



SELF PROGRAM

2026/2027

International Law

Aldonza MUÑOZ / Pierre-François LAVAL

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Course information

Number of credits: 6 credits

Contact hours: 30 hours

Hours taught per week: 3 hours

Teaching period: Spring 2027

Course description

This course is co-taught in two parts of fifteen hours each: the first covering the general architecture of international law, the second focusing on how international law operates in practice in situations of crisis.

1st fifteen hours: General International Law

This part of the course builds the general architecture of international law that the rest of the course takes for granted: where its rules come from, who they bind, and what happens when they are broken. It covers the sources of international law (treaties, custom, general principles, and the special case of peremptory norms), the subjects and actors of the international legal order beyond the state (international organizations, individuals, NGOs), and the law of state responsibility for internationally wrongful acts, extended to the

responsibility of international organizations and to why most other non-state actors escape international responsibility altogether. Each session opens with a question put to the group before the corresponding rule is introduced, and includes short in-class exercises applying the material to concrete scenarios.

2nd fifteen hours: International Law in Practice

The second part of the course focuses on international law, as it represents one of the main modes of regulation of international political life. The course will analyse the way in which international law operates in practice with regard to crisis situations.

The case of conflicts between States or within States will be particularly studied. What does international law say about war and the way it is waged? The example of the aggression in Ukraine will be commented on, this time from the sole angle of international law. It will be shown that this law concerns relations between States, but also the fate of populations. The law of armed conflict will be studied, as well as international humanitarian law.

The question of international migration will also be studied, as it is often a consequence of internal or international armed conflicts. How does international law protect, in such contexts, individuals who fear the violence of a conflict or persecution based on their ethnicity, their religion or their political opinions?

Finally, a focus will be proposed on the role of the international judge in the settlement of international disputes. The particularly rich activity of the International Court of Justice over the last ten years will be examined.

Course outline

International Law — Part I (Aldonza Muñoz):

Part 1. Sources of International Law

- The sources map: Article 38 of the ICJ Statute
- Treaties: formation, interpretation, validity and termination
- Custom: state practice and *opinio juris*
- General principles of law, subsidiary means, and soft law
- Hierarchy of norms: *lex specialis*, *lex posterior*, and *jus cogens*

Part 2. Subjects and Actors of International Law

- The State: the Montevideo criteria, sovereignty, recognition
- Other actors: international organizations, individuals, NGOs.

Part 3. Responsibility for Internationally Wrongful Acts

- The wrongful act: attribution and breach
- Circumstances precluding wrongfulness, and reparation
- The responsibility of international organizations and other non-state actors

International Law — Part II (Pierre-François Laval):

Part 1. The law of armed conflicts:

- The extension of the scope of international law: International and non-international armed conflicts
- The hardening of international law: the legal use of force
- The humanization of international law: international humanitarian law

Part 2. International refugee law

- The concept of refugee: classical approach and recent trends
- The international rights of the refugee
- The international refugee's obligations

Part 3. The role of the international judge in dispute resolution

- Recent practices: International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court
- Technical aspects of dispute resolution
- Limits of international justice

Prerequisites

A keen interest in current and global affairs.

Course objectives

The aims of this course are that students will:

- Understand where the rules of international law come from, and distinguish treaties, custom, and general principles
- Master the legal criteria of statehood, and understand the powers and limits of other international actors (international organizations, individuals, peoples, NGOs, corporations, and armed groups)
- Understand the conditions that trigger state responsibility, and extend that logic to international organizations and other actors
- Understand fundamental principles of international law
- Understand the problems of implementation of international law
- Measuring the usefulness of international law

Assessment

50% written exam on Part I (case-study exam, like the exercises done in class) + participation bonus

50% final written exam on Part II

Attendance

In order to participate, students must be present. Nevertheless, a maximum of 2 (two) unexcused absences will be allowed; otherwise, no mark will be given. An unexcused absence at a test (final test or continuous assessment) means no credits for the course.

Bibliography

International Law — Part I:

Public International Law, Malcolm Shaw, Cambridge University Press, 9th ed., 2021

International Law, Malcolm Evans (ed.), Oxford University Press, 6th ed., 2022

International Law — Part II:

Brownlie's *Principles of Public International Law*, James Crawford, Oxford, 9th ed., 2019

International Law, J. Klabbers, Cambridge University Press, 2013