respectful fashion.

Technology in the Class

There is now a growing body of evidence demonstrating the limitations and drawbacks of using personal electronic devices in the classroom. The proliferation of wireless communications technologies increases the potential for distractions that undermine the learning environment for all students. For the vast majority of students, attentive listening and taking hand-written notes is more conducive to effective learning than electronic note taking. For this reason, the use of phones for talk or text is prohibited while this class is in session, and I strongly encourage students to leave their mobile devices and laptops at home or stored in their bag. If you require an electronic device to take notes, please contact me.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

The responsibility of the institution - Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the

institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

The responsibility of the student - Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student's transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the University's policy on academic integrity, which can be found on pages 32-34 of the undergraduate calendar.

Please see the (revised) academic integrity policy: <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>.

Late Work Policy

Late papers will be penalized by 3% per day, to a maximum of seven days. Assignments submitted after seven days, without documented permission, will not be accepted – resulting in a grade of '0' on the assignment and 'N' in the course.

Occasionally, students may find themselves facing mental or physical health issues or other life challenges that interfere with their ability to successfully complete course requirements. If this applies to you, please email me as soon as possible and use the support services offered at UVic, such as counselling services, the Centre for Accessible Learning, and the Centre for Academic Communication. Feel free to contact me regarding issues related to this course and guidance regarding other supports available at UVic.

Course Experience Surveys (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is important to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my

teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessible via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with time in class to complete the survey.

Course Schedule

A) HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS (SEPT 4-20)

Historical Origins (Sept 4-10)

1. MLK, chapter 1 pp 1-8 and Chap 2 pp 21-55
2. Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present and Future of the United Nations*, Chapter 1 “The Troubled Advance to a New World Order, 1815-1945” (Vintage, 2006)
3. MLK Appendix - Charter of the United Nations, pp. 348-361
(<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>)

Theoretical Understandings of the UN (Sept 11-17)

1. MLK Chap 1 pp 9-12 and Chap 4 pp 113-115
2. Barnett, Michael and Martha Finnemore, Chapter 2 “Political Approaches” in DW
3. Amrith, Sunil and Glenda Sluga, New Histories of the United Nations. *Journal of World History* Vol 19(3) pp 251-274

B) UN STRUCTURE AND KEY INSTITUTIONS (SEPT 18 –OCT 4)

Overview, General Assembly and Security Council (Sept 18-24)

1. MLK Chap 2 pp 25-55
2. M.J. Peterson, Chapter 5 “General Assembly” in DW
3. David Malone, Chapter 6 “Security Council” in DW

Secretariat and Secretary General (Sep 25-27)

1. MLK Chap 3 pp 94-99
2. James Jonah, Chapter 9 “Secretariat: Independence and Reform” in DW
3. Edward Newman, Chapter 10 “Secretary-General’ in DW

C) DIPLOMATIC PROCESSES (OCT 1 – 9)

States, Groups and Blocs (Oct 1-4)

1. MLK Chap 3 pp 71-93
2. Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Chapter 12 “Regional Groups and Alliances” in DW

Non-State Actors (Oct 8-9)

1. MLK Chap 3 pp 99-110
2. Paul Wapner, Chapter 14 “Civil Society in DW
3. Craig Murphy, Chapter 15 “Private Sector” in DW

***** MIDTERM OCTOBER 11 *****

D) GLOBAL ISSUES (OCT 15 – DEC 3)

Peace and Security 1: Peacekeeping and Intervention (Oct 15-18)

1. MLK Chap 4 pp 111-167
2. Ramesh Thakur, Chapter 22 “Humanitarian Intervention” in DW

Peace and Security 2: Disarmament and Terrorism (Oct 22-25)

1. MLK Chap 4 pp167-183
2. Keith Krause, Chapter 17 “Disarmament” in DW

Economic Development (Oct 29-Nov 1)

1. MLK Chap 5 pp 191-234
2. Nico Schrijver, Chapter 34 “Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Development” in DW

Human Rights: 1 (Nov 5-6)

1. MLK Chap 6 pp 235-290
2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>)

Glen Johnson, Writing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pp 15-68
(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000984/098483eb.pdf>)

Human Rights 2: Indigenous Rights (Nov 8-15)

1. Maivan Clech Lam, Chapter 30 “Minorities and Indigenous Peoples” in DW
2. Sheryl R. Lightfoot, “Indigenous Mobilization and activism in the UN system” Chapter 17 in Short, Damien and Corinne Lennox (eds) Handbook of Indigenous Peoples’ Rights (London, Routledge, 2016) {photocopy}

***** BOOK REVIEW ESSAY DUE NOVEMBER 22 *****

Human Rights 3: Migrants and Refugees (Nov 19-22)

1. MLK Chap 7 pp 321-330
2. Jane McAdam, “Human Rights and Forced Migration” in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long and Nando Sigona (eds) The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (Oxford, 2014). (available electronically through UVic library)

The Future of the UN and Reform (Nov 26 - 29)

1. MLK Chapter 8 pp 335-347
2. Edward Luck, Chapter 38 “Principal Organs (Prospects for Reform)” in DW

REVIEW (DEC 3-4)