

PSCI 3183: INTERNATIONAL LAW
ONLINE
MAYMESTER 2025

Professor: Megan Shannon

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Drop-in office hours: from 5/12 - 5/23, weekdays from 11am to noon at <https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/96032689941>

Instructor Bio

As a child, I would spend hours spinning the globe, wondering what was happening in the rest of the world (this was pre-internet!). I also wished for world peace every time I blew out my birthday candles. Teaching classes like this one allows me to pursue my childhood dreams. I'm excited to introduce you to the fascinating world of international law. I hope to build a sense of community in this class, even in an asynchronous online setting. I'm a fairly nice person and I hope you will feel comfortable contacting me. This is my twentieth year as a professor and my tenth at CU. In addition to teaching international law, I study how international institutions influence human and interstate security. I also enjoy running on the trails around Boulder and camping with my husband and kids.

Communication

I prefer to be contacted by email at megan.l.shannon@colorado.edu. If you do not get a response to your email within 24 hours, feel free to email again. You can also stop by my office hours on Zoom (no appointment needed). If there is another student on Zoom, you may be placed in the waiting room, and I will get to you as soon as possible.

Why You Should Care About International Law

Can international law change how countries behave? If so, how? People have strong opinions about the effectiveness of international law. Some say that international law changes how countries act, and that countries will even do what's not in their interest so that they can honor international law. Others say that countries only act in their own interest, and that international law has little ability to meaningfully change how countries behave. Who's right? Understanding the power and limits of international law is important as countries seek global solutions to pressing problems such as climate change. Grappling with questions about international law also gets us thinking about deeper questions of human nature and global society. Can individuals sometimes forgo their own interests to follow rules, norms, and principles that benefit humankind? Or, are we so self-interested that cooperation is impossible?

This class introduces you to the study of international law. You will learn about and read legal decisions made by domestic and international courts and legal bodies. From these decisions, you will identify the legal principles that govern global cooperation on issues such as human rights and the use of force. You will apply these principles to assess the legality of historical and ongoing events in the world. By semester's end, you will understand the power and limits of international law. You will also gain experience in reading legal decisions and understanding their implications for domestic and international politics.

This class will challenge you with some difficult questions, such as: is it legal for countries to ban headscarves to foster secularism and religious freedom? Must countries give individuals

who have committed heinous crimes the right to meet with their local consulate or embassy? Can international law have any power if there are no global police to enforce it? By continually grappling with challenging questions, this class will stretch your analytical abilities and ask you to confront your own moral and ethical code. You will emerge from this class a stronger thinker.

What You Will Gain From This Class

Upon completion of this class, successful students will be able to:

- (1) Distinguish between the primary sources of international law, including treaties, customary law, and general principles of law
- (2) Identify the key challenges to making and upholding international law, providing examples from current events
- (3) Evaluate the compliance of various countries with international law by examining specific cases and examples
- (4) Explain the functions of various legal institutions and courts in international law
- (5) Analyze the implications of landmark legal cases for international law and cooperation
- (6) Assess the legality of ongoing world events by applying principles of international law

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, though it is helpful if you have taken PSCI 2223: Introduction to International Relations.

Required Materials

- Textbook: Johns, Leslie. 2022. *Politics and International Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-1-108-98665-6.
- All other required readings are available from the textbook's website (www.cambridge.org/johns) or are posted to Canvas.

Class Structure

We will use Canvas in this course to access class materials, take quizzes and exams, participate in discussion boards, watch lectures, view grades, and receive class updates. For Canvas support resources, see the Canvas Student Support page <https://oit.colorado.edu/services/teaching-learning-applications/canvas/help/student-support>.

This is an asynchronous online class that takes a semester's worth of material and compresses it into three weeks. That means the class works differently from a semester-long, in-person class. It will feel like the class is intense and moves very quickly. On the one hand, this is great - we will all be focused on the class material for three weeks. On the other hand, it may feel difficult to balance the work of this class with the challenges of life. We can do this! But if you are struggling and need help, please reach out to me. The best way to manage the challenges of this class is to communicate and let me know what you're going through. You can drop in on Zoom office hours or email me and we can set up a time to talk.

For every day of class, there will be a reading, an online lecture(s), a quiz, and a discussion board. This is a three-credit class, so plan for about eight hours each class day to devote to the material. To optimize your learning, proceed each day as follows:

- (1) Find the day's module on Canvas.
- (2) Complete the assigned reading.
- (3) Watch the lecture(s).
- (4) Take the associated quiz before 11:59pm.

- (5) Complete the discussion board before 11:59pm.

Commitment to Inclusivity

The University of Colorado is a learning community that seeks to understand the world around us. CU cannot achieve those goals without the engagement of its undergraduate students. You have unique gifts, skills, and insights that advance our search for truth and knowledge. That means your participation in this class is valuable. My commitment is to make sure that you feel included enough in our class community to participate, even though the class is online. If you feel your differences isolate you from CU's community or if you need specific accommodations, please speak with me early in the semester about what we can do together to help you engage in our class and the CU community.

Grades and Policies

Reading Quizzes on Canvas, two lowest grades dropped, top nine quiz scores averaged, 20%

Each day there will be a quiz posted on Canvas designed to help you understand the material. The quiz will be available **until 11:59pm** the day of class. You may use your book or notes when taking the quizzes, though you may not work with other students. Once you begin the quiz, you have 30 minutes to complete it. The two lowest quiz scores will be dropped and the remaining nine scores averaged for the overall quiz grade. Quizzes cannot be made up if they are not taken by the end of the day.

Daily Discussion Board, 10%

Each day there will be a discussion board where you will answer questions about the day's material and comment on a classmate's discussion post. The discussion board posts will receive a grade of complete or incomplete. Receiving a grade of complete for all eleven discussion boards will earn the full 10% of the final grade. The discussion board will be available **until 11:59pm** the day of class. Discussion posts cannot be made up if they are not completed by the end of the day.

International Law Policy Brief, 20%

You will write a short policy brief (about three double-spaced pages) that takes a position on an issue of your choice in international law. The position might include, for example, asking a country to join or withdraw from a treaty, asking a country to sanction another country for breaking international law, or asking a country to comply with a law. You will also identify a relevant individual to send the policy brief to, and you will back up your position with credible sources. The policy brief is due on Canvas on May 30th at 11:59pm. Late policy briefs will be docked a letter grade each day after that.

International Law Policy Brief Presentation, 5%

You will record a brief presentation (about three minutes) on your policy brief and post it to Canvas. You will also watch or listen to one other classmate's presentation and make a comment. The presentation is due on Canvas on May 30th at 11:59pm. Late presentations will be docked a letter grade each day after that.

Midterm Examination, 20% and Final Examination, 25%

The midterm and final exams will be administered on Canvas. They are open book and open note. They will consist of short answer and essay questions. The midterm exam is on Monday, May 20th and the final exam is on Friday, May 31. You will have a two-hour window to complete the midterm exam and a two and a half-hour window to complete the final exam. Both exams must be completed by 11:59pm on the day they are assigned. The final exam will emphasize material covered after the midterm, but it will have a question or two that addresses material

before the midterm.

Use of AI

For this class, you may use AI programs such as ChatGPT to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, be aware of AI's limitations. The material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, and may perpetuate racial, gender, ethnic, and other biases. In fact, you should not trust anything AI says, and you should confirm the information it gives you through other means. The use of AI may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity.

You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (but consider that the quality of the reference may be poor). Plagiarism or other forms of cheating will be addressed according to CU Honor Code policies (see statement later in this syllabus).

You may not use AI to complete the midterm or final exam for this class.

Grading Scale

	B+ 89 - 87	C+ 79 - 77	D+ 69 - 67	
A 93 - 100	B 86 - 83	C 76 - 73	D 66 - 63	F 59 - 0
A- 92 - 90	B- 82 - 80	C- 72 - 70	D- 62 - 60	

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

The reading schedule will be modified as needed to reflect the pace of the course, so you'll want to check the modules frequently on Canvas. Readings may be added or subtracted.

Monday, May 12: Introduction to International Law

- Complete the "Start Here" module, including reviewing the syllabus and introducing yourself in the forum
- Read Chapter 1 and Requerimiento student materials
- Watch the lectures
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Tuesday, May 13: Making International Law

- Read pp 35-83
- Read North Sea student materials
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Wednesday, May 14: Making and Breaking International Law

- Read pp 83 - 102
- Read Nuclear Tests student materials
- Read pp 103 - 123
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Thursday, May 15: Breaking International Law

- Read Iran Hostages student materials
- Read pp 123 - 134
- Read Avena and Other Mexican Nationals (Mexico v United States)
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Friday, May 16: Upholding International Law

- Read pp 138-172 and Jurisdictional Immunities student materials
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Monday, May 19: Midterm Exam

Tuesday, May 20: Trade

- Read pp 204-231 and Shrimp student materials
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Wednesday, May 21: Human Rights

- Read pp 263-292 and Llantoy Huaman v Peru
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Thursday, May 22: Human Rights continued

- Read pp 293-309 and Manifesting Religion student materials
- Grootboom student materials
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Friday, May 23: Use of Force

- Read pp 310 - 352 and Nicaragua student materials
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Monday, May 26: No Class

Tuesday, May 27: Rules of Armed Conflict

- Read pp 353 - 392 and Nuclear Weapons student materials
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Wednesday, May 28: Criminal Responsibility

- Read pp 395 - 432
- Read Prosecutor v Akayesu
- read Koomen reading
- Watch the lecture
- Take the quiz
- Complete the discussion board

Thursday, May 29:

- International law policy brief due at 11:59pm
- Policy brief presentation due at 11:59pm

Friday, May 30: Final Exam