Universidad Rey Juan Carlos

TEACHING GUIDE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY AND FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

GRADO EN RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES (INGLÉS)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27

Q2803011B UNIVERSIDAD REY JUAN CARLOS
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I.-Subject Identification	
Type	FORMACIÓN BÁSICA
Teaching period	1 course, 1Q semester
Nº of credits	6
Language in wich the subject is taught	English

II.-Presentation

This course, International Relations: Theory and Fundamental Principles, introduces students to the basic concepts and key debates of International Relations (IR), the discipline that lies at the heart of the Degree. In line with the general objectives of the programme, its main aim is to enable students to explain and analyse the defining characteristics, actors, and core assumptions of international affairs, and to equip them to interpret international realities and institutions independently, critically, and with academic rigour.

A solid grounding in the theories and fundamental principles of IR has never been more necessary. The reconfiguration of the world order, the intensification of great-power competition, the erosion of multilateral institutions, and the growing weight of transnational actors and forces have made it increasingly difficult to make sense of global politics without firm conceptual foundations. This course provides students with the analytical tools required to move beyond the headlines and to understand the underlying structures, dynamics, and ideas that shape relations among international actors.

The course constitutes an initial academic introduction to the discipline of International Relations. As is often the case in the social sciences, there is no single best way to approach IR. The field is instead shaped by several major theories and traditions, and the course introduces students to the most influential of them, including (neo)realism, liberalism, the English School, social constructivism, and international political economy. Rather than adopting or defending a single perspective, the course presents these approaches as a dynamic conversation, encouraging students to compare their assumptions, strengths, and limitations. It also draws attention to the fact that some of the most important debates in IR are methodological in nature, concerning how we can know and explain the international.

A central thread of the course is the concept of International Society (IS) and the main components of the international system: its actors and its structural factors. International Society is composed primarily of states, in contrast to the notion of world society, which places the emphasis on individuals and transnational actors. Contemporary International Society rests on the idea of the state as an independent actor enjoying legal supremacy over non-state entities. Historically, the discipline focused chiefly on inter-state relations, treating economic institutions, social groups, NGOs, and other non-state actors as secondary; the course examines both this traditional, state-centred view and the broadening of the field to incorporate the expanding range of actors and forces that now shape world politics.

Building on these foundations, the course briefly addresses a number of substantive issues in contemporary IR, among them foreign policy, war and peace, security and cooperation, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, international trade and development, and regional integration. The aim is not to exhaust these topics but to show how the theories and concepts studied earlier can be applied to interpret real-world problems, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The ultimate objective is for students to develop the capacity to analyse, on their own and with critical judgement, the principal questions, actors, and institutions of international affairs, to identify their causes and consequences, and to assess the responses formulated by the different international actors. In doing so, the course also lays the groundwork for the more advanced and specialised study that students will undertake later in the Degree and in postgraduate programmes.

To this end, students are expected to engage in sustained readings (monographs, selected IR texts, case studies, simulationss and contemporary analyses of specific topics) and curated online resources. Assessment combines a final examination with continuous evaluation based on reading comprehension, case-study analysis, essay questions, and active participation in seminars, conferences, structured debates, and oral presentations.

III.-Learning outcomes

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CG03. Students must have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data in order to make value judgements that include an analysis of the relevant political, legal, social, economic, scientific and ethical issues.
CG04. Students must be able to transmit information, ideas, problems and solutions to others, be they specialised or not.
CG06. Students must have developed the learning skills required to deal with further study with a high degree of independence.
CE08. Students must acquire the necessary skills to study and independently analyse the protagonists, relations and institutional framework of the International Society, as well as obtain the necessary resources for such an analysis.
CE09. Students must be aware of and understand the basic features of the globalisation of social, economic and political activity as well as the functioning of international organisations.
CE12. Students must understand and be able to apply the rules and protocols of international relations between international participants and States.

- Key for degrees not adapted to RD 822/21: **CB** - basic competences, **CG** - generic competences, **CE** - specific competences, **CT** - transversal competences.
- Key for degrees adapted to RD 822/21: **CON** - knowledge, **COM** - competences, **HAB** - skills.

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IV.-Contents

IV.A.-Syllabus

Thematic Unit	Topic	Sections
I. The concept and the object of International Relations (IR)	Topic 1: General considerations. Conceptual approach.	What is IR and what is for? Core principles.
	Topic 2:IR as a field of study.	What is the point of studying IR?
	Topic 3: Actors and factors of the IR The Global State System.	States and non-state actors. Views of the State.
	Topic 4: Level of Analysis in IR.	From Global to individual level.
	Topic 5: IR and World Politics.	Globalization and Global Politics. Perspectives of World Politics.
II. Why study IR? Historical sketch of the Modern State System	Topic 1: International Relations in Everyday Life.	Social basis and practical aspects of IR.
	Topic 2: Brief historical sketch of the Modern State System.	Key developments.
	Topic 3: IR and the changing Contemporary World of States.	Dynamics and change of the State system. State types in the Global State System.
III. The evolution of the International Society. History of the International System	Topic I: The evolving international system: 1900-1950. Topic II: The Cold War (1945-1990). Topic III: From the Cold War to the War on Terror. Topic IV: Mapping the post-Cold War Era. Topic V: The current agenda. Rising powers and the emerging global (dis)order.	The historical context of the International Relations.
IV. Theories and Paradigms in the Science of International Relations	Topic 1: IR and as an academic subject.	The development of IR thinking.
	Topic 2: Diversity and disciplinarity in IR Theory.	Main traditions of thought in IR.
	Topic 3: Major debates in IR.	The historical context and theorical discussions.
V. Theories of world politics	Topic 1: Realism and the principle of dominance. One realism, or many?	Revision of the dominant IR theories. Main critiques.
	Topic 2: Liberal and social theories. The principle of reciprocity and identity.	
	Topic 3: Structuralism and post-structuralism. The role of the economic context.	
	Topic 4: Social constructivism. Identities and ideas.	
	Topic 5: International Society (English School).	

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	Topic 6: Marxist theories on international relations.	
	Topic 7: Feminism and gender theories.	
	Topic 8: War and world politics. Peace studies.	

IV.B.-Training activities

Type	**Title**
Individual work	Readings: see bibliography.
Other activities	Selected documentaries and Film Forum.
Other activities	Presentations by the professor and other guest speakers on current issues related with the course, with previous preparation by the student required (materials will be provided by the professor).
Other activities	Seminars and conferences.
Oral presentations	Individual oral presentations by the students on different topics proposed by the professor related with the course.
Practical sessions	Practical problems solving based on case studies and simulation exercises proposed by the professor.

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V.-Student workload	
Theoretical sessions	38
Resolution of exercises, problems, case studies, etc.	20
Practical sessions in experimental, technological and clinical laboratories, fieldwork, etc.	0
Tests and/or exams	2
Academic tutorials	6
Related activities: conferences, seminars, etc.	12
Preparation of theoretical sessions and self-study	12
Preparation of practical tasks, exercises, case studies, projects, etc.	30
Preparation for tests and/or exams	60
Total student workload	180

VI.-Methodology and academic programme

Type	Period	Content
Practical sessions	Week 2 to Week 16	Short readings, practical cases, class discussions and students oral presentations.
Theoretical sessions	Week 5 to Week 16	Documentaries and Film Forum.
Seminars	Week 3 to Week 16	In the classroom, at the University and outside of the University (seminars organized by reserach centres and think-tanks in hybrid format).
Academic tutorials	Week 1 to Week 16	Tutorials.
Theoretical sessions	Week 1 to Week 16	Additional readings (see bibliography).
Theoretical sessions	Week 1 to Week 16	Online simulation cases
Theoretical sessions	Week 1 to Week 16	Lectures by the professor on all the topics of the syllabus.

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VII.-Assessment methods

The general assessment method is continuous as established in the *Regulation for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes* of Rey Juan Carlos University.
All the assessment systems established in the degree report must be employed, except for those that have a minimum weight of 0%, which can be used by professors in the academic years they consider relevant. Each assessment system may be applied through one or more assessment activities, consistent with the system. No assessment activity can exceed individually 60% of the overall grade for the subject.
The sum of non re-evaluable activities cannot exceed 40% of the overall grade for the subject and, in general, should not have an established minimum grade (except for practical activities in which, strictly speaking, the conditions of the ordinary call cannot be reproduced in the extraordinary call).
Those students who do not manage to pass the subject in the ordinary call, or do not attend this first call, may attend the extraordinary call only for failed re-evaluable assessment activities.
The distribution and characteristics of the assessment activities are described below.

VII.A.-Description and weight of the assessment activities

Assessment activity	Minimum Grade	Percentage	Contents
Final exam	5. Reassessable. A passing grade is required for the mark to be combined with the ordinary assessment.	60%	All the topics of the syllabus.
Reading control	5. Non-reassessable.	10%	Reading comprehension exam (see bibliography).
Short readings, case studies, online simulations, oral presentations, seminars/ conferences; delivered through the virtual campus.	No. Non-reassessable.	30%	Relevant topics related with the course content.

VII.B. Assessment of students with academic exemption from class attendance

Having Academic Exemption from Class Attendance (DAAC) does not imply that students are automatically exempt from participating in the continuous assessment activities or in the training activities of compulsory attendance as established in the teaching guide. Once the exemption has been granted, students must contact the subject's teaching staff, who will propose the adaptations he/she may consider relevant, as long as they guarantee the acquisition and adequate assessment of the learning goals established. Students must maintain adequate communication with the teaching staff so that they may provide information on the dates for training and assessment activities, if these are not established in the programme and available for students at the time of achieving the exemption.
Subject with possibility of academic exemption: Yes.

VII.C. Review of assessment activities

In accordance with the Regulation for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes of Rey Juan Carlos University.

VII.D.-Students with a disability or special educational needs

In order to guarantee equal opportunities, non-discrimination, universal accessibility and academic success, students with disabilities or especial education needs may request curricular adaptations to follow their studies. These adaptations will be provided by the Unit of Attention to People with Disabilities of Rey Juan Carlos University, in accordance with the regulation which regulates the service for the Attention of People with Disabilities at the University. This Unit will issue a report for curricular adaptations, so that students with disabilities or special education needs must contact the service (at e-mail discapacidad.programa@urjc.es) in order to provide relevant information for different educational alternatives.

VII.E.-Academic behaviour, academic integrity and honesty

Rey Juan Carlos University is fully committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty, so studying at the URJC means assuming and subscribing to the values of integrity and academic honesty set out in the University's Ethical Code. To support this process, the University has Rey Juan Carlos University's Academic Conduct Regulation as well as different tools (anti-plagiarism, supervision...) that offer a collective guarantee for the full development of these essential values.

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VIII.-Teaching resources and materials

Basic bibliography

TEXTBOOKS

- Baylis, J., Smith, S., & Owens, P. (Eds.). (2026). *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations* (10th ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-globalization-of-world-politics-9780198899808
Student resources: https://learninglink.oup.com/access/baylis10e-student-resources
- Sørensen, G., & Møller, J. (2025). *Introduction to international relations and global politics* (9th ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
https://global.oup.com/academic/product/introduction-to-international-relations-and-global-politics-9780198899730
Student resources: https://learninglink.oup.com/access/sorensen-moller9e
- Pevehouse, J. C., & Goldstein, J. S. (2025). *International relations* (13th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Pearson.
https://www.pearson.com/en-us/subject-catalog/p/international-relations/P200000010704/9780138118914

PRACTICAL CASES

Snow, D. M. (2022). *Cases in international relations: Principles and applications* (9th ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/cases-in-international-relations-9798881851521/

READING CONTROL

- Kaplan, R. D. (2025). *Waste Land: A World in Permanent Crisis*. London, UK: Hurst Publishers.
- Papaconstantinou, G., & Pisani-Ferry, J. (2024). *New world new rules: Global cooperation in a world of geopolitical rivalries*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Agenda Publishing.
- Stubb, A. (2026). *The triangle of power: Rebalancing the new world order*. New York, NY: Columbia Global Reports.

Consultation bibliography

Useful Links of IR Journals

- Cambridge Review of International Affairs, http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccam20.
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**,** http://carnegieendowment.org/
- Contemporary Politics**,** http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccpo20
- European Journal of International Relations, http://journals.sagepub.com/home/ejt
- Foreign Affairs, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/
- Foreign Policy, http://foreignpolicy.com/
- Foreign Policy Analysis, https://academic.oup.com/fpa
- Harvard International Review, http://hir.harvard.edu/
- International Organization, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-organization
- International Affairs, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/ia
- International Studies Quarterly, https://academic.oup.com/isq
- International Studies Review, https://academic.oup.com/isr
- International Studies Perspectives, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1528-3585
- International Theory,https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-theory.
- Perspectives on Politics,https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics
- Review of International Studies, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/review-of-international-studies
- Washington Quarterly, https://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/
- World Policy Journal, http://www.worldpolicy.org/node/3811
- World Politics, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics
- World Today, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/twt
- YaleGlobal Online, http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/

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Online Resources:

Spanish Think tanks

- CIDOB.
- Fundación Alternativas.
- IBEI.
- IECAH (courses and Ukraine's special report).
- INCIPE.
- Real Instituto Elcano (Blog y ARIs).

International Think tanks:

- 2020 Global go to think tank report (database).
- Council on Foreign Relations.
- Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- International Peace Institute.
- International Institute for Strategic Studies.
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Chatham House.
- International Alert.
- International Crisis Group.
- Geneva Call.
- The Japan Institute for International Affairs.
- Public Policy Forum (PPF).
- Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance.
- Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR).
- Center for European Policy Analysis.
- https://www.wilsoncenter.org/program/cold-war-international-history-project

The Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project website offers a wide array of primary sources and scholarly essays exploring various facets of the cold war.

Non-traditional media:

- El Orden Mundial.
- The Political Room.
- Descifrando la guerra.
- GEOPOL 21.
- Reporteros sin Fronteras.
- 5W.
- Ground News app (to compare how important issues are being covered across different media).

Media:

- Foreign Affairs.
- Foreign Policy.
- Política Exterior.
- The Diplomat.
- Esglobal.

Podcasts:

- El hilo (LATAM, informal).
- Geopolítica Pop (El Orden Mundial).
- GMT (EFE, summary, international news).
- Hoy en EL PAÍS (El País, summary, national news).
- The Ezra Klein Show (Informal, in English, different topics).
- Un tema al Día (informal).
- The world in brief (The Economist).
- The Daily (The New York Times)
- Global news podcast (BBC).
- FT News Briefing (Financial Times).
- Questions politiques (France inter, in French).
- Géopolitique (France inter, in French).

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- Today in focus (The Guardian).
- Ones and Tooze (Foreign Policy).
- War on the rocks
- What next (Daily news and analysis).
- The Journal (The Wall Street Journal).
- Today, explained
- Presunto Podcast

Newsletters:

- Council on Foreign Relations (three topics each day).
- Político (Daily UE).
- Washington Post.

Blogs

- https://www.e-ir.info/

E-International Relations is a website that provides daily updates on world affairs aimed at students of politics and international relations.

- https://theglobal.blog/

The Global is a blog on global governance produced by the Global Governance Centre at the Graduate Institute Geneva.

- https://ordersbeyondborders.blog.wzb.eu/

Orders Beyond Borders is a blog on global governance produced by the WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

- http://www.theory-talks.org/

Theory Talks explores current debates in International Relations from a theoretical perspective.

- http://opiniojuris.org/

Opinio Juris examines current issues related to international law.

- http://www.undispatch.com/

UN Dispatch covers the UN and related issues.

- https://warontherocks.com/

War on the Rocks explores a variety of security and foreign policy issues from a realist perspective.

- https://duckofminerva.com/

Duck of Minerva features posts by academic writers on a variety of issues in world politics.

- http://globalvoicesonline.org/

Global Voices collects blogs and translated blog overviews from all over the world, with a certain emphasis on low-income countries.

IX.-Professors	
Name and surname	VICENTE GARRIDO REBOLLEDO
E-mail address	vicente.garrido@urjc.es
Department	Derecho Público II
Campus	Madrid - Vicálvaro
Category	Catedrático/a de Universidad
Academic degree	Doctor
Person responsible for the subject	Yes
Tutorial timetable	Para consultar las tutorias póngase en contacto con el/la profesor/a a través de correo electrónico
Number of quinquennia	5

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Number of sexennia	4
No. of positive evaluations by Docentia	5

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