

# INTA 2110 - Introduction to International Security

Spring 2025

Class Hours: TR 12:30-1:45pm

Classroom: J. Erskine Love Manufacturing 185

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Office Hours: By appointment

<b>Core Impact Statement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Course Description</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Course Evaluation</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Grading</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Student Resources</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Course Policies and Expectations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Class Schedule</b>	<b>6</b>

## Core Impact Statement

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking

- Persuasion

## Course Description

This course offers an introduction to a range of traditional and contemporary international security issues from both a theoretical and policy perspective. After completing the course, students will be conversant in the most important theories in international security and the ins and outs of emerging security challenges. This course starts out by exploring a central puzzle at the heart of international security - why do strategic actors end up in violent conflict despite its inefficiency? Through the lens of the three “I”s: interests, interactions, and institutions, we will analyze why states and non-state actors often resort to costly violence to pursue their interests. We will cover major theories in international security through topics such as the role of domestic politics in warfare, why states form alliances to increase security, and why some actors resort to terrorism. In the second half of the course, we will apply these tools to specific issue areas such as nuclear weapons, regional security competitions, climate change, as well as emerging security issues such as cybersecurity, drone warfare, and artificial intelligence.

## Course Evaluation

Performance in this course will be evaluated through the following assessments:

In-class debates (3)	15%
Debate position papers (3)	15%
Reflection memo (3)	30%
Final paper	30%
Participation	10%

### **In-class debate & debate position papers:**

We will hold four in-class debates throughout the semester. The first debate will be a practice session that will not be graded, and the next three debates will be graded (5% each). Student groups will also submit position papers at the beginning of the class as a team, which will also be graded (5% each). These first two components are group exercises and will receive one grade per team. After the debate is over, students will submit a reflection memo with a chance to incorporate arguments made in class (10%). This third component is an individual exercise by each student, separate from the group’s grade.

### *Prompts:*

Each debate will center around a single prompt that asks students to explore both sides of the argument and come up with potential rebuttals to those arguments. Debate prompts will be designed to further explore key concepts learned up to that date - for example, it can be statements such as “International institutions have an independent effect at constraining state behavior.” Students will then be asked to argue for or against this statement using concepts and logic from lectures as well as empirical evidence from the textbook and other appropriate historical and current events. Prompts will be released one week before the debate.

### *Groups:*

Students will be divided into 4 groups, and will together:

1. Prepare for the debate,
2. Write the position paper, and
3. Make speeches in the debate.

Students are encouraged to leverage their comparative advantages, and are free to decide among themselves as to how to divide up the labor. For example, some students can spend more effort on gathering facts, some students can consolidate points into coherent arguments, and others can focus on representing arguments in class. What is important to know is that there will be one grade for the entire team for both the oral arguments made in-class and the initial position paper.

**\*\*Free riding concerns:** Students are also free to switch groups after each debate. If groups have severe cases of free riding by certain team members, please email me with supporting evidence (ex. evidence of no replies on email threads, failure to complete mutually agreed assigned roles, no records of input/collaboration on shared docs) BEFORE the debate day, and the free rider will be asked to make a 5-minute solo oral argument with a randomly assigned pro or con position before class debate begins, and will receive a separate debate grade based on it. **\*\***

### *Debate position paper:*

Each group will submit a 1-page debate position paper as a team by the beginning of class on debate day. (submit on Canvas electronically) The position paper template will be shared on Canvas. It will have the following components divided in four quadrants:

1. Pro arguments
2. Con arguments
3. Rebuttal to Con arguments
4. Rebuttal to Pro arguments

For each quadrant, have 1~3 main points in bullet points, and list any supporting evidence under each point. Empirical evidence should be cited in footnotes that are listed in a separate page - it is sufficient to just include page numbers for evidence from inside the textbook, and website links for evidence from outside the textbook.

It is important to take the time to think through all four components carefully, as there is an equal chance of being assigned to one of four positions on debate day!

### *Structure of the debate:*

On debate day, the class will proceed in the following order:

1. Position papers will be due by the beginning of class (submit on Canvas electronically)
2. Each group will randomly draw positions. There will be four positions - Pro, Con, Rebuttal to Con, and Rebuttal to Pro.
3. Pro and Con will play rock, scissor, papers - winner picks whether to go first or second
4. Pro (Con) presents opening arguments - 10 minutes
5. Con (Pro) presents opening arguments - 10 minutes

6. Preparation time is given for the rebuttal teams - 10 minutes
7. Team presents rebuttal to Pro (Con) arguments - 10 minutes
8. Team presents rebuttal to Con (Pro) arguments - 10 minutes
9. Debate debrief as an entire class - 10 minutes

*Grading Rubric:*

Each debate will be assessed according to the debate grading rubric available on Canvas.

**Reflection memo:**

After the debate is over, each student will individually submit a 2-page reflection memo considering arguments and empirical evidence made by other teams, as well as any additional reflections of the student's own. The reflection memo should have the following components:

1. Have a thesis statement. Do you agree/disagree/partially agree with the prompt? If you are partially agreeing, state in the thesis under what conditions the prompt is true and under what conditions the prompt doesn't hold up.
2. Have 1~3 arguments supporting the thesis statement. Use empirical evidence to support each argument.
3. Acknowledge some possible rebuttals to arguments 2., AND go into why they still fail to debunk your thesis statement. (This second bit is important)

In writing the reflection memo, everyone will have access to all position papers submitted by each team as a common resource. The goal of this exercise is to synthesize facts and opinions and form your own judgments, beyond summarizing. Memos will be graded based on the nuance and sophistication of arguments made, empirical support, and overall coherence.

Reflection memos will be due (submit on Canvas electronically) by the beginning of class following debate day.

**Final paper:**

Students will also write a 10-page, double spaced final paper, due **3pm on Monday, April 28th** via Canvas electronic submission. Final paper prompts will be made available on April 1st, and students will have several options to choose from. Treat the final paper as an extended version of the reflection memos. You are expected to have a nuanced thesis statement, clear main arguments with supporting evidence, and a sufficient treatment of possible counterarguments and/or alternative explanations. On the last day of classes, there will be an opportunity to ask questions regarding the substantive arguments of the final paper before they are submitted.

**Participation:**

While I won't be checking attendance (I respect you as adults to make good judgments), the expectation is that you attend lectures and stay actively engaged for the 75 minutes of class time. Having said that, I understand that various circumstances can arise during the semester. The point is to act in good faith - email me in advance, and we can figure things out. On the other hand, students with regular, unexcused absences should not expect to receive full marks on participation. Having full marks on participation can often make or break a borderline grade.

## Grading

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Per Georgia Tech policy, grades are awarded on a scale of A-F with no +/- grades permitted. Additional information regarding Georgia Tech's grading system is provided by the Registrar [here](#).

Incompletes (I): Students may be assigned an "incomplete" when they were doing satisfactory work, but for nonacademic reasons beyond their control and deemed acceptable by the instructor, the student was unable to meet the full requirements of the course.

Withdrawals (W): Withdrawals from individual courses without penalty will not be permitted after 60 percent of the term has been completed, as specified by the official calendar, except in cases of hardship.

## Student Resources

### Textbook:

The main textbook that we will be using is *World Politics*, by Jeffry Frieden, David Lake, and Kenneth Schultz, fifth edition. (<https://wwnorton.com/books/World-Politics/>) Electronic copies of the chapters we will be using will be made available on Canvas. There is no need to purchase the book, although those who wish to are free to do so.

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Georgia Institute of Technology is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. Students with disabilities, whether physical, learning, or psychological, who believe that they need accommodations, are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible to ensure accommodations are implemented promptly. Students must provide documentation of their disability to ODS by uploading the forms into the AIM portal. Per Georgia Tech policy, accommodations are not retroactive, which means the accommodations are applied once the student has conversed with the instructor either in person, by phone, or by email to discuss accommodation needs. During this exchange, the student and instructor will discuss how the student's accommodations will be applied in the course. The student needs to inform the professor and/or ODS of the intention to use specific accommodations prior to the course event and with a reasonable amount of time for accommodations to be adequately facilitated. Students can find more information about the Office of Disability Services, including contact information, at [disabilityservices.gatech.edu](http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu), or

call ODS at 404.894.2563 or in person at Smithgall Student Services Building, 353 Ferst Drive, Suite 221.

Getting help with writing/speaking:

I highly recommend students, whether individually or in groups, to check out the Georgia Tech Communications Center (<https://www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu/>) for assistance on improving your writing and speaking skills. This course has a lot of debates and short writing assignments that privileges clarity and succinctness. The Communications Center will be an excellent resource for you to help you communicate your ideas more clearly. You can book in-person or virtual appointments, and even rent presentation rehearsal rooms.

## Course Policies and Expectations

Late Assignment Policy:

Out of fairness to others, late assignments will receive deductions according to below:

0-24 hours	30% of total available points
24-48 hours	50% of total available points
48-72 hours	70% of total available points
72 hours-	100% of total available points

Academic Integrity:

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For a clear description of what counts as plagiarism, cheating, and/or the use of unauthorized sources, please see the [Student Code of Conduct](#). For more information about Georgia Tech's standards with respect to academic integrity, please see Georgia Tech's [Honor Code](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a paper will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

On the use of generative AI tools:

While I personally find that generative AI has several benefits for improving efficiency and has potential to be a useful pedagogical tool (for example, I'm allowing the use of LLMs for students to fix LaTeX code in my Game Theory course), for the contents of this particular course (which emphasizes critical thinking and synthesis of arguments) I do not find that generative AI has much value-add in improving pedagogy. I'm therefore prohibiting the use of generative AI tools in completing written assignments (position papers, reflection memos, and final papers) for this course. If you need help with grammar and writing, consult the Georgia Tech Communications Center instead.

## Class Schedule

### Part 1: Foundational Concepts

## **Week 1**

1/7 (Tue) - Course introduction and syllabus reading

- (no reading for this day)

1/9 (Thu) - Understanding interests, interactions, and institutions I: Interests and interactions

- *World Politics*, Chapter 2, pp. 42-69

## **Week 2**

1/14 (Tue) - Understanding interests, interactions, and institutions II: Institutions

- *World Politics*, Chapter 2, pp. 69-83

1/16 (Thu) - A primer on game theory

- *World Politics*, Chapter 2, pp. 86-91

## **Week 3**

1/21 (Tue) - Why are there wars? I: Information problems

- *World Politics*, Chapter 3, pp. 92-120

1/23 (Thu) - Why are there wars? II: Commitment problems

- *World Politics*, Chapter 3, pp. 120-132
- **Debate Prompt 1 released**

## **Week 4**

1/28 (Tue) - Why are there wars? III: Issue indivisibility & Explaining changes in warfare

- *World Politics*, Chapter 3, pp. 132-140

1/30 (Thu) - **In-class debate 1, position papers due by beginning of class (Practice)**

## **Part 2: Levels of Analysis**

## **Week 5**

2/4 (Tue) - Domestic politics and war I: Diversionary theory of war & special interest groups

- *World Politics*, Chapter 4, pp. 144-175
- **Reflection memo 1 due (Practice)**

2/6 (Thu) - Domestic politics and war II: Special interest groups & democratic peace theory

- *World Politics*, Chapter 4, pp. 175-191

### **Week 6**

2/11 (Tue) - International institutions and war I: Alliances

- *World Politics*, Chapter 5, pp. 194-215

2/13 (Thu) - International institutions and war II: Collective security

- *World Politics*, Chapter 5, pp. 216-241

### **Week 7**

2/18 (Tue) - Violence by nonstate actors I: Civil wars

- *World Politics*, Chapter 6, pp. 246-278

2/20 (Thu) - Violence by nonstate actors II: Terrorism

- *World Politics*, Chapter 6, pp. 278-301
- **Debate prompt 2 released**

## **Part 3: Global Issues**

### **Week 8**

2/25 (Tue) - Nuclear weapons I: The nuclear arms race & strategic arms control

2/27 (Thu) - **In-class debate 2, position papers due by beginning of class (Graded)**

### **Week 9**

3/4 (Tue) - Nuclear weapons II: Nonproliferation regime & extended deterrence

- **Reflection memo 2 due (Graded)**

3/6 (Thu) - Regional Issues I: US-China competition



## **Week 10**

3/11 (Tue) - Regional Issues II: US-China competition & The “Return” of Russia

3/13 (Thu) - Regional Issues III: The “Return” of Russia

- **Debate prompt 3 released**

## **Week 11 (Spring Break)**

3/18 (Tue) - No Class

3/20 (Thu) - No Class

## **Week 12**

3/25 (Tue) - Human rights & humanitarian intervention

3/27 (Thu) - **In-class debate 3, position papers due by beginning of class (Graded)**

### **Part 4: Emerging Issues in International Security**

## **Week 13**

4/1 (Tue) - Drones

- **Reflection memo 3 due (Graded)**
- **Final paper prompts released**

4/3 (Thu) - Cybersecurity

## **Week 14**

4/8 (Tue) - Social media and influence operations/mis/disinformation

4/10 (Thu) - Artificial intelligence: competition and cooperation

- **Debate prompt 4 released**

## **Week 15**

4/15 (Tue) - Climate change

4/17 (Thu) - **In-class debate 4, position papers due by beginning of class (Graded)**

## **Week 16**

4/22 (Tue) - Conclusion and final paper Q&A session

- (No reading for this day)
- **Reflection memo 4 due (Graded)**

**4/28 (Mon) - 3pm - FINAL PAPER DUE** (Set by the [registrar](#))