RPOS 380 Basics of International Law
Dr. Douglas M. Stinnett

Office Hours
Office Hours: Wed & Fri. 2-3pm (B16 Humanities)
Email: dstinnett@albany.edu

Class
MWF: 10:25 – 11:20
Location: Humanities 133

Course Description
The objective of this course is to provide an introduction to public international law and the role it plays in international politics. Most of the major issues we think of when we think about international politics involve international law to some degree, including the conduct of wars, international trade, arms control, proliferation, and the protection of the environment. Yet the effectiveness and even the basic purpose of international law remains a contested subject. Some believe that international law has a meaningful influence on the actions of states and individuals. Others view international law as merely scraps of paper, and hold that it is state interests and power that ultimately guide international relations. We will address both perspectives and play special attention to the political factors that influence the creation and functioning of international law.

The course is divided into two parts. The first half address several basic topics regarding how international law is created, why states follow it, and how legal disagreements are adjudicated and resolved. In the second half, we will address the substance of international law in several specific issue areas. Note that the course is very cumulative. The theoretical topics we tackle in the first half will continue to pop-up in each specific area of law that we discuss in the second half.

Course Materials
There are two required books for this class:


We will also read several articles and selections from longer works. I will put PDF copies of these readings on Blackboard, under the course content section. Each of these readings is identified on the syllabus.

Course Requirements
Class Participation: You are required to attend class regularly and actively participate in class discussions. In addition, you will find the class more enjoyable if you are actively engaged. The readings will serve as the basis for lectures and discussions. Some class meetings will be reserved for discussion and debate, but even on lecture days I will ask questions of the class and expect active participation. A portion of the final grade will be made up of my estimation of your degree of participation. A record of attendance will also be kept.

Readings: It is important that you keep up with the readings as the semester progresses. For each week on the syllabus, I will announce in class the specific day of the week we will discuss each assigned reading. This will allow you to **read the assigned materials prior to class**, which will be critical to learning the material. In addition, if I feel that students are not doing the readings, I **reserve the right to replace part of the participation grade with unannounced quizzes on the reading assignments.**
Important Dates

Take-home mid-term handed out: Friday March 1st
Take-home mid-term due: Monday March 4th
Paper due: Monday April 1st
In-class simulation: Wednesday May 1st and Friday May 3rd
Simulation paper due: Monday May 6th
Final: Wednesday May 15th, 3:30 – 5:30

Grade Break-down

Attendance and Participation 10%
Take-home Midterm 25%
6 Page Essay 20%
Simulation Participation and Report 15%
Final Exam 30%

Letter Grades

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Course Policies

Office Hours: I encourage you to come see me with any questions or difficulties that you have about the readings or class discussions. I am also available to meet with you at my Downtown Office (220 Milne). You are free to ask me questions immediately after class, but be aware that my attention is often focused on several different things at this time. To get my complete attention, it is best to come see me during my office hours.

Honesty: All students will be held to the University at Albany’s Standards of Academic Integrity.

Absences: Absences will be excused in case family emergency or documented illness. If you will be absent from class due to religious, academic, or university obligations please let me know in advance. Make-up examinations will be given at the earliest date convenient following the exam date. Exams will not be given in advance of the scheduled exam date.

Grade Re-evaluation: Students may ask the instructor to re-evaluate assignments that they feel have been graded incorrectly. Re-evaluation requests should be in the form of a short, typewritten statement explaining specifically why the student thinks that the grade should be reconsidered. These requests must be submitted to the instructor, along with the assignment, within one week after it has been returned to the class.

Changes to the Syllabus: This syllabus is a general plan for the course; changes during the semester may be necessary and will be announced in class by the instructor and posted on Blackboard.

Part I: Theoretical Overview and the Basics of International Law

Week 1 (Wed Jan 23 – Fri Jan 25) Introduction
• Scott, Chapter 1

Week 2 (Mon Jan 28 – Fri Feb 3) Sources of International Law
• Ku and Diehl Chapters 3-4
• Scott, Chapter 8 - 9

**Week 3 (Mon Feb 4 – Fri Feb 8) What’s the Point? Formation and Functions of International Law**
- Ku and Diehl Chapter 2

**Week 4 (Mon Feb 11 – Fri Feb 15) Actors in International Law**
- Scott, Chapters 2-4

**Week 5 (Mon Feb 18 – Fri Feb 22) Compliance: Why do States Obey International Law?**
- Ku and Diehl Chapter 7
- “On Compliance.” Abram Chayes and Antonia Chayes. Blackboard

**Week 6 (Mon Feb 25 – Fri Mar 1) How is International Law Adjudicated Enforced?**
- Downs, George W., David M. Rocke, and Peter Barsoom. 1996. "Is the Good News about Compliance Good News about Cooperation?" Blackboard.

**Friday, March 1st:** Pick up take home exam

**Part II: Specific Issues Regulated by International Law**

**Week 7 (Mon Mar 4 – Fri Mar 8) The Use of Force and the Laws of War**
- Scott Chapter 6
- Ku and Diehl Chapter 13 - 14

**Monday March 4th:** Turn in Exam

**Week 8 (Mon Mar 11 – Fri Mar 15) The Conduct of War**
- Scott, Chapter 12
- Ku and Diehl Chapter 12

**Week 9 (Mar 18 – Mar 22) Spring Break**

**Week 10 (Mon Mar 25 – Fri Mar 29) Human Rights**
- Scott, Chapter 11
- Ku and Diehl Chapter 15 -16

**Week 11 (Mon Apr 1 – Fri Apr 5) Short Week**

Monday April 1st Paper Due

Wednesday Apr 3rd & Friday April 5th: No Class
Week 13 (Mon Apr 8 – Fri Apr 12) Arms Control
• Scott, Chapter 10
• Stinnett, early, Horne, and Karreth. “Complying by Denying.” Blackboard

Week 14 (Mon Apr 15 – Fri Apr 19) Trade and the Seas
• Iida, Keisuke. “Is WTO Settlement Effective?” Blackboard.
• Ku and Diehl Chapter 11
• Ku and Diehl Chapter 19

Week 15 (Mon Apr 22 – Fri Apr 26) The Environment
• Scott, Chapter 13
• Ku and Diehl Chapter 17 - 18

Week 16 (Mon Apr 29 – Fri May 3) Climate Change

Wed May 1 & Fri May 3: In-Class Simulation

Week 17 (Mon May 6 – Wed May 8)
• Mon May 6 Climate Simulation Paper Due
• Wed May 8 Review for Final

Final: Wed, May 15th 3:30 – 5:30