

POLS 389: International Law and Organizations

Dr. Ches Thurber

Fall 2021

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Office Hours: M/T 9:30-11:00 a.m.

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Class Hours: Online

Class Room: Online

Course Description

Is international law a joke? If there are no police, no jail, and no consistent means of enforcement, is it really law at all? And what about international institutions? Do they really have an impact on the world, or are they just, as one American politician put it, “debating societies”? These questions will be at the heart of this course. In the big picture, we will evaluate how effective the effort to build a system of international laws and organizations has been in promoting global cooperation. In the process, we will examine the main principles of international law as well as some of the most prominent international institutions. Issues of war, peace, and human rights will receive special attention in the second half of the course. The class includes a series of simulations of the International Court of Justice and the UN Security Council.

Mode of Delivery

This will be a fully online class. It is primarily asynchronous (i.e. no required online meeting times). Content for each week will be made available on Blackboard by Sunday at midnight and assignments will generally be due the following Sunday at midnight.

You *MUST* stay up to date with the class. This is *NOT* one of those online classes where you can just set aside a week or two and knock everything out. It will require your consistent engagement, week in and week out, over the course of the semester.

There will be a few opportunities for synchronous activities that are scheduled in the syllabus. Alternative arrangements will be made in all cases so that students who are not available at those times are given an equal learning opportunity.

A Note on Learning Amidst Pandemic

I was hoping to be able to delete this section this year. But the virus had other ideas. These are still crazy times. We will be proceeding with this class the best we can and to some degree I hope the process of reading, writing, and talking about topics we are all passionate about helps provide you with some sense of normalcy. But sometimes that can feel like absurdity. Please know that you are not alone in feeling it and that we are all in this together. I will be as accommodating as I can this semester in light of these circumstances and I hope that we can all agree to engage each

other in a spirit of mutual patience, empathy, and understanding. If you or somebody you know is struggling with anxiety or other issues, do not hesitate to reach out. Resources available include the DRC, Student Counseling Services or call 815-306-2777.

Office Hours

I will be holding office hours on Mondays and Tuesdays between 9:30 and 11:00. Office hours appointments are available either in-person in my office or online. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this; since we don't have class in person, this is the best chance I have to get to know you! Sign up for an appointment at [this link](#). The system will send you a Zoom link that we can use for our meeting. Or you can just show up at my office at that time.

Texts

The required textbooks for the course are:

- David L. Bosco. *Five to Rule Them All: The UN Security Council and the Making of the Modern World*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Kenneth Cain, Heidi Postlewaite, and Andrew Thomson. *Emergency Sex and Other Desperate Measures: True Stories from a War Zone*. Ebury, 2006.
- J. Martin Rochester. *Between Peril and Promise: The Politics of International Law*. Sage, 2012.

Students will also need to register and pay for the Packback discussion board service.

Packback

For me, classroom discussion is the most important part of the college learning experience. And unfortunately this is exactly the part that online teaching takes away. To help bring some of this back, we will be experimenting with an online discussion platform called "Packback" this semester.

You can think of Packback as an online discussion board, similar to ones offered on Blackboard. The advantage of Packback is that it promises to be much more engaging, allowing for a lot more back and forth discussion and feedback. The disadvantage of Packback is that it will cost you money. I take this drawback seriously and am assigning Packback this year only after hearing very positive reviews from other faculty.

For each week of the course, you will be required to post *THREE* times on the Packback discussion board. In one post you will pose a question for your classmates. In the other two you will respond to questions your classmates or I have posed.

An email invitation will be sent to you from help@packback.co prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam), you may register by following the instructions below:

1. Create an account by navigating to <https://questions.packback.co> and clicking "Sign up for an Account" Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can log in with your credentials.

2. Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Looking to join a community you don't see here?" section in Packback at the bottom of the homepage. Community Lookup Key: c24493f5-5ba6-4af1-a2d7-ab0466408d59
3. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

You can find more info about Packback at help.packback.co. I am of course available to answer questions, and you are also welcome to get your money's worth by contacting Packback's customer support team directly at help@packback.co. (Seriously, they encourage you to do this and they are very responsive!)

If the cost of Packback (\$35) creates hardship for you or your family, you may also contact them to request a fee waiver. They have promised to honor such requests. You may choose to include me in your communication with Packback about this or not, depending on what you are comfortable with (i.e. I will go to bat for you to get you a waiver, but you are also welcome to keep this private).

You can find a brief propaganda video on Packback here: vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions

Model UN Option

Students in the class are encouraged to consider participating in NIU's Model UN club, for which I am the advisor. We meet one day a week during the semester, and then travel to Chicago the weekend before Thanksgiving to represent a country in a mock UN simulation. Students who choose to participate in Model UN may choose to count the Model UN experience in lieu of the class UNSC simulation.

Evaluation

Packback Discussion Board Posts (20%): For each week of the course, students are expected to contribute three posts to Packback: one question and two responses. The posts must meet minimum criteria for length and depth of engagement. Doing so will result in full credit (100%) for that week. Posts are due by midnight on Sunday at the end of the week.

Reading Quizzes (10%): For each week of the course, there will be an online multiple choice quiz on the readings and video lectures. Students will be able to re-take the quiz one time. Quizzes must be complete by Sunday at midnight.

Midterm Exam: (30%) There will a midterm held in the sixth week of class. I will provide a list of possible exam questions one week before the exam. I encourage you to work with others to plan your answers in advance, but your work on exam day must be your own, produced without the assistance of books or notes. Students may take the exam at any time within a multi-day window, but the exam will be timed and must be completed in one sitting. SafeAssign will be enabled.

ICJ Case Simulation: Written (15%) and Oral Participation (5%)

In October, we will run a series of mock cases before the International Court of Justice. Each student will be assigned the role of an advocate of a party to the dispute or to that of a justice of the court. Each student will independently write a memorial or a decision of approximately 4 pages (single-spaced) in length. Students will also be evaluated on their oral advocacy in the simulation. Students will have the opportunity to participate either in a simulation that involves

a “live” oral arguments session, or one in which they may upload their oral arguments by video at a time of their choosing.

UNSC Simulation: Participation (10%) and Reflection Memo (10%)

In the last week of the semester, we will run a series of UN Security Council simulations. These simulations will take place on online discussion boards, with video uploads of oral arguments as appropriate. Students are expected to participate actively throughout the week. After the simulation is complete, students will write a 1,000 word reflection memo. Students participating in the NIU Model UN team can count this in lieu of the UNSC simulation and write their reflection memo on their Model UN experience.

Course Policies

- If you think you need to delay taking an exam or submitting a written assignment, you should talk to me, generally at least two weeks before the exam/due date. Such extensions are never guaranteed, but will be based on university policy, exigency of the circumstances, and timeliness of the request (the earlier the better). Any missed exam or written assignment submitted after the deadline without prior authorization will incur a penalty.
- All students are expected to adhere to the highest levels of academic integrity. Violations of university, departmental, and disciplinary standards will not be tolerated and will lead to an F for the assignment and possibly the course. I will report all violations through institutional procedures. Information on University-wide definitions and policies regarding academic integrity can be found [here](#).
- If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu. Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations. The sooner you let me know your needs, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.
- I ask that my undergraduate students refer to me as either Dr. or Professor Thurber. I’m just old-school that way. Please let me know how you prefer to be addressed, both in name and pronoun, especially if it differs from what is in the college directory. I will make every effort to address you in the way you wish to be addressed. Please try and do the same for your fellow classmates, as well as for other faculty in the department.
- I am committed to your success in this class – if you feel that you are not performing to your expectations, please come and see me. I am available to answer any questions you may have about course assignments, requirements or content. I generally answer e-mails within 24 hrs on weekdays, and would be happy to schedule an appointment to meet with you if you are unavailable during my posted office hours.

Class Schedule

Students are expected to read the listed readings before the indicated class session.

Week 1: Introduction (Monday 08/23 - Sunday 08/29)

- PP: Ch. 1
- CFR.org, "What Does the World Health Organization Do?"
- Jacobs, "Opposition to Breast-Feeding Resolution by U.S. Stuns World Health Officials," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2018.

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 08/29

Week 2: IR Theory and International Law (Monday 08/30 - Sunday 09/05)

- PP: Chs. 2-3
- TBD

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 09/05

Week 3: Jurisdiction, Sovereignty, and Human Rights (Monday 09/06 - Sunday 09/12)

- PP: Chs. 4-5
- TBD

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 09/12

Week 4: War and Peace (Monday 09/13 - Sunday 09/19)

- PP: Ch. 6
- TBD

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 09/19

Week 5: Economics (Monday 09/20 - Sunday 09/26)

- PP: Ch. 7
- TBD

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 09/26

Week 6: Exam Week 1 (Monday 09/27 - Sunday 10/03)

- Optional Online Review Session A: Monday 9/27 11:00-12:15
- Optional Online Review Session B: Tuesday 9/28 2:00-3:15
- Exam available beginning Tuesday 9/28 at 3:15 PM

Exam (Timed 90 minutes) must be completed by midnight on Sunday 10/03

Week 7: Health and the Environment (Monday 10/04 - Sunday 10/10)

- PP: Ch. 8
- TBD

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 10/10

Week 8: ICJ Simulation Week 1 (Monday 10/11 - Sunday 10/17)

- Simulation Prep

Advocates' Simulation Memorials Due by midnight on Sunday 10/17

Week 9: ICJ Simulation Week (Monday 10/18 - Sunday 10/24)

- ICJ Simulation 1 Oral Arguments: Monday 10/18 11:00-12:15
- ICJ Simulation 2 Oral Arguments: Tuesday 10/19 2:00-3:15
- ICJ Simulations 3 and 4 Oral Arguments: Videos posted online by midnight on Tuesday 10/19

Justice decisions and videos due by midnight on Sunday 10/24

Week 10: The UN Security Council Part I (Monday 10/25 - Sunday 10/31)

- Bosco: Intro - Ch. 4

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 10/31

Week 11: The UN Security Council Part II (Monday 11/01 - Sunday 11/07)

- Bosco: Chs. 5 - Conclusion

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 11/07

Week 12: Triumphs and Pitfalls of International Aid and Intervention (Monday 11/08 - Sunday 11/14)

- Emergency Sex: First Half

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 11/14

Week 13: International Intervention Part II (Monday 11/15 - Sunday 11/21)

- Emergency Sex: Second Half

Reading quiz and Packback posts due by midnight on Sunday 11/21

Week 14: Thanksgiving (Monday 11/22 - Sunday 11/28)

- Begin preparing for UNSC simulation

Week 15: UNSC Simulation (Monday 11/29 - Sunday 12/05)

- Participate in UNSC discussion boards throughout the week

Final Exam Week ; (Monday 12/06 - Wednesday 12/8)

Final Reflection Paper due by midnight on Wednesday 12/8