POLI 329
The Political Foundations of International Law

Instructor:
Dr. Claire Cutler (Fall 2020)

Course description:
This introductory course examines the contested nature of the relationships between international law, international politics and international political economy. This contestation reflects profound disagreements over how these relationships should be analyzed and theorized. An adequate understanding thus requires a critical examination of the analytical and theoretical foundations of international law and how they relate to the field of international relations. The course begins with analysis of the origins of international law, which is richly entwined with the history of western international society. Different approaches to the study of international law and international politics that derive from distinctive analytical and theoretical traditions are reviewed. We will examine the developments that are breaking the frames of traditional understandings of law and politics, and the critical approaches that reject international laws’ foundations as colonial, oppressive, and exploitative in advancing private regimes of appropriation and dispossession. The ability of international legal institutions to regulate the use of force and to advance human rights, self-determination, and resistance are also considered.

Prerequisites: None

Course outcomes/objectives:
- Understand how the international legal system operates
- Regulation of human rights, use of force, criminality and the global political economy
- Understand the main players in the international legal system
- Develop core undergraduate skills such as effective writing, analysis, and argumentation

Topics may include:
Relationship between international law and international relations
Watersheds in the development of international law
Influence of forces of globalization on international law
International legal institutions
Human rights and criminality
Use of Force
Private transnational governance

Course delivery: In the Fall 2020 term, this course will be delivered synchronously.

This online summary is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.