



BJØRKNES
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Study Abroad in Oslo, Norway
Bjørknes University College

Peace and Conflict Studies | International Studies

Course Descriptions
Fall 2021

All international students should take three courses, which amounts to a full semester (30 ECTS/credits). Below you will find course descriptions of four courses, of which you should choose three:

- *The Ethics of War and Peace*
- *Foreign Policy Analysis*
- *U.S. Foreign Policy: At Home and Abroad*
- *International Political Thought*

It is possible to audit a fourth course if desirable. Students who audit courses are required to participate in classes, but will not take the exams.

In addition to the core courses, international students have the opportunity to participate in an introduction course on Norway (see final page for description).

The Ethics of War and Peace (10 credits)

The last 100 years have seen brutal wars, murderous totalitarian regimes, genocide, and nuclear weapons. But we have also witnessed – to a certain extent *because* of the facts just mentioned – an unprecedented development of international law, a great resurgence of interest in international ethics and the ethics of war, humanitarian initiatives on a large scale, and the founding of international organizations such as the United Nations, designed to foster peace and international cooperation.

In this course, we will delve into the contents and background of one of the most important developments of late 20th century thought about war: namely, the resurgence of the “just war” idea. The idea of justice in war, and the need to restrain the use of violent force, has a long history in the Western tradition, with interesting parallels in other traditions. It is different from political realism on the one hand and from pacifism on the other, yet shares important traits with both.

The course will analyze some of the most important contributions to the ethics of war. We will first look at the basic rationale for, and organizing of, the just war idea in modern texts, by focusing on excerpts from Michael Walzer’s seminal *Just and Unjust Wars* together with other important texts. Thereafter, we will study texts from some key historical figures who have contributed to the ethics of war, before finishing the semester with a return to our own age and current debates.

The aim of the course is to gain intimate knowledge of the main ethical concepts we need to know in order to be able to debate the morality of using armed force, and to relate this to the quest for stable, peaceful solutions to armed conflict. We will be debating both the question of when to use armed force (*ius ad bellum*) and how to employ it (*ius in bello*). Since these questions are intimately related to questions about how war can end peacefully, and indeed how war can be avoided overall, we have decided to call the course “The Ethics of War *and Peace*”, even though our focus is on the use of armed force.

Learning outcomes

The candidate shall be able to...

Knowledge

- ✓ Gain knowledge of the historical development of international law pertaining to armed conflict, both *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*.
- ✓ Discuss the concept of “just war”.
- ✓ Explain how the just war tradition is different from political realism on the one hand and from pacifism on the other.

Skills

- ✓ Evaluate arguments for and against use of armed force (*ius ad bellum*).
- ✓ Evaluate the *ius in bello* criteria for right conduct of war.
- ✓ Use historical and contemporary examples to illustrate ethical dilemmas of war.
- ✓ Refer to key literature on the ethics of war and peace.

Competence

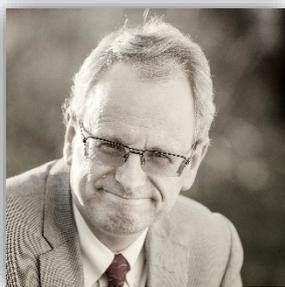
- ✓ Gain knowledge of central ethical concepts needed for discussing the ethics of the use of armed force.

Assessment

Exam:

This course consists of two separate exams that together constitute the final grade. Both exams must be passed in order to pass the course. Students can retake one or both exams.

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 2500 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F).
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F).



Lecturer

Professor Henrik Syse, Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Bjørknes University College, Research Professor at PRIO (Peace Research Institute Oslo), Editor for Journal of Military Ethics, and from 2015 to 2021 one of the five permanent members of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. Learn more about Henrik [here](#)

U.S. Foreign Policy: At Home and Abroad (10 credits)

Has the United States been a force for "good" in the world, or has it been a force for instability? Do Americans and foreigners agree on this? This course investigates US foreign policy inside and out. It examines both the domestic determinants of U.S. foreign policy as well as foreign perspectives on the U.S. role in the world. We will discuss some of the core tenets of foreign policy making, and underlying ideological questions. Was the "liberal world order" the United States created after World War II really "liberal" and did it have any connection to "liberalism" in the United States? What do Americans mean when they argue that the United States is "exceptional" in world history? Do foreigners agree?



Lecturer

Dr. Hilde E. Restad, Associate Professor of International Studies. She holds a PhD in Foreign Affairs from University of Virginia and her research focus on US foreign policy. Hilde frequently provides analyses of American politics for Norwegian media, including prime time TV. In 2014 she published her main work so far; *American Exceptionalism: An Idea that Made a Nation and Remade the World* (Routledge).

**This course is under development. Learning outcomes and information about the assessment/requirements will be announced later.*

Foreign Policy Analysis (10 credits)

In this course we examine the various theories of foreign policy and how foreign policy is made, focussing in particular on states. The intention is to provide students with an insight into the decision making process, including how policy instruments are chosen, the role of leadership in the process, the importance of history and identity in framing the foreign policy goals of a country and the relevance of such factors as biases, perceptions, psychology and interests (bureaucracies) in shaping the agenda. The course will include a close reading of the foreign policies of the United Kingdom which we will use to shed light on the complexities involved in understanding why states behave as they do.

Learning outcomes

The candidate shall be able to...

Knowledge

- ✓ Understand the key central concepts in foreign policy analysis.
- ✓ Have an awareness of the key foreign policy literature.
- ✓ Have a good basic understanding of the United Kingdom's foreign policy.

Skills

- ✓ Analyse foreign policy documents in light of foreign policy analysis theory.
- ✓ Assess the idea of the conception of foreign policy being a “two-level game”.
- ✓ Utilise foreign policy analysis tools to make sense of international political agreement and disagreement.
- ✓ Critically discuss the role of leadership in foreign policy decision-making.

Competence

- ✓ Display a critical appreciation of the various contending theories in foreign policy analysis and the complexities associated with understanding foreign policy at different the levels of analysis.
- ✓ Understand of why states act the way they do internationally and how they make decisions.
- ✓ Appreciate the relevance of foreign policy analysis in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Assessment

Requirement:

The requirement must be passed in accordance to given deadline in order to register for the exams.

- ✓ Short essay; memo: 1200 words (pass/fail).

Exam:

This course consists of two separate exams that together constitute the final grade. Both exams must be passed in order to pass the course. Students can retake one or both exams.

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 2000 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F).
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F).



Lecturer

Dr. Christopher White, Associate Professor of International Studies. Chris holds a PhD from London School of Economics (LSE). He is a specialist in political theory and British politics. He has also worked, amongst other places, at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the UK House of Commons.

International political Thought (10 credits)

This course provides students with a set of conceptual and analytical tools in order to acquire a deeper and more nuanced understanding of international relations. The course surveys the various schools of thought in international politics, it provides an account of the evolution of thinking in international relations theory and relates theory to current debates in international affairs. The objectives of the course are to promote a more abstract and critical space for thinking about a wide and intellectually demanding range of literature, and to develop the ability to articulate this thought clearly and concisely in both written and spoken form. Major themes include: normative theory, methodology and epistemology, theories of international relations – realism, liberalism, hermeneutics, Marxism and critical theories – and issues pertaining to human nature, science and the environment

Learning outcomes

Knowledge

- ✓ Display a thorough understanding of some of the most important theoretical perspectives on the international relations agenda.
- ✓ Understand in a more sophisticated way issues, events and controversies in the international political realm.
- ✓ Be sensitive to the methodological, normative and philosophical complexities associated with political theorizing.
- ✓ An appreciation of the disciplinary history of international relations theory, and core assumption that inform the subject.

Skills

- ✓ Draw on the theoretical debate in order to better develop student's own political views, particularly in the international domain.
- ✓ Relate theory to practice – by understanding how theory shapes the options political actors choose when examining policy options.
- ✓ Develop debating and didactic skills.

Competence

- ✓ Understand the relevance and significance of 'theory' in everyday political life.
- ✓ Improved self awareness of the underlying assumptions that inform political views.
- ✓ Sensitivity to the complexities that characterize political life.
- ✓ Sensitivity to the 'western' nature of much international relations theorizing.

Assessment

Exam:

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 3000 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F)
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F)



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Additional course

Norway – A Brief Introduction (not for credit)

The program also includes “Norway – A Brief Introduction” (not for credit) to help you navigate Oslo and the Norwegian social, cultural and political landscape.

In order to make the most out of your time in Oslo, we want you to acquire some basic knowledge about Norway, Oslo and general "Norwegian-ness." This short and fun mini course will introduce you briefly to subjects such as Norway's political history, our splendid geography, Norwegian society, culture, current politics and more. As part of the course Bjørknes organizes various excursions to places of interest in and around Oslo. By the end of the course you will not only be better equipped to make sense of and understand Norwegian society, but also to make sure that you enjoy all the great things Norway has to offer!



Lecturers

Bjørnar Østby, Assistant Professor. Bjørnar is a former student of Peace and Conflict Studies at Bjørknes University College. He completed his Master's degree from London School of Economics (LSE) in 2017 and is now a full time lecturer here.



Nik Brandal, Associate Professor of International Studies. Prior to joining Bjørknes, Nik was a PhD-scholar at the University of Oslo, and his fields of expertise include extremism and political radicalization in the 20th century, social democracy and the Nordic Model. He holds MA in History and BA in Educational Studies. In 2010 he was a Leiv Eiriksen-scholar at the Genocide Studies Program at Yale University/ Norwegian Research Council.

[Get to know the rest of our staff here!](#)

For more information
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Disclaimer: Please note that changes may occur.