

International Relations Theory (K001202)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 6.0

Study time 180 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2)

English

Gent

lecture

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Lesage, Dries

PS03

lecturer-in-charge

De Keersmaecker, Goedele

PS03

co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Arabic and Islamic Studies)

crdts 6

offering A

Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences(main subject Political Sciences)

6

A

Bachelor of Science in Political Science

6

A

Bachelor of Science in Public Administration and Management

5

A

Exchange Programme in Political and Social Sciences

6

A

Linking Course Master of Science in Political Science(main subject International Politics)

6

A

Linking Course Master of Science in EU-Studies

6

A

Preparatory Course Master of Science in Political Science(main subject International Politics)

6

A

Preparatory Course Master of Science in Conflict and Development Studies

6

A

Preparatory Course Master of Science in EU-Studies

6

A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

international relations – theory-building – war and peace – international cooperation
– structural dependency – social construction – foreign policy

Position of the course

The course allows to theorize on previously acquired knowledge on international politics. It is also crucial for the development of the Bachelor and Master dissertation. The course has two objectives: 1) familiarizing students with the main theoretical perspectives for the study of international politics, 2) teaching the application of these theories.

Contents

After an introduction to actors, levels of analysis, and the concept of power, thorough examination is conducted on realism, liberalism, English School, Marxism, neo-Gramscianism, social constructivism, feminism, post-colonialism, and analysis of national foreign policy.

Initial competences

- A general historical framework and a basic factual knowledge of contemporary international politics are required. Reading a comprehensive book on international politics from 1815 to the present is recommended.
- Students are expected to closely follow international topical developments throughout the academic year so that they can adequately apply theoretical insights to them.
- Students must be open to theoretical approaches that go beyond the anecdotal and journalistic.

Final competences

- 1 To have profound knowledge of the main theoretical paradigms regarding international relations, with attention to the historical dimension.
- 2 To be able to interpret the current world order and important historical and topical events and developments.
- 3 To be able to analyse the various components of an international problem (among other things, actors, interests, ideas, power resources, power relations, institutions, ...).
- 4 To be able to apply in a critical and - if relevant - eclectic manner the main theoretical paradigms regarding international relations in the assessment of international trends and events.
- 5 To be able to efficiently locate and process literature about theory building.
- 6 Being able to independently and creatively apply the important theoretical paradigms in international relations to the development of the Bachelor and Master dissertation.
- 7 Being able to critically evaluate studies on international politics from theoretical and methodological perspectives.
- 8 When observing international trends and events, being able to transcend a journalistic or anecdotal approach by systematically demonstrating a theoretical, scientific reflex.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

During lectures, students are encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussions. The instructor will also present discussion points to the students. Support for guided self-study is also provided through Ufora. During seminars students will have to read articles in the classroom and answer some questions about them. The lectures are conducted on campus in accordance with the applicable safety standards regarding the corona virus. If necessary, an online alternative will be provided.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: International Relations Theory

Indicative price: € 40

Optional: no

References

Course content-related study coaching

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Answering some questions about articles that are read in the class room.

Calculation of the examination mark

Written exam (80%)

Seminar (20%)

Facilities for Working Students

Working students have access to the resources available on Ufora as well as exclusive access to lecture recordings.

Working students and others with legally valid absences from the seminar will be offered a substitute test.