

**History 2705E**  
**The Western Tradition in International Relations Theory and**  
**Practice**  
**2025 – 26**

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This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

**Course Description**

The course examines historical international relations theory critically and in context, not only the "canon" of Western thinkers but also international voices often marginalized in IR theory. In doing so, the course considers the role of race, gender, imperialism, religion, and more in the development of IR theory.

**Course Syllabus**

What is the lineage of ideas that brings us to modern understandings of international relations (IR) today? Focusing on the "Western tradition," this course will examine the works of prominent influences on international relations theory from the ancient world to the present as philosophical texts, but also in context. In doing so, this course will explore the interplay of how certain events influence major works, but also consider how some thinkers influence others. The first half of the course will focus largely on the accepted Western canon of international relations. The second half will focus on international relations theories and thinkers that either have been marginalized or challenge this canon. Students will gain an understanding in several concepts such as just war theory, natural law, political realism, liberalism, and ideological IR theory. The course will also explore how globalization, anti-imperialism, race, gender, and the environment have led to new considerations in modern IR theory. In this course, students will also come to terms with the limits of the traditional Western "canon" of IR theory. What is gained when considering the ideas of figures often not included in the "canon?" What does placing "canonical" Western theorists and theories in context, highlighting the role of imperialism or racism, to name two of many examples, do to our understanding and the applicability of their theories?

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to:

- Understand the major concepts in the intellectual history of international relations as shown through major works by major thinkers in political and diplomatic thought
- Effectively read, critique, summarize and understand primary sources as major philosophical texts and as historical artifacts

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- Gain an appreciation for the historiography of international relations scholarship along with an understanding of the context and lineage of certain philosophical concepts in international relations theory
- Communicate clearly and effectively an argument through class discussions and written assignments. As part of this course, there are a number of written assignments which will allow students to enhance their understanding of IR theories or help students write concisely, clearly, and purposefully.
- Consider concepts of race, gender, and class in why certain voices are prioritized and others marginalized in the “canon” of the “Western tradition” of IR theory
- Grapple with ways to think beyond the standard canon to develop a broader understanding of IR
- Through an interactive crisis simulation, students will work collaboratively with one another while understanding the challenges in the application of major IR theories.

### Methods of Evaluation

Short Essay: 15%

Short Response Assignment: 10%

International Relations Crisis Simulation: 35%

- In-class Participation/Group Collaboration: 15%
- Two Written Reports: 20% (10% each)

Final Take-Home Exam: 25%

Participation in Class Discussion: 15%

**For all assignments, further instructions will be included on OWL Brightspace.**

*Short Essay:* Students will complete a **1000-word (not including footnotes or endnotes) essay** related to ancient and classic thinkers in Western IR theory. This assignment has two steps. The first step encourages students to submit their assignment by **October 3**. Students can elect to submit a rough draft for initial feedback or a more polished draft to save time later. Feedback will be returned within two weeks and students will receive a mark (which can be kept by foregoing a resubmission). **Students who submit the assignment at the first deadline will receive feedback to help them in submitting their final polished version.**

Resubmission is an important part of the assignment and beyond also allowing a chance to improve on early work, it is an opportunity for students to become aware of the expectations in this course. The final submission deadline is **October 24**. Further information will be posted on OWL Brightspace.

*Short Response Assignment:* Students will be required to write a **1000-word (not including footnotes or endnotes)** argumentative response to one of four statements regarding course content. Responses will be marked on clarity of writing, content, strength of arguments, and use of sources and research. Questions will be posted on OWL Brightspace at the start of the course. **Deadline for submissions is November 21.**

*International Relations Crisis Simulation:* The final assignment in this course will be a crisis simulation taking place over the final weeks of the course. The simulation will begin with an initial crisis and then students will negotiate and work with, or against, one another, as other

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crises will take place. The end goal will be to find common ground between the different schools of thought, resolving any crises and hopefully develop a balanced world system. The simulation will be similar to Model UN Crisis Committees.

One's mark will be determined by two items. The first will be based on the students' involvement in the live simulation taking place during class time. Students should be active in discussions, while also encouraging group collaboration and teamwork. Marks will be determined through a mix of self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and the evaluation of the professor and any teaching assistants.

The second part of the mark will be determined by **two 1000-1250 word (not including footnotes or endnotes)** written reports. The first report will be due **February 12** and will use historical examples to inspire an analysis of how a student's assigned school of thought would respond to the initial crisis. The second report will be due on **April 2** and will reflect on some of the simulation's events and discuss the challenges of implementing a theory into practice. Though students will likely be influenced by their fellow classmates' positions and ideas throughout the simulation, students are responsible for their own written reports.

Information regarding the simulation will be posted on OWL Brightspace in January.

*Exam:* There is a final take home exam in this course. It will be cumulative and take place in the April exam period. Students will have roughly one full week to complete the take-home exam. It will be composed of two essay sections covering material related to the themes of the course. The deadline will be set by the registrar's office and exams submitted past this date will only be evaluated if accompanied by the appropriate documentation from Academic Advising.

*Participation:* Class time will be divided in a variety of ways over the duration of the course. Some weeks will be a three-hour lecture introducing students to a topic or certain thinkers with a break in the middle along with time for discussion. Other weeks will see a one-hour lecture, followed by two tutorials all taking place during assigned class time; the class will be split in two for these two tutorials. Other weeks will have class presentations or simulations taking up the entire duration of the class. Participation will be determined by the quality of student contributions over the entire duration of the course. Students will be expected to be prepared to discuss course content each week. More information regarding tutorials will be posted on OWL Brightspace.

**All assignments should be submitted online via OWL Brightspace at 11:59:59 pm ET on its due date. The timestamp on OWL Brightspace will be considered final for any disputes regarding the punctuality of submissions.** All written assignments will require citations (endnotes/footnotes and bibliography) in the most recent version of Chicago Style. Hardcopies are not required nor will be accepted.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

**Absences and Late Assignments:** For all late assignments, a late penalty of **2% per day (weekends will count as one day)** will be applied. Should you require accommodation due to medical reasons or otherwise, please see the following section, contact Academic Advising or consult the Undergraduate Policies and Statements on the History Department website. The final date any assignment will be accepted for evaluation is April 9, 2025.

**Obtaining a passing grade on the international relations crisis simulation is a requirement for passing History 2705E.**

### **Course Materials**

Most materials will be located on OWL Brightspace, using ebooks or online sources. The following items will be made available for purchase at the UWO Bookstore (<https://bookstore.uwo.ca/>) :

Recommended:

Torbjorn L. Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2016).

While only recommended, Knutsen's textbook is a good companion piece to the content in this course. While we may not be referencing it often in discussions, it can provide good context and it is another option for you to lean on in your assignments in History 2705E.

### **Course Schedule and Readings**

#### ***September 4: Course Introduction***

***September 11: The Western Canon: Roots of IR Theory in the Ancient Era***

***September 18: The Western Canon: Natural Law, Christianity and Just War Theory***

***September 25: The Western Canon: The State and Sovereign during Early Modern Europe***

***October 2: The Western Canon: The Birth of "Modern" IR and International Law***

***ESSAY FIRST SUBMISSION DUE OCTOBER 3***

***October 9: The Western Canon: The Enlightenment and the Social Contract***

***October 16: The Western Canon: The Concert of Europe as a Concept***

***October 23: The Western Canon: Liberalism and Liberal Internationalism***

***ESSAY RESUBMISSION DUE OCTOBER 24***

***October 30: The Western Canon: Explaining the “Twenty Years Crisis” and Modern Political Realism***

***November 6: READING WEEK – No Classes***

***November 13: The Western Canon: The Liberal World Order and the Founding of the United Nations***

***November 20: The Western Canon: Neoliberalism***

***SHORT ASSIGNMENT DUE NOVEMBER 21***

***November 27: The Western Canon: Neorealism***

***December 4: The Western Canon: Contemporary Discussions***

***WINTER TERM:***

***January 8: Challenging the Western Canon: Methods to Challenge***

***January 15: Challenging the Western Canon: Indigenous Approaches to IR***

***January 22: Challenging the Western Canon: Marxism-Leninism***

***January 29: Challenging the Western Canon: Pacifism and Positive Ideas of Peace***

***February 5: Challenging the Western Canon: Anti-Colonialism***

***February 12: Challenging the Western Canon: Environmentalism and IR***

***FIRST REPORT DUE FEBRUARY 12***

***February 19: READING WEEK – No Classes***

***February 26: Challenging the Western Canon: Dependency & World Systems Theories***

***March 5: Challenging the Western Canon: Feminism and IR***

***March 12: Crisis Simulation – Week 1***

***March 19: Crisis Simulation – Week 2***

***March 26: Crisis Simulation – Week 3***

***April 2: Crisis Simulation – Week 4******SECOND REPORT DUE APRIL 2******April 9: Crisis Simulation – Week 5 + REVIEW*****Additional Statements**

***Communication policies:*** Students are welcome to come to the professor's office hours or to arrange another time to meet the professor at his office if they have questions or concerns about the course. Additionally, they may contact the professor via email. The professor will aim to respond to students within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends. Please use your UWO email address for any correspondence.

***Use of electronic devices:*** Students are welcome to use electronic devices for the purposes of writing notes, reviewing course materials, or, in the crisis simulation, perform tasks related to it. Recording tools are not allowed without written permission from the instructor.

***Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI):*** You may not make any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course. Any use of such tools for assignments in this course may be considered a form of academic misconduct.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.