

POU44032 — Contemporary International Relations B

Module Information	
Module Code	POU44032
Module Title	Contemporary International Relations B
Department	Political Science
Year Group	Senior Sophister
Module Personnel	Christian Gläsel
Academic Year	2026–27
Credit Weighting	5 credits
Semester	Semester 2
Contact Hours	2 hours class per week

Module Content	
Module Description	Today, a majority of the world's population lives under some form of authoritarian rule, with profound consequences for international and human security. This module examines how authoritarian regimes shape contemporary international relations, and vice versa. Drawing on recent theoretical and empirical research, it explores how autocratic governments shape international security, conflict, cooperation, diplomacy, and global governance, and how international organisations, sanctions, and foreign influence campaigns influence relations between authoritarian and democratic states. The module addresses questions such as: Why do authoritarian regimes emerge and decline in waves? Why do some survive while others collapse? Under what conditions do they resort to repression or military aggression? How do they use propaganda, censorship, and foreign influence campaigns to project power abroad? And how can democratic states and international institutions respond to democratic backsliding, violations of human rights, and threats to the international order? By the end of the module, students will be equipped to critically evaluate competing theoretical explanations and contemporary empirical research on authoritarianism in world politics.
Module Learning Aims	

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Learning Outcomes	By the end of the module, participants will be able to: 1. Explain how domestic political institutions and incentives shape the international behaviour of authoritarian regimes. 2. Critically evaluate competing theoretical and empirical explanations of authoritarianism in world politics. 3. Analyse contemporary international challenges—including armed conflict, repression, foreign influence operations, and democratic backsliding—through the lens of comparative authoritarian politics and international relations. 4. Develop and communicate theoretically grounded arguments, both orally and in writing, drawing on relevant academic literature. 5. Design a research proposal that formulates an original research question and outlines an appropriate strategy for its empirical investigation.
Indicative Reading / Resources	– Dukalskis, Alexander. 2021 <i>Making the World Safe for Dictatorship</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. – Frieden, Jeffry A., David A. Lake, Kenneth A. Schultz, Susan D. Hyde, and Stephanie J. Rickard. 2026. <i>World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions</i>. 6th ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. – Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2018. <i>How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Assessment

Assessment Components	One essay in response to an in-class simulation 40% Research proposal 60%
Assessment Details	Assessment is designed to develop students' ability to critically engage with contemporary research on authoritarianism in world politics and to apply theoretical insights to pressing international challenges. Throughout the module, students are expected to participate actively in simulations that examine the international causes and consequences of authoritarian rule. Students will submit one essay in response to an in-class simulation. The essay should critically analyse the simulation in light of the relevant academic literature and demonstrate an ability to connect theoretical arguments with contemporary

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international developments. Alternatively, or in addition, students should reflect on their personal learnings from the simulation.

The final assessment is a research proposal on a topic related to authoritarianism in international relations. Students are expected to formulate an original research question, situate it within the relevant scholarly literature, develop a theoretically grounded argument, and outline an appropriate empirical strategy for investigating it. The proposal should include a concise discussion of the proposed case selection, data, and methodology, but it should not contain an empirical analysis. The assignment is intended to provide a foundation for independent research and may serve as a starting point for future dissertation work.

Additional Information

Prerequisites	POU22021, POU22022, POU44021
Co-requisites	POU44021
Any other information	