Politics 15a
Introduction to International Relations
Session O: Online Summer Session
June 1 – August 9, 2020

Contact details
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Course description
This course introduces the academic study of International Relations. Topics include the nature of the state system, the outbreak and settlement of violent conflicts, the sources of international conflict and cooperation, and the origins and effects of international institutions and international agreements. The course unfolds in three parts: 1) conceptual and historical foundations; 2) contending theoretical perspectives; 3) issues in international security.

Prerequisites and enrollment
Prior coursework in Politics or International Relations is neither expected nor required. If you were placed on the wait list, e-mail me to request a consent code.

Learning outcomes
After completing this course, you will be able to:
1) Identify and interpret major patterns, trends, shifts, and decisive moments in international relations.
2) Utilize analytical tools to understand state actions and interactions, and the consequences for the international system.
3) Critically evaluate contending perspectives on and differing explanations of general trends and major developments in international relations.
4) Apply digital literacy skills to analyze primary-source information and report the results of your work.
5) Advance to higher-level study in more specialized courses in international relations.
Course structure and preparation time
This course will be conducted asynchronously; there will be no required class meetings. I will be available for weekly office hours via Zoom, and I will make every effort to reply to e-mail within one day. Students are expected to spend approximately 12-15 hours per week on lectures, course readings, and assignments.

Latte online platform
All course readings, assignments, and other materials, with the exception of two required texts, can be accessed in the Latte online platform, available at https://moodle2.brandeis.edu.

Required texts
There are two required texts, which you should purchase or rent from the vendor of your choice. Be sure to have the edition listed, not an earlier edition.


Assignments
The assignments required for the course and their weight in the final grade are as follows:

1) Forum posts 15%
2) Online quizzes 30%
3) Digitized documents paper 30%
4) Final assessment 25%

Forum posts
Most weeks, you will initiate one forum post on Latte, and you will comment on one classmate’s forum post. Forum posts will respond to either a ‘question of the day’ related to assigned readings, or to questions about a supplementary reading by a newspaper, think tank, or other online media.

Online quizzes
Most weeks, you will take an untimed quiz on Latte after completing lectures and course readings for that week’s lessons.
Digitized documents paper
In the digitized documents paper, you will investigate an important state decision in international relations using government documents and other primary-source materials. You will choose from a list of topics, and links will be provided to the documents to use for your analysis of your topic. The paper must be no more than 2,500 words. It is due by Friday, July 31.

Final assessment
The final assessment is an open book, open notes written exam. It will be in two section: first, passage interpretation, which will ask you to interpret and critically evaluate three passages from course readings; second, applying knowledge, which will ask you to use concepts and examples from the class to analyze two ‘what if’ scenarios in international relations. The final assessment must be no more than 2,000 words. It is due by Sunday, August 9.

Weekly list of course topics
Each week is broken into two lessons. See Latte for the detailed schedule of lecture materials, course readings, and assignments for each lesson.

Week 1: week of June 1
- Lesson 1: The State System
- Lesson 2: The ‘Long’ Nineteenth Century

Week 2: week of June 8
- Lesson 1: World War I and After
- Lesson 2: The Interwar Crisis

Week 3: week of June 15
- Lesson 1: World War II and After
- Lesson 2: The Cold War

Week 4: week of June 22
- Lesson 1: Regional Conflicts
- Lesson 2: IR Theory: Realism

Week 5: week of June 29
- Lesson 1: IR Theory: Institutionalism
- No second lesson this week
Week 6: week of July 6
- Lesson 1: State Structure
- Lesson 2: Domestic and Transnational Politics

Week 7: week of July 13
- Lesson 1: Nuclear Weapons
- Lesson 2: Nuclear Proliferation

Week 8: week of July 20
- Lesson 1: The United Nations
- Lesson 2: UN Peacekeeping

Week 9: week of July 27
- Lesson 1: International Terrorism
- Lesson 2: Regime Change

Week 10: week of August 3
- Lesson 1: World Order
- No second lesson this week