International Relations

The major in international relations is administered by the International Relations Committee: Professors Ferraro (politics), Hashmi (international relations), Jones (Russian and Eurasian studies), Kebede (geography), Khory (politics), King (history). Paus (economics) Western (international relations); Associate Professor Adelman (economics; on leave Fall 2015), Datla (history), K. Schmeiser (economics); Assistant Professors Doerr (international relations), Houston (geography), Reiter (politics).

Overview

The Department of International Relations (IR) focuses on the myriad and complex interactions of human beings across state boundaries. It aims to provide students a global perspective on the origins of the current international system, the salient concerns in international relations today, and the emerging challenges humanity will face in the years ahead. These goals can best be achieved through an interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon the theoretical insights and empirical knowledge of several disciplines, including economics, geography, history, and political science. International relations majors are expected to complete a course of study that includes introductory core courses in each of these fields, a course in research methods, as well as advanced courses in a number of more focused tracks. They are expected to attain a level of proficiency in a foreign language that will allow them to do basic research in it. They are also encouraged to study abroad during their junior year. The department strives to educate informed citizens and thoughtful leaders for our emerging global society.

Contact Info

Linda Chesky-Fernandes, senior administrative assistant
Jeremy King, chair

Requirements for the Major

Credits

- A minimum of 40 credits
- 12 credits must be at the 300 level and undertaken in at least two disciplines. These courses must be taken at Mount Holyoke or another of the Five Colleges. Only 4 credits of independent work can count toward the requirements for courses at the 300 level

Courses

- One of the following: Economics 213, Economic Development: A Survey or Economics 218, International Economics. Please note that the Department of Economics requires Economics 110, Introductory Economics (or one of its predecessors Economics 103 or Economics 104) as a prerequisite for Economics 213 and 218.
- One of the following: Geography 105, World Regional Geography or Geography 206, Political Geography. Students with high school preparation in geography should take Geography 206.
- One of the following: History 151, Modern and Contemporary European Civilization or History 161, British Empire and Commonwealth
- Politics 116, World Politics

These introductory courses provide the foundation for more advanced course work in the IR major. Therefore, they should all be completed within the first five semesters at Mount Holyoke. IR 200, Research Methods—intended for IR majors in their sophomore year.

Focus

Each student’s major must have a focus, consisting of at least 12 credits in two different disciplines, only 4 credits of which may be independent study. Students may elect one of the following five foci: global commons, international institutions, international peace and security, international political economy, or international ethics. They may also design a focus, with the approval of their advisor and the chair.

Foreign Language Requirement

Each student is expected to possess or acquire proficiency in a foreign language up to the intermediate level. This ordinarily requires two semesters of language study beyond the minimum requirements of the College, or four semesters in total.

Other

- Students should read the IR Handbook for Students carefully for more information on all requirements listed above. The handbook is available online at the IR website and in the IR office.
- Soon after declaring their major, students should plan individual programs of study in consultation with one or more members of the faculty committee, one of whom will be designated the student’s academic advisor.
- Exceptions to the requirements above will be made only in rare cases and require the approval of the chair.

The Department of International Relations does not cross-list courses in other departments that satisfy the major’s requirements. Generally, all courses taught by members of the IR Committee count toward the major. For courses offered by other faculty, the policy of the department is to accept any course in any department that is directly pertinent to the student’s focus in her major. Thus, for example, a student whose focus is global commons could conceivably count courses offered by the geology or biological sciences departments. Or a student focusing on international ethics could use certain courses in the religion or philosophy departments to satisfy her requirements in the major. Any questions concerning the appropriateness of a particular course can be answered by the advisor or the department chair. It is important for the student to verify that the course in question will count toward her major before she takes it.

The IR major focuses on global issues and institutions, and relationships across regions and nations. This does not preclude students from developing expertise in a particular region or nation; indeed, part of the study of international relations is how global issues find local expressions. But students whose primary interest is in a particular area of the world should elect a more appropriate major, such as Latin American or Asian studies.

International relations is an interdisciplinary major. Students who pursue an interdisciplinary major automatically fulfill the College’s “outside the major” requirement.

Requirements for the Certificate

The Five College Certificate in International Relations serves as the minor in International Relations.

The Five College International Relations Certificate Program offers students an opportunity to pursue an interest in international affairs as a complement to their majors. It prepares to students to make interdisciplinary connections between their field of study and the complexities of global challenges such as globalization, regional and ethnic conflict, environmental degradation, resource
scarcity, demographic stress, global climate change, wide disparities in global economic development, and challenges to global public health.

Courses

- A minimum of eight courses, covering each one of the following areas of study:
  - introductory world politics
  - global institutions or problems
  - the international financial and commercial system
  - the historical development of the international system since 1789
  - contemporary American foreign policy
  - proficiency in a contemporary foreign language through the completion of two years of the language at the college level or its equivalent.
- Two courses on the politics, economy, and/or society of foreign areas, of which one must involve the study of a third-world country or region outside of the United States and Europe

A complete list of the Five College courses for each of the seven requirements is available from the advisors listed below and the program’s website at https://www.fivecolleges.edu/international/courses

Other

- No more than four of these courses in any one discipline can be counted toward the certificate.
- No single course can satisfy more than one requirement.
- Students must complete the required courses (with the exception of the foreign language courses) with letter grades of B or better (no satisfactory/unsatisfactory grades).

For further information consult with one of the Mount Holyoke College advisors: Vincent Ferraro, Kavita Khory, or Jon Western (program director). Additional information also can be found at www.fivecolleges.edu/international/certificate.

Study Abroad

Students are encouraged to spend at least one semester studying abroad during their junior year. A suitable program and course of study should be chosen with the help of the student's advisor.

Honors Work

The department reserves its honors for majors who successfully complete a thesis in their senior year. Seniors writing a thesis must enroll in IR 395, Independent Study for two semesters.

Course Offerings

IR-200 Research Methods

Spring
Develops students’ skills in writing expository essays and introduces basic quantitative and qualitative research methods used in the social sciences and history. The course provides a foundation for writing research papers in advanced courses, as well as an honors thesis.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

S. Hashmi

Notes: This course should be taken by International Relations majors in their sophomore year.

Credits: 4

IR-211 Middle East Politics

Not Scheduled for This Year
Introduction to the cultures and politics of the Middle East. Includes the situation of the region at the time of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire; the emergence of independent states before and after World War II; the rise of Arab and Zionist nationalism; the Arab-Israeli conflicts; and the superpower rivalry and its influence on regional politics. Other topics include the Iranian revolution, the domestic and regional role of Islamic movements, and the political economy of oil.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives

H. Kosebalaban

Prereq: Politics 116.

Credits: 4

IR-222 The United States, Israel, and the Arabs

Not Scheduled for This Year
Surveys the constants and variables in U.S. foreign policy toward Israel and the Arabs since the end of World War II to the present. Analysis of domestic determinants of U.S. policy, including lobbies, ideology, and the international system. Consideration of U.S. policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict, intra-Arab disputes, and the Gulf War.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives

H. Kosebalaban

Prereq: Politics 116.

Credits: 4

IR-224 The United States and Iran

Fall
Explores America’s relationship with Iran from the end of World War II to the present. Examines America’s close ties to the Shah and the political, social, and economic causes of the Iranian revolution, with emphasis on the role of Shi’ite Islam. Concludes with analysis of politics and society in the Islamic Republic under Khomeini and his successors.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences

S. Hashmi

Credits: 4

IR-231 European Politics

Not Scheduled for This Year
This seminar explores European politics and societies from a transnational and historical comparative perspective. First, we discuss what kind of supranational entity the European Union is in the context of present and classical theories of European integration and supranational cooperation. Second, we explore European societies and public debates through transnational comparison: How do European leaders, journalists, and engaged citizens in different countries define democracy, citizenship, and equality in the context of globalization in comparison to North Americans or citizens in other regions?

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences

Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive; Writing-Intensive

N. Doerr

Prereq: Politics 116.

Credits: 4

IR-237 International Human Rights

Not Scheduled for This Year
This course provides an introduction to the basic concepts of, and issues in, international human rights. Prior to World War II, there was very little focus on the question of human rights within the international system and within the discipline of international relations. Since that time we have seen a significant expansion of human rights theory, practice, and institutions. This course outlines the historical ideational and institutional developments of human rights. It exposes students to a range of theoretical propositions and empirical findings.
to understand the role (and limits) of human rights in the international system today.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
J. Western
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-241 Global Resource Politics
Not Scheduled for This Year
An intensive examination of the international politics surrounding disputes over the ownership, extraction, and vital natural resources including fresh water, petroleum, arable land, timber, minerals, and oceanic fisheries. The course will assess the growing pressures being brought to bear on the world's resource base, including population growth, globalization, unsustainable consumption, and climate change. It will also examine the various ways (war, adjudication, conservation, innovation) in which various actors (states, regional and international organizations, multinational corporations, warlords, civil society groups, and so on) are responding to contemporary resource disputes.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
M. Klare
Prereq: Politics 116 or International Relations 116.
Credits: 4

IR-242 Media and the Public Sphere in Europe and the United States
Fall
Understanding media systems and the democratic role of the public is relevant to policy makers working in globalized societies. How do journalists and leaders communicate toward different media audiences and international arenas? What is the role of the internet and social media for non-state actors communicating across borders? An interdisciplinary perspective on theories of democracy and public space using case studies in Europe and the United States.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive; Writing-Intensive
N. Doerr
Credits: 4

IR-250 Topics in International Relations

IR-262 Transnational Social Movements in World Politics
Fall
How do multinational corporations, interest groups, NGOs, and social movements engage in world politics? In exploring this question, this course provides an introduction to the study of transnationally operating non-state actors and transnational social movements. First, we will look at the influence of movements on inter-state relations and on inter-national organizations. Second, we will investigate their increasing involvement in global governance. The class concludes with recent debates on the global economic crisis and conflict resolution and on global immigration, politicization, and democratization through social movements and new media.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
N. Doerr
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-270 American Foreign Policy
Spring
In this examination of American foreign policy since 1898, topics include the emergence of the United States as a global power, its role in World War I and II, its conduct and interests in the cold war, and its possible objectives in a post-cold war world. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between domestic interests and foreign policy, the role of nuclear weapons in determining policy, and the special difficulties in implementing a democratic foreign policy.

Crosslisted as: Politics 270
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
J. Western
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-295 Independent Study
Fall and Spring
The department
Instructor permission required.
Credits: 1-4
Course can be repeated for credit.

IR-305 International Society
Not Scheduled for This Year
An intensive reading course in theories of international society: the idea that states and peoples are or should be linked to each other through a web of shared values and institutions. It focuses on the work of Hedley Bull, Immanuel Kant, and John Rawls. How did these three men understand international society? What are or should be the values and institutions that give rise to it and support it? What implications do their visions of international society have for war and peace, state sovereignty, religion, democracy, capitalism, distributive justice, human rights, and international law? What responses and criticisms have their arguments engendered?

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
S. Hashmi
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-319 The United States and the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights
Not Scheduled for This Year
This course examines American foreign policy concerning the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad. The course begins by examining how and why these policies are developed within the U.S. political, economic, institutional, and geostrategic context. Through the use of case studies, we will then evaluate how these policies have influenced events in Latin America, East Asia, Eastern Europe, and sub-Saharan and southern Africa.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
J. Western
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-321 Culture and Social Movements
Not Scheduled for This Year
How do cultural diversity and inequality influence cooperation among NGOs and social movements cooperating in complex transnational environments and multicultural organizations on the ground? This course provides an introduction to the study of culture, including debates about class, race, and gender, nationality, language, and religion. First, we will investigate culture within transnationally operating non-state organizations such as NGOs and activist groups. Second, we will look at culture as a set of discourses and practices including news media analysis and the role of social media and cultural and political translation practices used by the most recent wave of global protests for equality, justice, and democracy.

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive; Writing-Intensive
N. Doerr
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4
IR-323 Comparative Politics of the Middle East
Fall
This course presents the rise (and sometimes collapse) of modern states in the Middle East, the nature of legitimacy, modernization, state-civil society relations, and political culture and economy; and the role of religion with specific reference to Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey.
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives
S. Hashmi
Prereq: 8 credits in Politics or International Relations, including Politics 106 or International Relations 211.
Credits: 4

IR-324 Islamic Political Thought
Not Scheduled for This Year
This course examines Islamic political thought from the origins of Islam to the present. It considers how Muslim thinkers over the past 14 centuries have understood such fundamental political concepts as the state, leadership, and law. The seminar also includes modern Muslim reflections on political concepts of Western origin, such as democracy, nationalism, and civil society.
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives
S. Hashmi
Prereq: Politics 116 and 8 credits in IR or POLIT.
Credits: 4

IR-327 Democratization in the Middle East and North Africa
Not Scheduled for This Year
This course provides a historical, theoretical, and empirical foundation to comprehend and question complex dynamics of political change and democratization in the Middle East. In Spring 2011, the region entered an irreversible process of political change and democratization despite strong authoritarian backlash. We will explore: What are the underlying socio-economic causes that led to the eruption of the revolution? What are the Islamic movements and what is their role in political change in the region? What explains the electoral success of Islamic-leaning parties in almost all free and fair elections in this region? Why was the Arab Spring largely contained in authoritarian republics?
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives
H. Kosebalaban
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-333 Just War and Jihad: Comparative Ethics of War and Peace
Not Scheduled for This Year
Why do we moralize about war? When is war justified, if ever? What restraints should soldiers accept? This course examines these issues within the context of Western and Islamic thought. Study of the origins and evolution of both traditions is combined with consideration of important topics of current concern, such as intervention, weapons of mass destruction, and women and war.
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives
S. Hashmi
Prereq: Politics 116 and 4 additional credits in Politics.
Credits: 4

IR-334 Globalization and the Muslim World
Not Scheduled for This Year
This course challenges students to explore and understand the Muslim world in a new era characterized by globalization, and to examine its various effects on the Islamic world. Though politics of the Muslim world has been largely studied with exclusive reference to states, the course encourages students to look beyond this statist paradigm to salient non-state actors. It provides a conceptual and theoretical framework helpful in examining various cases and issues pertaining to the process of globalization and the Muslim world, such as: transnational Islamic movements and networks, Muslims in global business or living as minorities, Islamic legal and moral doctrines, gender and human rights.
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives
H. Kosebalaban
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-337 International Human Rights Advocacy in Theory and Practice
Not Scheduled for This Year
This course examines how and why international human rights norms, laws, and institutions have emerged and how they are influencing global politics. We will examine closely the practices and influences of human rights advocacy organizations and the major international human rights political and judicial institutions. Students will be introduced to legal and political theories, advocacy strategies, and media technologies as well as a broad range of analytical approaches to evaluating advocacy campaigns. This class is linked (we share several class sessions and a final project) with Spanish 340: The Other in the Media: New Media and Otherness in the Americas.
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
J. Western
Prereq: International Relations 237.
Credits: 4

IR-343 Law and Religion
Not Scheduled for This Year
This course explores the relationship between law and religion through a comparative study of eight countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Israel, and India. It focuses on the role of religion in the constitutional law of these countries, both in the text of constitutional documents and in judicial interpretation of these texts. Starting with an analysis of the religion clauses in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the seminar explores questions relating to the separation of religion and state, religious liberty, and the proper role of courts in negotiating societal disputes over religion.
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
S. Hashmi
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-350 Advanced Topics in International Relations
IR-362 European Politics and Public Debate in Times of Crisis
Not Scheduled for This Year
This seminar explores European politics from a transnational comparative perspective. It explores what kind of supranational entity the European Union is in the context of theories of international organization. Second, it considers public debates through methods of discourse analysis: How do European leaders, journalists, and engaged citizens or protesters define and 'frame' democracy and social justice in comparison to American or Middle Eastern ones?
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
N. Doerr
Prereq: Politics 116.
Credits: 4

IR-365 Ethics and International Relations
Not Scheduled for This Year
Do ethical considerations matter in international relations? Should they? These questions are examined from the perspective of Western writers on these specific issues: just war, intervention, human rights, weapons of mass destruction, and
distributive justice. The course also considers challenges to the international system posed by the critiques and responses of non-Western states and peoples.  

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences

S. Hashmi

Prereq: Politics 116 and 8 credits from International Relations.

Credits: 4

IR-395 Independent Study

Fall and Spring

The department

Instructor permission required.

Credits: 1-8

Course can be repeated for credit.

See Also

- Politics
- Law, Public Policy, and Human Rights