The United Nations, with its 193 member states, is the world-leading forum for multilateral action. In over 75 years of existence, the agenda of its main organs has grown exponentially, as did the number of agencies, programs and funds that now make up the United Nations System. Even if states remain the main actors in international politics, the United Nations still influence and define global actions on a range of subjects: from the promotion of peace and security to the advancement of human rights, gender equality, the protection of the environment, food security, and the provision of services in health and technology. As such, the United Nations’ complex architecture of multilateral diplomacy, and the actions it authorizes, may have seismic effects on the international global order.

As competing trends of globalization and fragmentation emerge in world politics, this course will explore contemporary debates about the law, practice and relevance of the United Nations as a forum of global governance. The course will aim to critically assess, through an interdisciplinary lens, the structural and governance aspects of the organization rather than the substantive issues covered by its mandate.

We will start by discussing the historical, legal and political foundations of the United Nations, the role and power of its main organs and agencies and the relations between them. Following this scene-setting introduction, we will engage with the principal contemporary issues concerning the United Nations as a system of global governance. These include the question of membership and participation in the decision-making of its main organs and how internal structures, as well as the current international political environment, affect this process. We will consider the law-making role of the organization and
the issue of legitimacy with particular attention to the actions of the Security Council in the areas of international sanctions and non-proliferation.

The United Nations’ responsibility and accountability for its actions are central to current debates about global governance. What are the legal and non-legal consequences arising from United Nations’ responsibility? Is accountability possible at all when the privileges and immunities granted to the organization by the UN Charter shield it from the jurisdiction of national legal orders? Are wrongful acts committed by peacekeepers attributable to the United Nations or the troop-contributing nation? The cases of the cholera outbreak in Haiti and the fall of Srebrenica will give contextual background to these questions. The last part of the course will assess proposals for reform to the structure and membership of the UN primary bodies.

The format of the course will combine lectures with active students’ participation.

**EVALUATION**

Our class meetings will be organized around a discussion of each week’s readings. The course marking scheme is as follows: class attendance and participation in weekly discussions (20%); one in-class presentation of a 1,250-word comment paper (presentation and paper 30%); a final research paper proposal (10%); and a final research paper 3000-word paper that uses and expand on the course reading material (40%).

- **Class attendance and participation (20%)**

  **Assessment Criteria**

  Participation is divided in two components:

  1- In-class participation (10%): Students are expected to attend all classes at the appointed time, complete the readings before class, and participate thoughtfully in weekly discussions.
  2- Quizzes (10%): Four short quizzes will be posted on Quercus during the term, each valued at 2.5% to count towards participation.

- **1,250-word comment paper (15%)**: The comment paper will be a critical assessment of one or more of the sources on the reading list for one of the modules. Comment papers are due at 1 p.m. on the day before the class readings are scheduled to be discussed. Each student is expected to use the comment paper to illuminate an important question in the reading or to develop their own coherent argument based on the readings. The submission of the comment paper will be accompanied by a short in-class presentation of the paper. You must sign up for the presentation of your comment paper before the second class. To make your choice, review the syllabus and select the topic you are most interested in. We only have enough time for three papers/presentations per
class, therefore the earlier you make your selection the greater the chance you have to work on your preferred topic.

**Assessment Criteria**

- Understanding of the reading
- Coherence and structure
- Quality of the evidence and arguments used
- Capacity to consider alternative viewpoints
- Clarity of expression, grammar and spelling

**Presentation (15%)**

The presentation of your comment paper should be approximately 10-minute long followed by a 10-minute Q&A. During your presentation you can use slides and other available online tools to complement your talk. Aim to focus on the main points, arguments and conclusion of your comment paper. Identify two to three questions to close your presentation and start the Q&A session.

**Assessment Criteria**

- Structure of the presentation
- Ability to identify the key elements of a reading or make relevant connections between sources
- Clarity of thesis and arguments
- Identify/formulate questions raised by the material

**Research paper proposal (10 %)**

The proposal, due on July 21, serves the purpose of selecting a research question and formulating a thesis statement. This is the first conceptual step toward the final research paper. You are free to select a topic of research relevant to the United Nations based on the themes addressed in the course. Your proposal should include the research question (preferably “how” or “why” questions), a short introduction and thesis, and a succinct overview of the paper (how you would break down your arguments). Finally, you must include a bibliography with a minimum of 5 academic sources with annotations of how the source will be useful to your final paper. In addition, you may rely on grey literature (reports/briefings etc.) and news articles.
• **Research paper of 3,000 words**
  The final research paper is due on August 18. The instructor will discuss requirements and details on how to approach a research paper in class. Students should also seek to expand on their initial bibliography by adding additional relevant sources (minimum of 10 reputable sources, with at least 8 being academic sources, including those already in your proposal).

**Assessment Criteria**

- **Design of research task** Clarity and focus in formulation of research question; appropriateness of chosen methodology and/or approach.
- **Extent of research and use of sources** Comprehensiveness of research; application of research in addressing the research question and main argument.
- **Knowledge and understanding** Demonstrated understanding of key concepts and issues.
- **Quality of argument** Development of a central/overarching argument; structure; persuasiveness; conceptual clarity/logic of argument; statement of conclusions; support for conclusions.
- **Critical analysis and originality** Original contribution to knowledge in the subject area produced through synthesis, coverage, analysis or insight in approach, argument or recommendations (where relevant).
- **Presentation and expression** Format; headings and sub-headings; clarity of expression; grammar and spelling.
- **Referencing** Others’ work appropriately acknowledged; footnotes provided when needed; appropriate use of direct quotes and paraphrasing.

**Learning Objectives**

• Have a sound understanding of the historical origins, development, scope, principles, and main rules of the modern law and practice of the United Nations.
• Comprehend and evaluate the importance of the law and practice of the United Nations to global governance.
• Understand the procedures, practice and processes that influence decision-making within United Nations’ main organs and understand the role various actors play in the implementation and enforcement of international norms and standards set by the United Nations.
• Evaluate the contemporary challenges faced by the United Nations.
• Be able to communicate effectively, in speaking and in writing, on core issues of the law and operation of the United Nations.
• Engage in independent, inquiry-based learning with a high degree of personal autonomy, in particular by preparing an independent research essay on a specific topic related to the United Nations.
COURSE RULES AND POLICIES

You will find a description of important course policies below. It is important that you thoroughly read and review these policies and discuss any questions or concerns with the course instructor.

USE OF QUERCUS

We will meet online two times a week on Tuesday and Thursday. Attending lectures and interacting with your peers is an integral component of the learning experience. As such, it is imperative that you attend the synchronous online lectures and participate in class discussions. This course uses the University’s learning management system, Quercus, to post information about the course. This information includes the syllabus, the readings for each course, any announcements, materials regarding assignments, discussion posts, lecture slides and other tools to help in your learning. The site is dynamic and new information and resources may be posted as we move through the term, so please make it a habit to log in to the site on a regular, even daily, basis. To access the course website, go to the U of T Quercus log-in page at https://q.utoronto.ca.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of Toronto places a high importance on academic integrity and takes academic misconduct very seriously. It is important that students review the University’s Code of Behavior on Academic Matters to understand what may constitute as academic misconduct, the processes for addressing such misconduct and the penalties that may be levied.

All of the suspected cases of academic misconduct will be investigated using the procedures highlighted in the University’s Code of Behavior on Academic Matters. If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me during office hours. For further clarification on academic misconduct and plagiarism, please see Writing at the University of Toronto http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources. This site is also a treasure trove of resources on writing in higher education.

Code of Behavior on Academic Matters
https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-mattersjuly-1-2019

University of Toronto Plagiarism Detection Tool
“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).”

Students who object to using the above tool may use the following alternative procedure: inform the
instructor, in the first two weeks, that they will not be using Ouriginal and discuss alternative arrangements including submitting all saved drafts of their paper and handing in notes, outlines, bibliographic research, etc. through Quercus.

LATE POLICY

You should submit your assignments electronically through Quercus before the due date. If you think there are technical problems with Quercus, please reach out to me immediately. Any late assignments will be levied a 2% penalty per day (including weekends).

If there are extenuating circumstances which require consideration, please contact the course instructor five working days before the due date of the assignment.

EMAIL POLICY

I will make an effort to respond to your emails in a timely manner. However, keep in mind that responses can typically take up to two business days. Please be cognizant of this when writing emails. Messages written during weekdays before 5 p.m. are likely to receive a faster response. Larger discussions and more substantive questions should be reserved for office hours.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year by visiting http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/new-registration. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructor, and the instructor will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructor will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

You can access a wide range of programs and services to support their health and wellbeing. Many of these programs are listed at: https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/
### IMPORTANT SESSIONAL DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First class</td>
<td>Tuesday, July 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline to enrol</td>
<td>Sunday, July 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Throughout the term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment paper and presentation</td>
<td>Rolling submission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper proposal due</td>
<td>Thursday, 21 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline to drop the course</td>
<td>Monday, August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last class</td>
<td>Thursday, August 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final essay due</td>
<td>Thursday, August 18</td>
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</table>

### COURSE OUTLINE

1. **INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

   **Required Readings:**


   Charter of the United Nations, Preamble, Chapter 1, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Article 108.

   **Suggested Readings:**


2. **THE UN SYSTEM AND ITS KEY ACTORS**

   **Required Readings and Material:**

   UN System chart


Shashi Tharoor, “‘The Most Impossible Job’ Description” in Simon Chesterman (ed.), *Secretary or General?: The UN Secretary-General in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 33-46.

**Suggested readings:**


3. **SPOTLIGHT ON THE UN’S MAIN ORGANS**

**Required Readings:**


UN Doc. A/RES/377 (V) (November 3, 1950) – Uniting for Peace resolution

UN Doc. S/2022/155 (February 25, 2022) (vetoed)

UN Doc. S/RES/2623 (February 27, 2022)

UN Doc. A/ES-11/L.1 (March 1, 2022)

**Suggested Readings:**


4. MEMBERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

**Required Readings:**


Rebecca Barber, “Could Russia be Suspended from the United Nations?”, *EJILtalk* (March 1, 2022).

**Suggested Readings:**


Nico J. Schrijver and Niels M. Blokker (eds.) *Elected Members of the Security Council: Lame Ducks or Key Players?* (Brill Nijhoff, 2019).


5. GROUPS AND EXTERNAL ACTORS

**Required Readings:**


Suggested Readings:


6. THREE PILLARS (1): PEACE AND SECURITY

Required Readings and Material:


Thomas J. Biersteker, “SanctionsApp 3.0: Real-time Access to Sanctions Data”, *YouTube*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiqCT2l33ug&list=RDCMUC-ImDz1aGqVBzT1Y971Ae-Q

UN Sanctions App: https://unsanctionsapp.com/ (section: designing sanctions)

UN Doc. S/RES/1636 (October 31, 2005) – Sanction Lebanon

Suggested Reading


7. THREE PILLARS (2): HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

Required Readings


Sustainable Development Goals website: https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Suggested Readings


8. LAW-MAKING

Required Readings


UN Doc. S/RES/1373 (September 28, 2001)

UN Doc. S/RES/1540 (April 28, 2004)

Suggested Readings


9. LEGITIMACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Required Readings


Suggested Readings


10. RESPONSIBILITY, PRIVILEGES, IMMUNITIES

Required Readings


David Bosco, “When the Blue Helmets Are to Blame”, *Foreign Policy* (July 22, 2014).


Suggested Readings


11. CHALLENGES

**Required Readings**


**Suggested Readings**


Nathan Cogswell and Nate Warszawski, 5 *Challenges the UNFCCC Must Overcome to Spur Climate Action*, March 14, 2022, online: https://www.wri.org/insights/5-challenges-unfccc-must-overcome-climate-action.


12. REFORM: WHO SHOULD SIT AT THE TABLE?

**Required Readings**


**Suggested Readings**