

**Political Science 551**  
**The United Nations System**

Monday and Wednesday, 1:30 – 3:18

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Course Description

This course begins with an overview of various theoretical perspectives on international relations generally and on the role of international organizations and law more specifically. We then examine the historical evolution of the United Nations and its precursors, and discuss the UN's structure and governance role in various areas, including international peace and security, human rights, development, and the environment. We also assess the weaknesses and strengths of the UN and its agencies and possibilities for reform. We then turn to the topic of globalization and the role of the UN, WTO and other international organizations. We conclude with a discussion of unilateralism versus multilateralism in the contemporary international system.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend every class session and to keep themselves updated on current events involving the UN and other international organizations (we will begin every Wednesday session with a discussion of relevant current events). Graded assignments include: two quizzes, a midterm exam, a final exam, and a 5-page paper on UN reform (due February 28). Detailed instructions on the paper assignment will be forthcoming in class. The quizzes and exams will test course readings as well as information covered during class sessions. Note that class lectures and discussion will often cover material that is not covered in the course texts, so receiving a good grade in this course requires that you attend class *and* do the readings.

The final grade will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam	30%
Final exam	30%
Paper	20%
Quiz 1	10%
Quiz 2	10%

Course Texts

The following required books are available at SBX:

- Karen Mingst & Margaret Karns, *The United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 3rd Ed.
- Paul Diehl, ed., *The Politics of Global Governance*, 3rd Ed.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

### **January 3 – Introductory session**

Readings:

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 1

### **January 8 – International Organizations: Trends and Concepts**

Readings:

Pevehouse, Nordstrom & Warnke, in Diehl  
Abbott & Snidal, in Diehl

### **January 10 – The Evolution of the United Nations**

Readings:

Thompson & Snidal, “International Organization,” pp. 692-98 (available at  
<http://encyclo.findlaw.com/9800book.pdf>)  
Mingst & Karns, Chapter 2, pp. 17-22

### **January 15 – No class; Martin Luther King, Jr., Day**

### **January 17 – The Structure of the United Nations**

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 2, pp. 22-52

### **January 22 – Actors and Decision-making in the UN System**

**Quiz #1**

Readings:

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 3

### **January 24 – Actors and Decision-making in the UN System (cont.)**

Readings:

Johnstone, in Diehl

### **January 29 – Peace and Security: Collective Security**

Readings:

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 4  
Miller, in Diehl

### **January 31 – Peace and Security: Peacekeeping**

Readings:

Diehl, in Diehl

### **February 5 – Case Study: The Iraq Wars**

Readings: None

**February 7 – Midterm Exam**

**February 12 – Human Rights**

Readings:

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 6  
Natsios, in Diehl

**February 14 – Economic Cooperation and Development**

Readings:

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 5

**February 19 – Health and the Environment**

Readings:

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 7

**February 21 – Case Study: The Global Politics of Climate Change**

**Quiz #2**

Readings:

“Caring for Climate 2003: A Guide to the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol,” (available at [http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/caring\\_en.pdf](http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/caring_en.pdf))

**February 26 – The UN: Problems and Reform**

Readings:

Mingst & Karns, Chapter 8  
Alger, in Diehl

**February 28 – Globalization and Its Effects**

**Paper Due**

In-class video: *Commanding Heights, Episode III*

**March 5 – Case Study: WTO Dispute Settlement**

Readings:

Iida, in Diehl

**March 7 – Unilateralism versus Multilateralism**

Readings:

G. John Ikenberry, “America’s Imperial Ambition,” *Foreign Affairs* (Sept./Oct. 2002)  
(Available online through OSCAR)

**March 13 (Tuesday)**

Final Exam: 1:30 – 3:18