

POLI 3166 INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND COOPERATION
SPRING 2026
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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Office Hours: Thursdays 14:00-15:50

Lecture: Thursday 10:00-11:50, CPD G.02

Tutorial: Friday 15:00-15:50, CPD 1.19

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do states cooperate and what is the role of international organizations in international cooperation? This course focuses on the role and development of international organizations in world politics. It is required that students complete POLI2106 or the equivalent before taking this course. This course delves into the dynamic changes occurring within international organizations and how these shifts impact the formation, termination, and overall effectiveness of international organizations both theoretically and empirically. In the final portion of the course, we will discuss how features of international organizations are applied to the WTO, FIFA, and the UN.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the foundational theories and historical development of international institutions and their roles in promoting international cooperation.
2. Examine the motivations of individual states in joining international institutions and explore the challenges of achieving international cooperation.
3. Introduce institutional mechanisms that help states overcome collective action problems.
4. Present students with examples of international institutions addressing various issue areas—such as the WTO, FIFA, and the UN—and assess their unique institutional features.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES (CLOs)

At the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of foundational concepts in international relations, particularly in relation to international cooperation and the creation of international institutions.
2. Apply theoretical frameworks to analyze a range of international institutions and evaluate the usefulness of these theories.
3. Critically assess institutional design features and their role in facilitating commitment and cooperation among states.
4. Design and conduct research on issues related to international cooperation and institutional performance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Midterm: 25%

Final: 25%

WTO simulation and Papers: 30%

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Participation is a critical component of this course. Your participation grade is determined by your attendance as well as the quality of your participation. That is, you are awake, come to class prepared, paying attention, answering questions, and asking questions. Late for the class more than 15 minutes, as well as leaving the class before class ends without prior notice will be considered as missing.

You will be given one free absence without penalty in the semester.

Two Exams (25x2%)

The in-person midterm exam is currently set for **Thursday, Mar. 19th**, and will cover all lectures and assigned readings up to that date. The final exam is set for **Thursday Apr. 30th**. It will be cumulative but will focus more on material from the second half of the course. Additional details about the exam formats and expectations will be provided.

Policy on Rescheduling Exams: Students are required to take the exam as scheduled. The only allowable exception to this policy is a documented emergency or university event. In cases of severe illness and family emergency (death in family), students need to provide sufficient proof of the absence (e.g. a doctor's note, the obituary, etc.). If an emergency arises, students will need to contact me **BEFORE** the exam or will receive zero credit.

WTO Simulation and Papers (30%)

For this semester, tutorials will be dedicated toward a simulated World Trade Organization negotiation. Students will be put into teams to represent countries and will negotiate trade aspects on behalf of these countries. More details will be provided later, and I will provide more documentation. Your grade for simulation will be based off your attendance, participation in the simulation, your group's written reports, a final individual paper, and your countries outcome during the negotiations.

Discussion sections are scheduled as follows:

Feb. 6 Group Meeting 1
Feb. 13 Group Meeting 2
Feb. 27 Round 1 Negotiations
Mar. 6 Review for midterm (attendance is optional)
Mar. 27 Group Meeting 3
Mar. 10 Round 2 Negotiations
Apr. 17 Simulation recap
Apr. 24 Review for final (attendance is optional)

COURSE POLICIES AND OTHER INFORMATION

Prohibition of Recording of Class Session by Students

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an

accommodation should contact university. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University’s Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Electronic Etiquette

Cellphones may not be used during class. If you anticipate an important phone call (e.g. family emergency) put your phone on vibrate and leave the classroom, should you need to answer it. Other electronic devices like laptops or tablets are only allowed for classroom purposes. This policy is aimed at providing the best possible learning environment for all students.

Email Communication

All email communication with the professor should include a subject line that begins with POLI 3166 followed by more specific information regarding the purpose of the email. For example, “POLI 3166: meeting to discuss paper ideas.” I check email periodically, and you can expect me to respond within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours or more over the weekend or holiday. Yet, if the answers to questions are already found in the syllabus, you may not receive an answer to your email. Always consult the syllabus before emailing a question.

Refer to following webpage:

<https://www.usnews.com/education/articles/emailing-your-college-professor-dos-and-donts>

Email is a useful way to ask quick questions. Replying to long questions about the readings/lectures, however, is highly inefficient for both you and me. If you want to talk about something you don’t understand, come to office hours! While I respond to student emails, I prefer to talk in person. Come see me during office hours!

Late Assignment

Late assignment will be penalized by one letter grade (e.g. A to A-) for each day late. Students must contact the instructor prior to the due date to avoid the penalty.

Use of GenAI is prohibited in this course:

This course focuses on the development of independent critical thinking and the mastery of international relations. To ensure that all submitted work accurately reflects personal understanding and original thought, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools in completing assignments or assessments is strictly prohibited. This policy supports our commitment to academic integrity, the development of each student’s learning, and direct interaction with international relations. Any work suspected to be generated by AI will be treated seriously and may face discipline.

Final Grading

Final letter grade will be given based on the following scheme:

A+	4.3
A	4
A-	3.7

B+	3.3
B	3
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1
F+	0.49
F	0.25
F-	0

CLASS MATERIALS

International Organizations, Politics, Law, Practice by Ian Hurd (5th edition) will be used as the main textbook for this class. This book is available in paper and ebook (price ranges from 40-100 (USD)). You can purchase the online version or whichever version is available.

The remaining readings are primarily articles drawn from scholarly journal will be uploaded on Moodle.

Readings must be completed *before* the class meeting for which they are listed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Readings subject to change

- Jan. 22 Introduction to the course
 - No reading
- Jan 29: International Order & Traditional Approach
 - Philpott, Daniel. 1995. Sovereignty: An Introduction and Brief History. *Journal of International Affairs* 48 (2): 353-368
 - Ch.1-2
- Feb. 5: Do we need IO?
 - Abbott, Kenneth W. and Duncan Snidal. 1998. Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42 (1): 3-32.
 - Axelrod, Robert and Robert O. Keohane. 1985. "Achieving Cooperating Under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions." *World Politics*, 38(1): 226-254
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Barnett, Michael N. and Martha Finnemore. 1999. The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations. *International Organization* 53 (4): 699-732.
 - Hurd, Ian. 2022. The Case Against International Cooperation. *International Theory* 14 (2): 263-284
- Feb. 12: Do international organizations make difference?

- Downs, George W., David M. Rocke, and Peter N. Barsoom. 1996. "Is the Good News About Compliance Good News About Cooperation?" *International Organization* 50(3): 379-406.
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Peritz, Lauren. 2020. When are International Institutions Effective? The Impact of Domestic Veto Players on Compliance with WTO Rulings. *International Studies Quarterly* 64 (1): 220-234
 - Chaudoin, Stephen. 2014. Promises or Policies? An Experimental Analysis of International Agreements and Audience Reactions. *International Organization* 68 (1): 235-256
- Feb. 19: **New Years Break – No class**
- Feb. 26: Improving institutional design
 - Koremenos, Barbara, Charles Lipson, and Duncan Snidal. 2001. "The Rational Design of International Institutions." *International Organization* 55(4): 761-799.
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Duffield, John S. 2003. "The Limits of Rational Design." *International Organization* 57(2): 411-430
 - Rosendorff, B. Peter and Helen V. Milner. 2001. The Optimal Design of International Trade Institutions: Uncertainty and Escape. *International Organization* 55 (4): 829-857
- Mar. 5: Power v. IO
 - Steinberg, Richard H. 2002. In the Shadow of Law or Power? Consensus-Based Bargaining and Outcomes in the GATT/WTO. *International Organization* 56 (2): 339-374.
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Goldstein, J. & Sykes, A. (2025) The Perils of Institutional Rigidity, or How the WTO Helped to Sow the Seeds of Trump. World trade review. [Online] 24 (4), 481–488.
 - Stephen, M. D. (2025) The Diffusion of Global Power and the Decline of Global Governance. Ethics & international affairs. [Online] 39 (2), 145–158.
- Mar. 12: **Reading week – No class**
- Mar. 19: Midterm
- Mar. 26: Peace keeping peace making: League of Nations and the UN
 - Ch. 4
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon. 2013. "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(4): 875–891
 - Keith, Linda Camp. 1999. "The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Does it Make a Difference in Human Rights Behavior?" *Journal of Peace Research* 36: 95-118

- Apr. 2: Trade Organizations - GATT and WTO
 - Ch. 5
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Busch, Marc and Eric Reinhardt. 2003. “Developing Countries and GATT/WTO Dispute Settlement.” *Journal of World Trade* 37(4): 719-735
 - Goldstein, Judith L., Douglas Rivers, and Michael Tomz. 2007. “Institutions in International Relations: Understanding the Effects of the GATT and WTO on World Trade.” *International Organization*, 61: 37-67
- Apr. 9: Regional integration- EU, ASEAN and AU
 - Ch. 12
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Kelemen, R. D., & Pavone, T. (2023). Where have the guardians gone? Law enforcement and the politics of supranational forbearance in the European Union. *World Politics*, 75(4), 779-825.
 - Haas, Ernst B. 1976. “Turbulent Fields and the Theory of Regional Integration.” *International Organization* 30(2): 173-212.
- Apr. 16: International law - International Court of Justice & International Criminal Court
 - Ch. 11
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Krcmaric, D., & Escribà-Folch, A. (2023). I'll be back? Exiled leaders and political instability. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 67(2-3), 402-427.
 - Davis, Christina L. and Julia C. Morse. 2018. “Protecting Trade by Legalizing Political Disputes: Why Countries Bring Cases to the International Court of Justice.” *International Studies Quarterly* 62(4): 709–722.
- Apr. 23: FIFA, the International Olympic Committee, and the Court of Arbitration for Sport
 - Ch. 13
 - **Recommended readings:**
 - Bishop, M. L., & Cooper, A. F. (2018). The FIFA scandal and the distorted influence of small states. *Global Governance*, 21-40.
- Apr. 30: Final Exam

Appendix I: Guidelines on grading

Grade/ Competency	A+, A, A-	B+, B, B-	C+, C, C-	D+, D	F
Use of vocabulary and concepts	Student accurately and creatively uses concepts and key course vocabulary throughout the assignment, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of each.	Student accurately uses concepts and key course vocabulary throughout the assignment, but does not demonstrate creativity in use or fluency.	Student uses concepts and key vocabulary from the course, but in a manner that does not demonstrate understanding or proficiency; use of concepts and vocabulary is perfunctory.	Student rehearses concepts or key course vocabulary but not in a way suggesting understanding at a university level.	Student fails to use concepts or key vocabulary correctly or at all.
Deployment of theories and argumentation	Student deploys theoretical arguments well using their own voice and substantive arguments in a sophisticated way.	Student deploys theoretical arguments well although voice, style and substantive critiques are similar to the source.	Student deploys theoretical vocabulary in a way commensurate with rules for argumentation, but does not show creativity or sophistication in substance or style.	Student rehearses theories and bits of argumentation from others and not in a way suggesting understanding at a university level.	Student fails to attempt argumentation or use of theoretical tools from the course.
Creativity	Student's choice of topic, sources, assignment completion modality, arguments, and solutions show sophistication and critical thinking at a high level.	Student's choice of topic, sources, assignment completion modality, arguments, and solutions show critical thinking skills.	Student's choice of topic, sources, assignment completion modality, arguments, and solutions are average and "modal".	Student shows no more creativity than what is required to complete the task.	Student misunderstands creativity or fails to complete the assigned task.
Persuasiveness	Student makes an argument using appropriate language and	Student makes an argument using appropriate	Student makes an argument using either inappropriate	Student rants or editorializes considerably, but stays	Student rants incoherently.

	rhetorical style necessary to persuade the reader to accept or accommodate their viewpoint.	language and rhetorical style necessary to complete the assignment.	language and/or rhetorical style. Ranting or editorializing.	largely on message.	
Use of fact and empirical evidence	Student brings factual evidence to bear upon the arguments and supports factual claims with adequate support from reputable sources.	Student brings factual evidence to bear upon some arguments and supports factual claims with support from limited or questionable sources.	Student brings some facts into their arguments but fails to provide support consistently for factual claims and uses trite or prohibited sources as support (e.g., Wikipedia).	Students factual claims are questionable or unsupported. Student rehearses facts from unacceptable sources (e.g., Yahoo answers).	Factual claims, if any are incorrect, ill supported, or incoherent within the argument.
Grammar and spelling	Student's writing is grammatically correct and there are no spelling errors.	Students writing is grammatically correct in most instances and there are few spelling errors.	Students writing is grammatically correct in many instances but spelling errors are found throughout the document, consonant with ESL students.	Grammatical infelicities and spelling errors appear frequently in the document, but these are errors common to ESL students.	Grammar and spelling are unacceptable for university level writing for any student.
Mechanics and style	Student's writing is fluid, fluent, and in an appropriate style for the task.	Student's writing is fluent but stilted and/ or is an odd style for the task.	Student's writing is halting and imbalanced and may be inappropriate for the task.	Student's writing is only marginally acceptable for university level courses.	Student's writing needs significant remediation by outside sources.
Citations	Student accurately and completely cites all sources, whether factual, argumentative, or theoretical	Student accurately cites all sources, whether factual, argumentative, or theoretical	Student cites most expected sources, but does not provide accurate or	Student's citations are incomplete and inconsistent throughout the paper.	Student fails to cite at all.

	claims according to the appropriate citation scheme.	claims but does not provide complete citations or uses an inappropriate citation scheme.	complete citations.		
Sources	Student's choice of sources demonstrates sophisticated use of research resources. Sources are from reputable, academic sources.	Student's choice of sources indicates a notable level of use of research resources. Sources are from reputable, academic sources.	Student's choice of sources shows minimal use of research resources. Sources are from a mix of academic and non-academic sources, some of questionable provenance.	Students include only minimal outside sources from sophomoric or prohibited sources (e.g., Encyclopedia Britannica online).	Student fails to demonstrate appropriate outside research.

Appendix II Programme Learning Outcomes

Bachelor of Social Sciences – Major/minor in PPA

PLO1. Demonstrate a solid understanding of the key concepts in political science, political theory, public administration, government operations, international relations and legal systems;

PLO2. Understand critically and apply sensitively political science theories and research methods to analyze political complexities across national and international contexts;

PLO3. Reflect critically on learning of political science and public administration theories in practice to meet the standards and expectations of the public sphere profession and the community-at-large;

PLO4. Acquire specific knowledge and sensitive awareness of the formal, social and cultural aspects of political institutions and behavior;

PLO5. Develop the skills and appreciation for teamwork through participating in group activities and internships;

PLO6. Develop a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and intricacies of human society, and the ability to identify leverage points for policy and social actions.