



Exeter College Summer Programme

Introduction to International Law

Course Leader: Dr. David Eichert, david.eichert@politics.ox.ac.uk

Course Description:

This course seeks to provide students with an understanding of the logistics and substance of public international law, that is, the law that applies to how states relate to other states and some non-state actors in global politics. It asks what laws exist in the global political arena and how those laws affect the structure, content, and outcomes of global political, social, and economic interactions. As such, the course explores both what international law is (how it comes to be, and when and how it matters), as well as various places in which international law might matter in the international arena (both in terms of the structure of the international arena and issues that arise in contemporary international relations).

Course Objectives:

- 1) To increase students' understanding of the structure and function of law in the international arena; and
- 2) To prepare students to engage critically with legal, political, social, and economic questions that arise in international law.

Teaching:

12* 1.25 hour lectures
6 * 1.25 hour seminars
4* 1 hour tutorials

Assessment:

This course will be assessed by a three-hour end-of-course exam (60%) in addition to a 2000 word policy brief asking students to apply what they have learned in the class about international law to a pressing policy issue in the contemporary international arena. The use of generative AI is not allowed.

Having a Successful Experience:

Students are expected to have done the assigned reading prior to the lectures, seminars, and tutorials. Many of the ideas we will discuss may challenge you to think in different ways about the world, communities, identities, and their relationships to politics and society. Learning is about being open to new concepts and being willing to think deeply about the contradictions of everyday life. It is therefore important to be respectful of others' viewpoints and identities during the course and your entire experience at Oxford.

Course Schedule:

Lecture 1: What is International Law?

- Otzig, "International Law and International Relations: Quo Vadis?," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* (2024)
- Pahuja, "No Future Without History: The Future of International Law," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (2025)
- Tzanakopoulos, "The Master's Tools and the Master's House: Marxist Insights for International Law," *Oxford Handbook of International Law in Europe* (2024)

Lecture 2: The Building Blocks of International Law: States, Treaties, Diplomacy

- Cassese, "States: Rise and Decline of the Primary Subjects of the International Community," *Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law* (2012)
- Dunn, "There is No Such Thing as the State: Discourse, Effect, and Performativity," *Forum for Development Studies* (2010)
- Montevideo Convention (excerpts)
- [Ratification Interactive Dashboard](#) (choose 3 countries and see which treaties they have ratified)

Seminar 1: Who regulates space?

- Treaties on space (excerpts)
- "The Space Industry is Taking Off. Space Law is Still a Mystery," *New York Times* (2023)
- van Eijk, "[International Law as Science Fiction, or, if My Law's Not Real, Neither is Yours](#)" (2021)

Lecture 3: Founding Myths & Sources of International Law

- Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (1625) (excerpts)
- van Ittersum, "Hugo Grotius: The Making of a Founding Father of International Law," *Oxford Handbook of the Theory of International Law* (2016)
- Mégret, "Racial Panics and the Making of (White) International Law," *Race, Racism, and International Law* (2025)
- Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships," *Wicazo Sa Review* (2008) (skim article)

Lecture 4: Positivism, Colonization, & International Law in the 19th Century

- Oppenheim, *International Law* (1905) (excerpts)
- Obregón Tarazona, "The Civilized and the Uncivilized," *Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law* (2012)
- Makau Matua, "Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights," *Harvard International Law Journal* (2001)

Seminar 2: Is international law useful in Ukraine?

- "[EU Countries, Except Hungary, Vow 'Full Accountability' for War Crimes in Ukraine](#)," *EuroNews* (2026)
- Labuda, "Beyond Rhetoric: Interrogating the Eurocentric Critique of International Criminal Law's Selectivity," *Leiden Journal of International Law* (2023)

- Norosky & Carpenter, "The Right to Flee the Dangers of War: Rethinking Ukraine's Gender-Based Restriction on Civilian Men's Freedom of Movement," *Human Rights Quarterly* (2024)

Lecture 5: The Laws of War

- Leiber Code & Geneva Conventions (excerpts)
- Kinsella, *The Image before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction between Combatant and Civilian* (2011) (ch. 1)
- van Dijk, *Preparing for War: The Making of the 1949 Geneva Conventions* (2024) (ch.1)

Lecture 6: The United Nations

- UN Charter (excerpts)
- United Nations Security Council Resolutions 82 & 83
- ["Who Picked the UN Security Council?"](#) (2020)
- ["Why the United Nations Security Council Needs to be Reformed"](#) (2025)
- Achiume & Bâli, "Race and Empire in International Law," *UCLA Law Review* (2021)

Seminar 3: Does the War with Iran violate international law?

- Excerpts from news sources (posted online)

Lecture 7: Human Rights during the Cold War

- UDHR (excerpts)
- Susan Waltz, "Reclaiming and Rebuilding the History of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Third World Quarterly* (2002)
- Burke, "Universal Human Rights for Women: UN Engagement with Traditional Abuses, 1948-1965," in *Women and the UN* (2021)
- Slezkine, "From Helsinki to Human Rights Watch: How an American Cold War Monitoring Group Became an International Human Rights Institution," *Humanity* (2014)

Lecture 8: Regional Human Rights: Europe, Africa, and the Americas

- Huneeus & Madsen, "Between Universalism and Regional Law and Politics: A Comparative History of the American, European, & African Human Rights Systems," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* (2018)
- "Cotton Field" Case (excerpts) (warning: discussion of sexual violence)
- Treaty excerpts (ECHR, ACHR, ACHPR)

Seminar 4: Is there a right to freedom from religious symbols?

- Resources about "Lautsi v. Italy" and "S.A.S. v. France."

Lecture 9: International Criminal Law and Atrocity Crimes

- ["Hissène Habré: Scenes from an historic trial,"](#) Human Rights Watch (2016) (CW: sexual violence)
- Rome Statute (excerpts)
- ["What is the ICC and why has Trump sanctioned it?"](#) BBC News (2025)
- Genocide Convention (excerpts)
- Moses, *The Problems of Genocide* (2021) (Introduction)

Lecture 10: Regulating Weapons

- ["Chemical and Biological Weapons,"](#) ICRC 2013
- ICJ Nuclear Weapons Case (excerpts)
- Ruzicka & Wheeler, "The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," *International Affairs* (2010)
- Brooks, "Drones and the International Rule of Law," *Ethics & International Affairs* (2014)

Seminar 5: *Is there a Responsibility to Protect?*

- The Three Pillars of R2P (posted online)
- State declarations about R2P (posted online)
- Pison Hindawi, "Decolonising the Responsibility to Protect," *Security Dialogue* (2021)

Lecture 11: Identity and International Law

- ICERD, CEDAW, CRPD (excerpts)
- "Toonen v. Australia" (excerpts)
- Otto, "Lost in Translation: Re-Scripting the Sexed Subjects of International Human Rights Law," in *International Law and its Others* (2009)
- Lightfoot, *Global Indigenous Politics: A Subtle Revolution* (2016) (ch. 2)

Lecture 12: Trade and the Open Ocean

- "Corfu Channel" case & UNCLOS (excerpts)
- Roberts & Lamp, ["Who Wins and Who Loses from Globalization?"](#) (2021)
- Constantinou & Hadjimichael, "Liquid Entitlement: Sea, Terra, Law, Commons," *Global Society* (2021)

Seminar 6: *Who benefits from the open seas?*

- Excerpts from news sources (posted online)
- Lijalem Enyew, "Sailing with TWAIL: A Historical Inquiry into Third World Perspectives on the Law of the Sea," *Chinese Journal of International Law* (2022)