

**Doctoral School of Social Sciences
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University**

**World politics and the global environmental disaster
(Graduate course syllabus)
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Summary: In the current existential crisis, the world has advanced far beyond the stage of prevention and is rapidly moving towards the destruction of the global environment. And this happens when the world's leading power opposes the only measures that could save life on the planet. What are these environmental problems, who and how to deal with them. Such is the subject-matter of the present syllabus.

Sessions:

1. Presentation of the course

- 1.1.Objectives
- 1.2.Exams

2. The first sessions deal with **International Relations** as an academic discipline. Specifically, how political science is used to analyze world politics. The main theoretical frameworks, Realism and Liberalism are revised, in particular the evolution they have undergone over the years, as this evolution reflects the evolution of world politics. Particular attention is also paid to several other important approaches.

- 2.1.Realism → Neorealism
- 2.2.Liberalism → Neoliberalism
- 2.3.Other approaches
- 2.4.The dangers of structuralism in political science [Gattungsbegriffe and concepts; “a poor person is not a rich man without money”]
- 2.5.The current international system [we must not forget this] is capitalist
- 2.6.The tragedy of the common goods

Bibliography: Besides the historic classics of the literature: Thucydides – History of the Peloponnesian War (5th century BCE), Kautilya - The Arthashastra (2nd century BCE-1st century CE), Niccolò Machiavelli – The Prince (1513), Immanuel Kant – Perpetual Peace (1795), Carl von Clausewitz – On War (1832), etc. It is important to dust some contemporary main texts, such as:

Hans Morgenthau – Politics Among Nations (1948), for classical Realism.

Immanuel Wallerstein – The Modern World-System (1974), for a Marxist approach.

Kenneth Waltz – Theory of International Politics (1979), for Neo-realism or Structural Realism.

Robert Keohane & Joseph Nye – Power and Interdependence (1977), for Liberal institutionalism.

Robert Cox – Production, Power, and World Order (1987), for Critical theory.

It could be convenient, because of time constraints, to dive into International Relations theory contemporary manuals such as: Viotti, Paul R. and Mark V. Kauppi. International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction. There are many other “introductions to I.R. theory” and “readers on I.R. theory”.

3. After a few sessions on the theory of international relations, we are "armed" to explore **world politics** as such. We will also devote a few sessions to it.

- 3.1 International relations: “ in the course of their existence...”
- 3.2. Ressources
- 3.3. Power and soft power
- 3.4. Preponderance
- 3.5. Balance of power
- 3.6. Hierarchies
- 3.7. High politics and low politics
- 3.8. Complex interdependence
- 3.9. REGIMES [in capital letters]
- 3.10. regimes [in minuscules]
- 3.11. international organizations
- 3.12. international integration agreements
- 3.13. international “economic” integration agreements
- 3.14. Global[?]-ization and pyramidation

Bibliography:

Krasner, Stephen D. (ed.) (1983). International Regimes.

Acharya, Amitav (2014). The End of American World Order

It is in the interest of the course to visit the home-pages of the main international regimes (IMF, WTO, IEA), and those that offer statistical comparisons: UN, OECD, World Bank, Eurostat, Gapminder, Statista, etc, as well as the integration agreements (EU, UMSCA, Mercosur, ASEAN, BRICS, etc).

4. Anarchy and Hegemony, history of...

Europe invented capitalism. Three main reactions to European expansion: Asia, America and Africa.

- 4.2. A tale of a [very] few countries:
- 4.3. Spain [the inclusion of a new continent]
- 4.4. France [the 2nd largest maritime domain]
- 4.5. England [the largest maritime domain]
- 4.6. The post-war US built international system
- 4.7. The USSR [competing] hegemony
- 4.8. Hegemony defined [other concepts: domination, etc.]

Bibliography:

Gilpin, Robert (1981). War and Change in World Politics.

Keohane, Robert O. (1984). After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy.

Kennedy, Paul (1987). *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*.

D. R. Dávila Villers (1994) *Co-operation in Latin America and the Caribbean : an empirical test of Keohane's assumptions on co-operation and hegemony in the Third World*.

5. Main environmental problems of the world

The world's environmental problems have been around for centuries before global warming became fashionable. What is new is that now everything seems to be exploding at the same time.

- 5.2. Destruction of vegetation
- 5.3. Soil loss
- 5.4. Less and more degraded drinking water
- 5.5. Overfishing
- 5.6. Contamination
- 5.7. Air pollution
- 5.8. Plastic pollution
- 5.9. Ocean acidification
- 5.10. Destruction of natural habitats
- 5.11. Biodiversity loss
- 5.12. ...and Global warming

Bibliography:

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2021). *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2020). *Global Forest Resources Assessment*.

United Nations World Water Development Report (Annual).

United Nations (2021). *The Second World Ocean Assessment*.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2019). *Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6)*.

D. R. Dávila-Villers (2025) *...and who would save us now? The humanity's environmental crisis and the response of international actors* Paper to be presented at IPSA-Seoul July 2025.

It is advisable to visit the homepages of the main organizations that fight for the preservation of the environment, as well as those that are environmentally active.

6. History of the eco-movements

Here we trace the historical evolution of the main paradigms of eco-movements: naturalism, conservationism and environmentalism. And how they contributed to the creation of national parks, species protection and awareness.

6.2. In the US

6.3. In Europe

6.4. In the rest of the world [Latin America]

6.5. Who contributed more to the present disaster? [Evo Morales' Bolivia]

Bibliography:

Thoreau, Henry David (1854). *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1836). *Nature*.

Carson, Rachel (1962). *Silent Spring*.

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987). *Our Common Future (The Brundtland Report)*.

Klein, Naomi (2014). *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*.

Worster, Donald (1994). *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*.

7. The US hegemony in decay without a clear substitute

We will review each of the major hegemonic regimes (governing the distribution of hegemonic goods), and we will also check the world map for the same purpose.

7.2. Main regimes:

7.3. Finance

7.4. Trade

7.5. Energy

7.6. Security

7.7. And a geographical approach

7.8. High Seas, Deep Oceans, Outer Space

7.9. International law and national law

Bibliography:

Wallerstein, Immanuel (2003). *The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World*.

Mearsheimer, John J. (2001). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

Piketty, Thomas (2014). *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.

Nye, Joseph S. (1990). *Bound to lead : the changing nature of American power*.

Fukuyama, Francis (2014). *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*.

D. R. Dávila-Villers (2023). *Westlessness: Europe and France in the present international context*. Paper presented at IPSA-Buenos Aires July 2023.

8. The main actors in world politics, what can they do and what do they do?

This penultimate session aims to give guidelines for final essays and some advice for doctoral research.

- 8.2.States
- 8.3.UE, UMSCA, Mercosur, ASEAN, BRICS, etc
- 8.4.Bilateral free trade agreements
- 8.5.The UN system
- 8.6.IMF, WB, European Bank, etc
- 8.7.International organizations [G7, G20]
- 8.8.MNC [fossil fuel companies, polluting companies, etc]
- 8.9.Private banks
- 8.10. NGOs, etc.
- 8.11. Civil society
- 8.12. Social networking
- 8.13. Three logics of social action: Communities, States, and Financial markets

Bibliography: same as above

9. Prospects for the US hegemony

This last session is intended to be focused on debate. It is about "what comes next", although international processes can take decades or even centuries...

- 9.2.US vs the environment
- 9.3.Prospects for the world environment
- 9.4.Westlessness
- 9.5.Cooperation without hegemony
- 9.6.The final costs
- 9.7.How to incide in the process

Bibliography: Same as above

Calendar (to be announced)

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