

# **PSC/IR 106: Introduction to International Relations**

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University of Rochester  
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Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00-9:50  
Gavett 202  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:15-4:15

International relations is the study of how states interact with each other. This course builds a working knowledge of our field, introducing the background, theoretical, and empirical tools necessary to understand international relations today. Students will learn about important findings in a variety of subfields, including war, international political economy, institutions, and nuclear proliferation. To do so, the course emphasizes readings from original research material rather than from a textbook. Further, students will solve problem sets and work with common international relations datasets to obtain a working understanding of the discipline's methodological foundations.

## **Course Materials**

Blackboard is difficult to work with. Thus, I will post all course materials on my website: [wjspaniel.wordpress.com/pscir-106](http://wjspaniel.wordpress.com/pscir-106). Most importantly, this includes links to required readings, PDFs of lecture slides, and recorded videos of lectures.

## **Recitation**

This class has weekly recitations in place of the scheduled Friday lecture. We will meet in class on the first Friday (9/5) to assign you to a teaching assistant. Recitations are mandatory and constitute a large portion of your grade. There will be no leniency for students attending lecture but not recitation.

## **Evaluation**

Grades have four components: two problem sets, two data analyses, recitation, and two exams. The problem sets are worth 10% each and will test your ability to think strategically about basic problems in international relations. The two data analyses are worth 5% each and will ask you to become more familiar with IR's common datasets. Recitation is worth 20% and will be based on attendance and participation, as your teaching assistant will further detail. The exams are non-cumulative and each worth 25%.

After weighting each individual grade, final grades will be no worse than the following:

93% < x: A

90 ≤ x ≤ 93%: A-

87% < x < 90%: B+

83% < x ≤ 87%: B

80% ≤ x ≤ 83%: B-

77% < x < 80%: C+

73% < x ≤ 77%: C

70% < x ≤ 73%: C-

x < 70%: Non-passing grades

## **Disclaimer**

This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class. You alone are responsible for attending lecture and checking the website to stay up-to-date.

## Readings and Schedule

The readings and schedule are subject to change, pending international crises and how fast we move through the material. Please see the website for links to the readings and an up-to-date schedule.

### **Topic 1: Introduction and IR Basics (9/3, 9/8)**

No readings. Note that we will meet on 9/5 to assign recitations.

### **Topic 2: Basic Models of Conflict and Cooperation (9/10, 9/15)**

[“The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War”](#)

*The Evolution of Cooperation*. [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 4](#).

### **Topic 3: The Bargaining Model of War (9/17, 9/22, 9/24)**

[“Rationalist Explanations for War”](#)

*The Rationality of War*. Chapter 2.

### **Topic 4: International Trade (9/29, 10/1)**

Problem Set #1 due 10/1.

### **Topic 5: The Democratic Peace (10/6, 10/8)**

[“Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes”](#)

[“The Capitalist Peace”](#)

### **Topic 6: Leader-Based Explanations (10/15, 10/20)**

[The Logic of Political Survival](#). Chapter 1.

[“International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still \*Ex Post\* Inefficient?”](#)

Data Analysis #1 due 10/15.

### **Exam 1 (10/22)**

No recitations on 10/24.

**Topic 7: Economic Sanctions (10/27, 10/29)**

[“Do Economic Sanctions Destabilize Country Leaders?”](#)

[“The Microfoundations of Economic Sanctions”](#)

**Topic 8: International Institutions (11/3, 11/5)**

[“The Rational Design of International Institutions”](#)

*Controlling Institutions.* [Chapter 1.](#)

**Topic 9: The United Nations (11/10, 11/12)**

[“How Much Is a Seat on the Security Council Worth? Foreign Aid and Bribery at the United Nations”](#)

Problem Set #2 due 11/10.

**Topic 10: Nuclear Proliferation (11/17, 11/19)**

[“Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb”](#)

[“Winning with the Bomb”](#)

**Topic 11: Terrorism (11/24)**

[“The Quality of Terror”](#)

Data Analysis #2 due 11/24.

No class on 11/26.

**Topic 12: International Intervention (12/1, 12/3)**

[“The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement”](#)

[“Pitfalls and Prospects in the Peacekeeping Literature”](#)

**Wrap Up (12/8)**

**Exam 2 (12/10)**