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University of California, San Diego, Summer I, 2026

POLI 140A: International Law

Monday and Wednesday, 2:00 p.m.- 4:50 p.m.

RCLAS: Remote and Synchronous Class: [Class Zoom Link](#)

Instructor: Furkan Y Benliogullari (fbenliog@ucsd.edu, SSB 342)

Office Hours: 12 pm – 1 pm, Monday and Wednesday, [OH Zoom link](#)

Teaching Assistant: Marcelo Wilchinski (mwilchinski@ucsd.edu)

Description of the Course

In this course, we will look for answers to important questions, including the ones below:

- What is international law?
- How is it created? Who created it? How did it take its current form?
- Who enforces it? Why do states agree to be bound by international law if we talk about anarchy?
- How does international law affect the behavior of states, international organizations, individuals, and non-governmental organizations?

This course is a product of a hybrid approach. It is both a law and a political science course. Methodologically, we will first understand the law in question and then investigate its impact on actors, their interests, and their interactions. The first part, understanding international law, requires a focus on (1) the history of that set of rules coming into being and (2) the nature of the rule with its structure and limitations. Without understanding the law, it is challenging to understand its impact. Then, we will investigate the impact of international law on actors' interests and interactions.

Instructional Team

About your instructor: I (Furkan) am a 6th-year Ph.D. candidate in the UCSD Political Science Dept. My research focuses on the use of force and legal arguments in territorial disputes. Because of my research focus, I am familiar with the literature and arguments of both legal and IR scholarship. Before the Ph.D. program, I worked as a legal researcher at The Advocates for Human Rights after getting my LL.M. degree from the University of Minnesota Law School. I love cooking, swimming, and playing strategy games.

About your teaching assistant: I (Marcelo) am a third-year Ph.D. candidate in the UC San Diego Department of Political Science. My research focuses on state formation processes, particularly in nineteenth-century Latin America. Before coming to UCSD, I earned a B.A. in Political Science from the Universidad de la República (Uruguay) in 2020, followed by graduate diplomas in Economics (2021) and International Studies (2022) from the same university. Outside of academia, I enjoy watching and playing soccer, learning about history, and exploring new places.

Learning Outcomes

The broad objective of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to acquire expertise and skills that will help them in academia, at law school, or in the legal job market. More specifically, students should be able to:

- Understand the history and sources of international law and the strategic environment that creates the rules of international law and generates compliance and enforcement
- Identify actors' interests and incentives that lead to the institutional design of international law
- Assess the theories of international law and generate hypotheses on their impact on actors' behavior
- Conduct legal research to comprehend the legal question, use international legal rules and IR theories to formulate arguments in favor of or against a certain policy, and recommend that state actors take certain actions

Some of these objectives require you to consume information more passively. Others require you to use them to formulate arguments and propose a strategy in line with your arguments.

Consequently, I expect students to be active learners who actively gather information and problem solvers who find creative ways to solve hypothetical problems by using the information and instruments provided in the class and collected by themselves.

Course Format and Expectations

This course will be conducted entirely remotely and synchronously via Zoom. We will meet twice a week, for 2 hours and 50 minutes each. I intend to keep the class sessions slightly shorter.

To succeed in this course, students must (1) complete all assigned readings on the syllabus before attending class, (2) actively participate in the class and group discussions, (3) fill out the exit ticket for participation, (4) complete the assignments on time, and (5) use the office hours and class time to ask questions and clarifications. For this course, **you need to spend 15 to 20 hours per week**, due to the condensed nature of summer courses.

Assignments, Feedback, and Grading

Your grade will be based on a **midterm project** (40%), a **final project** (40%), and **participation** (20%). As these assignments approach, I will provide more details. I grade the policy strategies and initial assessments, and Marcelo grades your midterm and final assignments.

Midterm Project (40%): Students submit a policy recommendation to the US administration on a legal issue in the foreign policy domain and provide advice based on the theories of international law. This assignment requires both legal and policy assessment. Before the submission of the policy recommendation (midterm submission), students are required to submit an outline that explains their strategy.

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- Policy Strategy (5%): A single-page outline of your identification of the legal issue and the course of action you propose.
- Policy Recommendation (35%): 5-6 pages. A clear analysis of the facts and applicable laws in light of the theories of international law and our national security interests

Final Project (40%): Students conduct legal research and submit a memo to objectively assess the legal position of the state they are representing in light of the facts provided and the applicable rule of law. Before the submission of the case memo (final submission), students are required to submit an initial assessment of the case.

- Initial Assessment (5%): A single-page and single-spaced document with the applicable rule of law and a very brief presentation of important facts and your initial conclusion.
- Case Memo (35%): 6-page memo, objectively assessing the legal position of the state you are representing and presenting your detailed analysis.

Participation (20%): Students are required to participate in the class and fill out the exit ticket after each class session. You are allowed to miss two class sessions without any penalty. If you miss more, you will lose points. Each class session will be 2.5% of your total grade.

- Joining the class, being active in the class and group discussions, and filling out the exit ticket are enough to receive the grade. The class sessions will be discussion-heavy.
 - o Students who join via Zoom but do not participate in any class or group discussion will not receive the participation grade, even if they fill out the exit ticket.
 - o Students who join right before the end of the course to fill out the exit ticket will not receive the participation point.
- Given the remote nature of the course, I understand that some of you may not feel comfortable enough to turn the camera on. As long as you actively participate in the class discussion, you are not required to have your camera on.
- Based on the feedback from the previous course runs, I will share weekly discussion topics for those who want to do some research before the class. You are not required to do the research, but you will enjoy the discussions more if you do.

Late Policy: It is your responsibility to submit your work on time. For each day after the deadline, your submission will receive a 5% late penalty of the assigned grade for that assignment.

- Use the late policy strategically. If you don't have a viable document to submit at the time of the deadline, submit late instead of submitting something that will cost you more points than the late penalty.

Appeal: You can appeal your grade. You are required to write a one-page appeal with the arguments for a higher grade. Send your appeal to Marcelo first.

AI Policy: You are free to use ChatGPT and other AIs. You must acknowledge that you used ChatGPT or other generative AI in your submission comment. Otherwise, we will treat your use of AI as cheating. Transparency is important here.

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- The goal of this course is to ensure that you acquire some skills that will help you in academia, at law school, or get a job at a law firm. **Do not submit whatever AI gives you.** You must use your judgment and use this course to develop your analytical and critical thinking skills. To be able to use your judgment and assess the quality of the AI input, you need to know the course material.
- If you mischaracterize your use of AI (saying that you used it for proofreading or research while using it to write the entire thing), we will treat this as cheating.

Accessibility

If you are a student with a documented disability who will be requesting accommodations in my class, please make sure you are registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities (<https://osd.ucsd.edu/contact/index.html>) and provide me with documentation outlining your accommodations. I am happy to meet with you privately during office hours to discuss how I can help you with the accommodation.

UCSD Rules of Academic Integrity

You are expected to do your own work. Students are not permitted to use unauthorized assistance of any kind. Students caught plagiarizing will receive a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office for administrative sanctions. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me or the TA.

Students also agree that by taking this course, all required midterm and final projects will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted answers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Class Behavior and Inclusive Classroom

I am committed to providing an inclusive learning experience and supporting diversity of experiences, thoughts, and identities. Students are free to express their opinions respectfully and are expected to be respectful of classmates' views and behave courteously toward each other in and outside the classroom. If students encounter any barriers to participating in class, they are encouraged to notify me. No one shall target another class participant personally.

Course Material and Schedule

Coursebook: Orakhelashvili, Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law, 9th Edition.

- Given the cost of the new book, I arranged digital **Inclusive Access**. If you want to purchase the physical book or e-book, **YOU MUST OPT OUT**.

Recommended book: Armstrong, Routledge Handbook of International Law

- You have free library access to this book.

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Additional required readings are available on Canvas. If a reading has a “Recommended” tag, it is not a required reading. They are meant to develop your interest in that subject.

Attribute: Yonatan Lupu’s syllabus for the Public International Law course at GWU influenced this syllabus heavily. Please take a look at his teaching and research for more inspiration.

Week 1

June 29: Introduction; What is International Law?; History of International Law

- Orakhelashvili, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Anthony D'Amato, *Is International Law Really 'Law'?*, Northwestern University Law Review 79 (1985) pp. 1293-1314.
- Highly Recommended: Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, David G. Victor, and Yonatan Lupu, *Political Science Research on International Law: The State of the Field*, American Journal of International Law 106 (2012) pp. 47-97
- Recommended: Armstrong, Chapter 7

July 1: Sources of International Law

- Orakhelashvili, Chapters 3 and 6.
- Recommended: Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969)

Week 2

July 6: International Law and Municipal Law; Theories of International Law

- Orakhelashvili, Chapter 4.
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promise of International Institutions*, International Security 19(3) (1994-95) pp. 5-49.
- Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin, *The Promise of Institutional Theory*, International Security 20(1) (1995) pp. 39-51.
- Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change*, International Organization 52 (1998) pp. 887-917.
- Recommended: Armstrong, Chapter 1

July 8: Institutional Design

- Orakhelashvili, Chapter 12.
- Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, & Duncan Snidal, *The Rational Design of International Institutions*, International Organization 55(4) (2001) pp. 761-99.
- Kenneth W. Abbott, Robert O. Keohane, Andrew Moravcsik, Anne-Marie Slaughter, & Duncan Snidal, *The Concept of Legalization*, International Organization 54(3) (2000) pp. 401-419.

July 12: Policy Strategy Due

Week 3

July 13: Compliance and Effectiveness

- Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes, *On Compliance*, International Organization 47(2) (1993) pp. 175-205.
- George W. Downs, David M. Rocke, & Peter N. Barsoom, *Is the Good News about Compliance Good News about Cooperation?*, International Organization 50(3) (1996) pp. 379-406.
- Beth Simmons, *Treaty Compliance and Violation*, Annual Review of Political Science 13 (2010) pp. 273-96.
- Recommended: Armstrong, Chapter 4

July 15: International Dispute Resolution

- Orakhelashvili, Chapter 23.
- Laurence R. Helfer and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Toward a Theory of Effective Supranational Adjudication*, Yale Law Journal 107 (1997) pp. 273-391.
- Eric A. Posner and John C. Yoo, *Judicial Independence in International Tribunals*, California Law Review 93 (2005) pp. 1-74.

July 18: Midterm Project Due Date

Week 4

July 20: International Law of Trade and Finance

- Orakhelashvili, Chapter 18.
- Helen V. Milner and B. Peter Rosendorff, *The Optimal Design of International Trade Institutions: Uncertainty and Escape*, International Organization 55(4) (2001) pp. 829-57.
- Marc L. Busch and Krzysztof J. Pelc, *The Politics of Judicial Economy at the World Trade Organization*, International Organization 64 (2010) pp. 257-79.
- Recommended: Armstrong, Chapter 26

July 22: Territory

- Orakhelashvili, Chapter 7.
- Paul K. Huth, Sarah E. Croco, and Benjamin J. Appel, *Does International Law Promote the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes? Evidence from the Study of Territorial Conflicts since 1945*, The American Political Science Review 105(2) (2011) pp. 415-36.

July 25: Initial Assessment Due

Week 5

July 27: The Use of Force and Arms Control

- Orakhelashvili, Chapters 20 (read) and 21(skim)
- Erik Voeten, The Political Origins of the UN Security Council's Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force, *International Organization* 59 (2005) pp. 527-57.
- Recommended: Richard Price, Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines, *International Organization* 52 (1998) pp. 613-44.
- Recommended: Emanuel Adler, The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evolution of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control, *International Organization* 46 (1992) pp 101-45.
- Recommended: Armstrong, Chapter 13

July 29: International Human Rights Law

- Orakhelashvili, Chapter 16.
- Andrew Moravcsik, *The Origins of Human Rights Regimes*, *International Organization* 54(2) (2000) pp. 217-52.
- Ellen L. Lutz and Kathryn Sikkink, *International Human Rights Law and Practice in Latin America*, *International Organization* 54(3) (2000) pp. 633-59.
- Recommended: Armstrong, Chapter 21

July 31: Final Project Due Date