

TEACHING GUIDE

HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GRADO EN RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES (INGLÉS)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27

Publication date: 02-07-2026



I.-Subject Identification

Type	FORMACIÓN BÁSICA
Teaching period	1 course, 1Q semester
Nº of credits	6
Language in which the subject is taught	English

II.-Presentation

This is an introductory course on the history of international relations. It aims to provide students with an overview of the evolution of the various world orders from the emergence of the state in ancient Mesopotamia to the present day. To this end, the main historical events, alliances, conflicts and political doctrines and thought that played a decisive role in shaping the world as we know it today will be followed. It will also cover the development of the international history from Westphalian System till nowadays, with special attention to the foreign policies of XX century, the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.

The subject will be taught in the most dynamic way possible, involving a significant amount of independent work by students. Students are expected to attain a broad understanding of the critical developments in international relations, and of the main historical and theoretical debates about them.

By the end of the course, students will be expected to be able to identify the nature and scope of the issues raised concerning the history of international relations; summarise and appraise the relative merits and demerits of alternative views and interpretations about international history, foreign policy, economics, leadership and strategy, and evaluate their significance; identify problems, assess evidence, and reach conclusions consistent with them; devise and sustain arguments about these topics using the tool of analysis gained during the course.

III.-Learning outcomes

CG01. Students must be able to possess and understand their own knowledge of the area of institutional relations, based on general secondary education.

CG04. Students must be able to transmit information, ideas, problems and solutions to others, be they specialised or not.

CG07. Students must be able to understand international relations from a perspective based on respect for human rights and the principles of democratic life and multicultural society.

CE01. Students must acquire general knowledge on the source, development and nature of legal systems and protocols governing actions and meetings that regulate interpersonal and institutional relations in national and international scenarios.

CE03. Students must be able to identify, understand and analyse the source, basic principles and development of a democratic and plural society, as well as its confrontation with other lifestyles.

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.

- 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.



IV.-Contents

IV.A.-Syllabus

UNIT 1: DIPLOMACY IN ANTIQUITY

- 1.1. The Origins of Political Communities and External Relations
- 1.2. Treaties, Envoys and Diplomatic Practices in the Ancient Near East
- 1.3. Greek Diplomacy: City-States, Leagues and Balance of Power
- 1.4. Rome and the International Order of Empire

UNIT 2: THE MIDDLE AGES

- 2.1. Christianity, Islam and the Transformation of the Ancient World
- 2.2. Feudalism, Lordship and Fragmented Authority
- 2.3. Papacy, Empire and Universal Power
- 2.4. Trade, Cities and Cross-Cultural Diplomacy

UNIT 3: DIPLOMACY IN THE MODERN AGE

- 3.1. The Rise of Sovereign States and Permanent Diplomacy
- 3.2. The Reformation, Religious Conflict and International Politics
- 3.3. The Peace of Westphalia and the European States System
- 3.4. Colonial Expansion and Global Rivalries

UNIT 4: FROM WATERLOO TO THE BISMARCKIAN SYSTEMS (1815-1914)

- 4.1. The Congress of Vienna and the Restoration Order
- 4.2. Revolution, Nationalism and the Crisis of the Vienna System
- 4.3. The Unification of Italy and Germany
- 4.4. Bismarckian Diplomacy and the Road to 1914

UNIT 5: A GLOBAL WORLD

- 5.1. Imperialism and the Expansion of European Power
- 5.2. The United States and the Emergence of Extra-European Power
- 5.3. Japan, Russia and the Transformation of Asia
- 5.4. Global Economy, Technology and International Interdependence

UNIT 6: THE GREAT WAR AND THE INTERWAR PERIOD

- 6.1. The Origins of the First World War
- 6.2. Total War and the Transformation of International Politics
- 6.3. The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty System
- 6.4. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Collective Security

UNIT 7: THE SECOND WORLD WAR

- 7.1. The Collapse of the Interwar Order
- 7.2. Global War and Alliance Diplomacy
- 7.3. War Aims, Conferences and the Design of the Post-War Order
- 7.4. The Consequences of the War

UNIT 8: THE COLD WAR

- 8.1. The Origins of the Cold War
- 8.2. Bipolarity, Containment and Military Alliances
- 8.3. Crises and Conflicts in the Cold War World
- 8.4. Détente, Renewed Tension and the End of the Cold War

UNIT 9: BEYOND THE SUPERPOWERS

- 9.1. Decolonisation and the End of European Empires
- 9.2. The Non-Aligned Movement and the Global South
- 9.3. Regional Conflicts and Postcolonial State-Building
- 9.4. International Development, Dependency and Global Inequality

UNIT 10: THE NEW WORLD ORDER

- 10.1. The End of Bipolarity and the American Moment
- 10.2. Liberal Internationalism and Humanitarian Intervention
- 10.3. European Integration and Regional Orders
- 10.4. Globalisation, Markets and International Institutions



UNIT 11: THE UPHEAVALS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

11.1. 9/11 and the War on Terror

11.2. The Rise of China and the Return of Great-Power Competition

11.3. Russia, Revisionism and War in Europe

11.4. Crises of Global Governance

UNIT 12: DISRUPTIVE ACTORS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

12.1. Non-State Actors and the Transformation of Power

12.2. Technology, Cybersecurity and Digital Geopolitics

12.3. Climate, Resources and Environmental Security

12.4. Populism, Identity and the Crisis of the Liberal Order

IV.B.-Training activities

Type	Title
Lectures	Texts proposed by the Lecturer for class debates. It is recommended to complete the assigned reading in preparation for the individual exam.
Prácticas / Resolución de ejercicios	Working with Information and communications technology
Prácticas / Resolución de ejercicios	Group work, class debate and a presentation forms part of the assessment.

V.-Student workload	
Theoretical sessions	40
Resolution of exercises, problems, case studies, etc.	18
Practical sessions in experimental, technological and clinical laboratories, fieldwork, etc.	0
Tests and/or exams	2
Academic tutorials	16
Related activities: conferences, seminars, etc.	2
Preparation of theoretical sessions and self-study	35
Preparation of practical tasks, exercises, case studies, projects, etc.	37
Preparation for tests and/or exams	30
Total student workload	180

VI.-Methodology and academic programme		
Type	Period	Content
Week 1 to Week 14	Conferences/ visits	Theoretical sessions
Week 1 to Week 14	lectures	Practical sessions
Week 1 to Week 14	Debates, texts comments and problem solving.	Group work
Week 1 to Week 14	Group work presentations	Tests and/or exams
Week 14 to Week 14	Exam/ or test	Week 1 to Week 14



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

The course will be assessed in the following way:

- Evaluation of the theoretical contents: 60%, re-evaluable. In order to pass the course, it will be necessary to obtain at least 50% of the points assigned to this section.
- Evaluation of practical activities: 40%, not re-evaluable. No minimum mark is required.

The extraordinary evaluation (June-July exam) will be carried out by means of an evaluation of the theoretical contents. It will be necessary to obtain 50% of the score to pass the course.

No audio or video may be recorded or photographed during classes without the express permission of the teacher. Students who leave the classroom during the class will not be allowed to return until the end of the class.

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.

VIII.-Teaching resources and materials

Basic bibliography

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- Bridge, F. R., & Bullen, R. (2005). *The Great Powers and the European States System, 1814–1914* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Longman.
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- Darwin, J. (2007). *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405*. London: Allen Lane.
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- Iriye, A. (2002). *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
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Consultation bibliography



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Watson, A. (1982). *Diplomacy: The Dialogue between States*. London: Methuen.

Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

IX.-Professors	
Name and surname	JULIO GUINEA BONILLO
E-mail address	julio.guinea@urjc.es
Department	Derecho Privado
Campus	Madrid - Vicálvaro
Category	Profesor/a Permanente Laboral
Academic degree	Doctor
Person responsible for the subject	Yes
Tutorial timetable	Para consultar las tutorías póngase en contacto con el/la profesor/a a través de correo electrónico
Number of quinquennia	1
Number of sexennia	1
No. of positive evaluations by Docencia	1

