

POU44021 — Contemporary International Relations A

Module Information	
Module Code	<i>POU44021</i>
Module Title	<i>Contemporary International Relations A</i>
Department	<i>Political Science</i>
Year Group	<i>Senior Sophister</i>
Module Personnel	<i>Prof. Jesse Dillon-Savage</i>
Academic Year	<i>2026–27</i>
Credit Weighting	<i>5 credits</i>
Semester	<i>Michaelmas Term (Semester 1)</i>
Contact Hours	<i>2 lectures per week</i>

Module Content	
Module Description	<i>This module critically examines current world affairs through the lens of contemporary international relations theory. It explores the international system as a complex environment in which multiple actors, interests, and institutions interact to produce the outcomes we observe in global politics. Students engage with theories of interstate and intrastate conflict, international security, and the structure and change of the international order. Particular attention is paid to the relevance of these concepts to contemporary geopolitical events and conflicts, with an emphasis on existing empirical research.</i>
Module Learning Aims	<i>To equip students with the theoretical and analytical tools required to critically evaluate contemporary global events. To develop familiarity with key debates in international relations scholarship, including the causes and consequences of interstate and civil war, theories of international security, the dynamics of international order, and the role of domestic politics in shaping foreign policy outcomes.</i>
Learning Outcomes	On successful completion of this module, students will be able to:

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	1. Explain core theories and concepts in international relations, including rationalist and bargaining models of conflict, signalling theory, and democratic peace theory. 2. Analyse the causes, dynamics, and outcomes of interstate and civil war using established theoretical frameworks. 3. Critically evaluate empirical research on international security, armed conflict, terrorism, and alliance formation. 4. Assess the role of domestic politics, regime type, and political institutions in shaping states' decisions to use force. 5. Evaluate how international norms, laws of war, hierarchies, and systemic change shape world politics. 6. Apply theoretical frameworks to the analysis of contemporary geopolitical issues and conflicts.
Indicative Reading / Resources	<i>Frieden, J. A., Lake, D. A., & Schultz, K. A. (2016). World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions (3rd ed.). WW Norton. Weekly required and suggested readings are listed in the course syllabus.</i>

Assessment

Assessment Components	<i>Simulation and Response Essay 40%; In-Person Exam 60%</i>
Assessment Details	<i>Simulation and Response Essay (40%, 1,000 words, due Thursday 30 October): Students participate in an in-class civil war simulation in Week 4, then submit an individual reflective essay critically engaging with the simulation experience and relevant theoretical frameworks. In-Person Written Exam (60%, 90 minutes): A closed-book in-person examination held during the formal examination period. Students will be required to answer questions demonstrating critical engagement with the theories, concepts, and empirical research covered across the module.</i>

Additional Information

Prerequisites	<i>None</i>
Co-requisites	<i>None</i>
Any other information	<i>Office: 3 College Green, Room 4.07. Contact: DILLON SJ@tcd.ie. Phone: 01 896 3483. All written work is submitted via</i>



Additional Information

Blackboard. Academic integrity is strictly upheld in line with TCD policy.