COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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• Paul Staniland

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• John W. Boyer, History
• Mark Philip Bradley, History
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• Dipesh Chakrabarty, South Asian Languages and Civilizations, History
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• Terry Clark, Sociology
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• Marco Garrido, Sociology
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• Tom Ginsberg, Law, Political Science
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• James Hevia, History
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• Ryan Cecil Jobson, Anthropology
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• Eric Posner, Law
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• Nathan Tarcov, Political Science, Social Thought
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• Jennifer Trinitapoli, Sociology
• Lisa Wedeen, Political Science
• Dali Yang, Political Science
• Dingxin Zhao, Sociology

Assistant Senior Instructional Lecturers
• Matthias Staisch, International Relations

Senior Lecturer
Committee on International Relations

• Michael Reese, International Relations
  Lecturer
• Anjali Anand, International Relations
  Director of Career Services and Senior Program Officer
• Shelly Robinson
  Career Preparation & Programming Manager
• Gözde Erdeniz
  Student Affairs Administrator
• E.G. Enbar
  Administrative and Events Program Specialist
• Vanessa Carey
  Business Administrator
• Tekeisha Yelton-Hunter

GENERAL INFORMATION

The MA Program in the Committee on International Relations (CIR) is the nation’s oldest and preeminent professional research degree in International Relations. Students enroll in courses across the Social Sciences as well as UChicago’s Business, Law, and Public Policy schools. They specialize in two of our five field concentrations: International Security, Conflict Studies and Contentious Politics; International Political Economy and Development; Comparative Studies in Political Institutions and Identity; Human Rights, Environment, and International Law; and Research Methods in the Social Sciences.

CIR students take nine graduate courses and work directly with UChicago faculty on their MA thesis. Students are assisted in their course selections, and offered weekly mentorship for their research, by postdoctoral preceptors and by CIR staff.

CIR is highly selective for admission and offers substantial merit aid.

We offer exceptional career preparation that is tailored to the dozens of distinct career paths our students are pursuing. Our programming includes one-on-one advising on how to prepare a competitive PhD and JD application; internship and fellowship support; fully funded local, national, and international career development treks; and visits by leading alums who provide mentorship in a variety of fields.

Students interested in combining a CIR M.A. with an M.B.A. can apply to a joint degree program with the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. A dual M.A./M.A. degree with the Harris School of Public Policy and an M.A. /J.D. with the University of Chicago Law School are also available.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND COURSE WORK

CIR students complete two core seminars, enroll in an MA thesis workshop sequence, and submit a faculty-approved MA thesis.

COURSE WORK

Our core seminars, “International Order and Security” and “International Political Economy” examine the theoretical and methodological approaches that have been broadly influential in the study of International Relations. The seminars feature a mix of foundational and contemporary texts. They furnish a common vocabulary, and core analytical skills, that help students understand how their research commitments have been shaped by past investigators.

In addition, students must successfully complete the introductory seminar Perspectives in International Relations (offered in the Autumn Quarter) and participate in the master's thesis workshop throughout the academic year. Master's workshops are led by CIR preceptors and give students the opportunity to present and discuss their research projects as they develop from proposal to final draft.

Because Perspectives is offered only in the Autumn Quarter, students may not begin the CIR program at any other time of year.

Courses are selected with the guidance of a CIR preceptor. Students register for three graduate classes per quarter, beginning in the Fall and continuing through the Winter and Spring. They take graduate courses in the departments of Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Sociology, the centers for Latin American, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Studies, and professional schools of the University.
The Master's Thesis

Students write an article-length MA thesis under the supervision of a UChicago faculty member. Their preceptor provides weekly assistance, and serves as the paper's second reader. The preceptor organizes and leads an MA thesis workshop in the Winter and Spring. Both the faculty sponsor and the preceptor provide feedback on the proposal, the first draft, and give a written evaluation for the final submission. Approximately 40% of CIR students graduate in June, and 60% in August.

Sample Thesis Topics

Some recent MA paper titles include:
"From Knowledge to Power: The Social Sciences, Propaganda, and America's Rise to Hegemony"
"The Structural Origins of Tax Havens"
"Listening to the People: How Declining Responsiveness Drives Populist Sentiments"
"American White Nationalists: Discourses of the Nation, the State, and Globalization"
"'Doing Good Looks Good On You? Evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility and Women's Empowerment at the UN Global Compact"
"Segregation and the Spatial Distribution of Violence in the Northern Ireland Conflict"
"Still Dying to Win: The Coercive Logic of Suicide Attacks against Autocracies"
"Practicing Nationalism in Historical Writing: Japan’s Changing Image in Official Chinese Historical Narratives, 1950s to 1990s"
"Mark the Earth with Ruin: Official Memory and Memorialization in Post-Genocide Cambodia and Rwanda"
"An Open Book?: A Look at How Democratic Security-Seekers Signal their Intentions"
"Globalization and the Convergence of Power"

M.A. with Specialization

Students may apply for a second year of study, the M.A. with specialization. This second year requires an additional three quarters of residence during which the student takes an additional nine courses. Students apply for the second year with specialization during their first year in residence.

Joint and Dual Degrees

The joint degree program with the Chicago Booth School of Business is administered through the Division of the Social Sciences. Students pursuing a joint degree must fulfill all the requirements of the CIR degree in addition to the requirements of the respective professional degree, though there are some exceptions. Students enrolled in the dual J.D. /M.A. program with the Law School take nine courses in their fourth year of study, three of which are typically law-school courses; the remaining six come from the CIR list of approved courses. Students enrolled in the joint M.B.A/M.A. program take a reduced course load of 14 courses in the Booth School of Business and the full nine courses in CIR. Students interested in the dual M.A./M.A. degree program should contact the Harris School of Public Policy for more information.

Admission

CIR applicants must meet the formal requirements of the Graduate Social Sciences Division.

With one exception, applicants are no longer required to submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. Applicants to the joint CIR and Booth School of Business degree program must submit either GRE or Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) scores.

All financial aid is merit-based, and CIR offers tuition scholarships at the time of admission.

Applicants from non-English speaking countries must provide evidence of English proficiency by submitting scores from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Some non-native English speakers are exempt, if they have studied in an English language University. Please contact our Dean of Students Office with any questions: ssd-admissions@uchicago.edu

How to Apply

The Application for Admission and Financial Aid, with instructions and deadlines, is available online at: https://apply-ssd.uchicago.edu/apply/.

Applicants interested in the dual J.D./M.A. program must apply separately to both the Law School and the Committee on International Relations. Applicants interested in the joint M.B.A./M.A. program must submit their application to The University of Chicago Booth School of Business, which then refers the application to CIR. Please contact the Harris School of Public Policy regarding the application procedure for the dual M.A./M.A. degree.

For additional information about our program, please contact E.G. Enbar, our Student Affairs Administrator, at 773-702-8312 oregenbar@uchicago.edu.
INRE 30000. Perspectives on International Relations. 000 Units.
This required, non-credit course is designed to introduce students to the craft of research in International Relations. For the first half of Autumn quarter, the full cohort will meet for lectures on two central themes: (i) the fundamental aspects of conducting research in the social sciences, and, specifically, in International Relations; and (ii) preparation of the MA thesis proposal. Then, the three preceptor student groups will meet for workshops over the latter half of the quarter. The purpose of the workshops is to give each student the opportunity to present his or her proposal draft.
Instructor(s): Paul Staniland Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Open only to CIR students.

INRE 30600. Constructing a Society of Human Rights: A Psychological Framework. 100 Units.
This course is designed to discuss the ways that cultural and social psychology contribute to understandings about human rights conceptually, and how human rights issues emerge from social dynamics. Over the course of the quarter, students will learn about theories on intergroup conflict and prejudice, how an individual’s beliefs emerge from social contexts and shape their relationships with others, how obedience to authority is created and abused, and how social positioning and narratives influence conceptions of self and other. We will also discuss the relevance and impact of psychological study and data on human rights issues.
Equivalent Course(s): CCHDV 25220, HMRT 25220, FBPL 25220

INRE 31602. Human Rights: Philosophical Foundations. 100 Units.
In this class we explore the philosophical foundations of human rights, investigating theories of how our shared humanity in the context of an interdependent world gives rise to obligations of justice. We begin by asking what rights are, how they are distinguished from other parts of morality, and what role they play in our social and political life. But rights come in many varieties, and we are interested in human rights in particular. In later weeks, we will ask what makes something a human right, and how are human rights different from other kinds of rights. We will consider a number of contemporary philosophers (and one historian) who attempt to answer this question, including James Griffin, Joseph Raz, John Rawls, John Tasioulas, Samuel Moyn, Jiewuh Song, and Martha Nussbaum. Throughout we will be asking questions such as, "What makes something a human right?" "What role does human dignity play in grounding our human rights?" "Are human rights historical?" "What role does the nation and the individual play in our account of human rights?" "When can one nation legitimately intervene in the affairs of another nation?" "How can we respect the demands of justice while also respecting cultural difference?" "How do human rights relate to global inequality and markets?" (A) (I)
Instructor(s): B. Laurence Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): HMRT 21002, HIST 29319, PHIL 31002, LLSO 21002, PHIL 21002, HMRT 31002, HIST 39319, MAPH 42002

INRE 31700. Human Rights II: History and Theory. 100 Units.
This course is concerned with the theory and the historical evolution of the modern human rights regime. It discusses the emergence of a modern "human rights" culture as a product of the formation and expansion of the system of nation-states and the concurrent rise of value-driven social mobilizations. It proceeds to discuss human rights in two prevailing modalities. First, it explores rights as protection of the body and personhood and what role they play in our social and political life. But rights come in many varieties, and we are interested in human rights in particular. In later weeks, we will ask what makes something a human right, and how are human rights different from other kinds of rights. We will consider a number of contemporary philosophers (and one historian) who attempt to answer this question, including James Griffin, Joseph Raz, John Rawls, John Tasioulas, Samuel Moyn, Jiewuh Song, and Martha Nussbaum. Throughout we will be asking questions such as, "What makes something a human right?" "What role does human dignity play in grounding our human rights?" "Are human rights historical?" "What role does the nation and the individual play in our account of human rights?" "When can one nation legitimately intervene in the affairs of another nation?" "How can we respect the demands of justice while also respecting cultural difference?" "How do human rights relate to global inequality and markets?" (A) (I)
Instructor(s): B. Laurence Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): LLSO 27100, CRES 29302, HMRT 20200, HMRT 30200, HIST 29302, HIST 39302

INRE 32002. Hacking for Defense. 100 Units.
The innovation toolkit (lean startup, human-centered design, prototyping) was developed to create new value under conditions of intense uncertainty. Typically, courses on innovation focus that effort on new venture creation, but our large institutions—both public and private—wield tremendous influence and power. We believe these organizations should be more responsive to changing conditions and that they deserve commitment from the best and brightest when it comes to the application of innovation. All institutions within the Department of Defense and Intelligence Communities (DoD/IC) are large, complex, and as impactful on society as any that one can identify. They face intense pressure to adapt their missions to changing constituencies, evolving geopolitical demands, technology revolutions, social norms, and complex regulations. This course aims to train students in how to apply the innovation toolkit to such organizations and their challenges.
Equivalent Course(s): PPHA 33830

INRE 32100. Civil-Military Relations and the Politics of Militaries. 100 Units.
How do we define a military? What is a military’s purpose? How have militaries around the world embedded themselves into the social and institutional fabric of the state? How do military leaders act compared to their civilian counterparts when placed in similar political roles? This seminar will help students answer the
aforementioned questions by introducing them to the literature on civil-military relations. The general structure of the class readings will focus on two primary themes. The first half of the course will introduce students to long-standing debates over the role of politicization in military organizations and whether such trends are desirable or not. The latter half of the class will focus on research that analyzes the militarization of politics and how such trends might subvert traditional notions of the military profession. This course is intended for CIR students and all course assignments will be structured around helping students complete the writing of their MA theses. Non-CIR students should contact the instructor directly about taking the class.

Instructor(s): Kevin Weng Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): CIR students only.

INRE 34600. Case Study Methods. 100 Units.

How do social scientists utilize case studies as a method for identifying causal relationships? What are the epistemological assumptions that underlie the use of case studies? How similar or different are these assumptions from those of large-N and other quantitative methodologies? What are some of the limitations of case study research? This seminar will help students address the aforementioned questions by introducing them to ongoing methodological debates within the social sciences surrounding the use of single and comparative case studies. The course is organized according to a “snowball method” of first cementing a baseline understanding of certain individual lessons (e.g. single case selection) before gradually proceeding to larger themes (e.g. comparative case studies) that incorporate and reinforce the lessons learned from previous weeks.

Instructor(s): Kevin Weng Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): CIR students only!

INRE 34700. Academic Presentation in International Relations & Thesis Preparation. 100 Units.

This class will provide instruction in the norms of publicly presenting one’s research in front of an academic audience. Using examples drawn from the literature on International Relations and Comparative Politics, students will learn about the typical practices of structuring a research project for academic consumption. Specific topics will include: addressing alternative hypotheses, formulating a literature review, addressing missing data issues and selection bias, formulating an empirical puzzle, tenets of constructive criticism, etc. At certain intervals in the course, students will present their own work-in-progress research to the class body where they will be expected to utilize the lessons from previous sessions.

Instructor(s): K. Weng Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): This course is intended for CIR students in the final stages of writing their Master’s Thesis. Non-CIR students should contact the instructor if they wish to attend the class.

INRE 34800. Historical Processes of State Formation. 100 Units.

How did states come into being? How do we assess “state-ness” or the “strength” of state institutions? Why did nation-states become the primary actor in the international system instead of alternative forms of political organization such as empires, city-states, or city-leagues? What explains variations in the institutional makeup of states? This course helps students formulate an initial set of answers to the previous set of questions by providing an overview of the state-formation literature. Specifically, the class will cover theories that address how states come into being, organize their societies, extract resources, and structure their political institutions.

Course readings will initially start with an introduction to varying conceptualizations of the state before moving onto a discussion of how to operationalize and measure degrees of “state-ness”. The remaining course readings will explore themes surrounding war, colonialism, civil society, taxation, economic development, & (ultimately) state breakdown.

Instructor(s): K. Weng Terms Offered: Winter

INRE 36001. Society, Politics and Security in Israel. 100 Units.

This graduate course examines Israel’s unique DNA through a thorough examination of its history, society, politics and security challenges. We shall explore these traits as manifested in the defining chapters of Israel’s history, since the early stages of the Zionist driven immigration of Jews to the Holy Land, through the establishment of the Jewish State in 1948, until present time. Students will work with primary sources, diverse theoretical perspectives, and rich historiographical material to better understand the Israeli experience, through domestic, regional and international perspectives. Particular attention will be given to the emergence of the Israeli vibrant society and functioning democracy in the background of continuous conflict and wars. The course will explore topics such as: How Israel reconciles between the imperatives and narratives of democracy and Jewishness, between collective ethos and heterogeneous tribalism, and between protracted security challenges and resilience. We will also discuss the multifaceted aspects of the changing Israeli security doctrine and practice, in light of regional threats and international involvement.

Instructor(s): M. Elran Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 28139, PBPL 28139

INRE 40801. Seminar on the International Politics of Asia. 100 Units.

This seminar is a graduate-level survey of the contemporary cross-national politics of Asia. It centers the perspectives brought to bear on these issues by the state and society of modern India. The course covers four overarching areas of scholarship: (1) statebuilding and its associated practices of national identity construction; (2) civil-military relations; (3) intrastate conflict and contentious politics including human rights and the rule of law; (4) the political economy of development and environmental sustainability since liberalization; and (5) regional geopolitical and geoeconomic competition. This survey is offered distinctly from, but as a pre-requisite
Committee on International Relations

for participation in CIR’s March 2020 Asian International Relations Seminar in Mumbai and Delhi. The course emphatically welcomes all students with a substantive interest in the region’s politics, regardless of their ability to join us for this subsequent trip.

Instructor(s): Michael Reese, Matthias Staisch
Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): Open to CIR students and all others with instructors’ consent

INRE 41500. MA Research Methods. 000 Units.
This in-person course will foster the development of the students’ scholarship through regular interaction with their preceptors. In this course, students will work with preceptors to both synthesize the individualized coursework into a cohesive curriculum and to plan and execute the MA thesis, from choosing research questions, selecting an appropriate research design, elaborating their chosen methodology, conducting research, and writing up their results.

Instructor(s): Michael Reese, Matthias Staisch
Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): Open to CIR students and all others with instructors’ consent

INRE 43000. Core Seminar: International Order and Security. 100 Units.
This seminar is a graduate-level survey of international order and security, covering two general areas of scholarship: (1) theories of international order and instability and (2) strategic interaction approaches to international security. The first half of the seminar is devoted to several current approaches to the problem of international (dis)order. Students will be introduced to the dominant theoretical perspectives -- realism, liberalism, and constructivism -- and their competing approaches to international order at various levels of analysis. The second half of the seminar explores theories of strategic interaction regarding the likelihood of war and the maintenance of peace. The concepts of coercion, deterrence, compellence, and reassurance will be discussed at the ‘general’ strategic level; whereas crisis bargaining will be introduced at the ‘immediate’ tactical level. The ultimate goal of the seminar is to provide students with a solid theoretical foundation for future explorations of academic and policy questions of special interest to them.

Instructor(s): M. Reese
Terms Offered: Autumn, Winter

Note(s): Open only to CIR students

INRE 43800. Core Seminar: International Political Economy. 100 Units.
This seminar is a graduate-level survey of international political economy (IPE). It addresses three prominent questions: (1) How do governments coordinate to regulate the cross-border flow of goods, services, and capital? In particular, what are the relative merits of relying on decentralized, or market-based institutions, as opposed to centralized, or state-based ones, for doing so? (2) What are the distributional implications of these coordinating devices? Specifically, what kind of cleavages constitute the distributional struggles that characterize today’s global economy? (3) Why are the systems of international exchange prone to periodic crisis, and how do governments seek to restore stability, and insure against future volatility? By the end of this part of the core sequence, students will be able to (1) critically evaluate competing (empirical) measurements of the key concepts which constitute theoretical propositions in IPE; and (2) craft a research design that adequately matches a theoretical claim in IPE with relevant empirical data.

Instructor(s): M. Staisch
Terms Offered: Autumn, Winter

Note(s): Open only to CIR students

INRE 43801. Seminar on the International Politics of Asia. 100 Units.
This seminar is a graduate-level survey of the contemporary cross-national politics of Asia. It centers the perspectives brought to bear on these issues by the state and society of modern India. The course covers four overarching areas of scholarship: (1) statebuilding and its associated practices of national identity construction; (2) civil-military relations; (3) intrastate conflict and contentious politics including human rights and the rule of law; (4) the political economy of development and environmental sustainability since liberalization; and (5) regional geopolitical and geoeconomic competition. This survey is offered distinctly from, but as a pre-requisite for, participation in CIR’s March 2020 Asian International Relations Seminar in Mumbai and Delhi. The course emphatically welcomes all students with a substantive interest in the region’s politics, regardless of their ability to join us for this subsequent trip.

Instructor(s): M. Reese, M. Staisch
Terms Offered: Autumn, Winter

Note(s): Open only to CIR students

INRE 46500. MA Thesis Workshop. 000 Units.
This required, non-credit course is designed to continue the preceptor-group collaboration established in Autumn’s Perspectives (INRE 30000). The purpose of the workshop is to give each student the opportunity to present his or her thesis research as it develops during their first year in the CIR program. Must be taken in each of Winter and Spring quarters.

Terms Offered: Spring

INRE 49700. Reading/Research: International Relations. 100 Units.
This course allows students the opportunity to receive course-credit for their thesis research. It may only be taken once.

Instructor(s): P. Staniland
Terms Offered: Autumn, Spring, Winter
Prerequisite(s): Open only to 1st year CIR students