**Course title:** Contemporary Controversies in International Relations
**Course code:** (GI) INRE 4007 LNEN
**Programs offering course:** Semester Global Internship, London Open Campus Block
**Open Campus Track:** International Relations and Political Science
**Language of instruction:** English
**U.S. semester credits:** 3.00
**Contact hours:** 45.00
**Term:** Spring Block I 2021

## Course Description

The course provides an overview of important international conflicts of our time, their causes, main agents, and recent developments. Investigating a number of case studies will allow us to not only identify and learn in detail about different areas of international controversy, but also to study models of international cooperation. Course participants are to analyze a variety of current conflicts by diagnosing the conflict, providing an outlook for the medium-term future, and proposing solutions. Classroom content is supplemented and enhanced by debate meetings with experts and practitioners from different organizations and institutions. The course addresses the following and other questions: In which policy domains do we find contemporary / future international controversies? What are the ways in which these controversies are diffused and settled? What are existing obstacles to the resolution and settlement of international conflicts? What major multilateral forums exist? Is global governance a realistic and desirable goal? What could possible forms look like?

## Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Synthesize a range of current positions and debates in international relations to develop a nuanced analysis of the controversies studied
- Develop a firm understanding of foundational theories of international relations
- Acquire practice in addressing pointed and critical questions to politicians and members of government bureaucracies.
- Further develop critical thinking and communication skills by regularly debating political topics of current significance – in writing and in class
- Improve team work and public speaking skills by preparing and delivering presentations in a group

## Course Prerequisites

Students should have completed two courses in modern history, politics, or international relations.

## Methods of Instruction

The methodology will be characterized by lectures, presentations and class discussions based on the assigned readings. Lectures will be enhanced by PowerPoint presentations whenever these are helpful to explain international conflicts and controversies. The class debates will be prepared and conducted in such a way that they can serve as preparation for discussions and meetings with politicians, civil servants, NGO representatives as well as independent experts. Classroom activities will include individual, partner and group work and will be complemented by homework exercises.

## Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their
original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - 20%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements, 3% grade penalty &amp; written warning</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion</td>
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N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**
Class: 1.0  (Re)-Introduction to the International System

In this class students will evaluate their perspective on the international system through a thorough re-introduction. The international system will be reviewed in the context of recent significant international developments, including, but not limited to, changes in the EU, changes in US foreign relations, international positions on the Middle-East, and international positions on the Korean peninsula.

Reading:

Recommended Reading:

**Week 2**
Class: 2.0 International Actors and the Politics of Cooperation

Cooperation is an assumed necessity in international relations. This class examines this assumption through an analysis of contemporary international organisations and the main parties/actors...
Students will visit an organisation connected with research and/or international policy development.

Reading:

Recommended Reading:

- **Homework Assignment 1 due**

**Class: 3.0  Global/Alpha Cities**

This class examines the emergence and in some cases intentional creation of “global cities” (aka “Alpha” cities) that functional as essential sites for both exchange and intense competition in the global economy, e.g., Shanghai vs. Hong Kong (shipping), Hong Kong vs. Singapore (UNHDI), London vs. Berlin (as post-Brexit financial centers).

Readings:

**Week 3**

**Class: 4.0  Environmental Degradation and International Conflict**

This class examines the correlation between environmental challenges and the rise of conflict throughout the world.

Reading:

Recommended Reading:

- **Midterm Exam due**

**Class: 5.0  The United States and Paris Agreement**

This class examines the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2016), why and how the agreement was reached, and subsequently, the US decision to withdraw from the agreement (2017), and consequences to-date.

Readings:

**Week 4**

**Class: 6.0  Terrorism as International Conflict**

Terrorism is often understood in public discourse as a particular form of conflict used by non-state forces, yet there are multiple, and often conflicting, definitions of the term. This class examines the conflicting definitions and discourses on terrorism and other non-state acts of violence and discusses their relevance for geopolitics.

Reading:

Recommended Reading:

- **Individual Presentations due**

**Class: 7.0 Human Rights and the Responsibility to Protect**

Students will hear from a guest speaker pertaining to human rights and discourses on mutual responsibilities.

**Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


- **Homework Assignment 2 due**

**Week 5**

**Class: 8.0 Crises in the Middle East**

This class evaluates the multiple security and economic challenges in the context of the Middle Eastern crises. Students will hear from a Guest Speaker researching on the crises in the Middle Eastern region.

**Class: 9.0 Case Study: The Rohingya**

This class examines the case of the Rohingya and the alleged ethnic cleansing they are facing in Myanmar, the broader discrimination they face in South Asia, and global reactions to the same.

**Readings:**

Ibrahim (2018), Introduction, Conclusion and Epilogue; Chaudhury and Samaddar, Eds. (2018), Introduction, Epilogue and Afterword

- **Group Project due**

**Week 6**

**Class: 10.0 A New Cold War or Worse?**

China’s rapid economic rise and increasingly assertive foreign policy has led to an expansion of conflicts with its regional neighbors as well as the United States and others who more and more often view China as a strategic threat despite Beijing’s assurances to the contrary. While some are predicting an inevitable war with China, it is clear that military positioning has already shifted, as well as on-going trade conflicts and increasingly, even, restrictions on cultural and educational exchanges. This class discusses these developments from contrasting perspectives in terms of existing conflicts and the potential for more serious ones to emerge. Class will include a screening of John Pilger's documentary, The Coming War on China (2016).

**Readings:**

Allison (2017).

**Class: 11.0 The Future of International Conflict and its Management**

In this final class before the exam, students review the course thus far, and examine the capacity and accuracy of forecasting international disputes.

**Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**
Course Materials
Readings


**Online Resources**


Global Terrorism Database. See: https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/

