

Identification	Subject (Code, title, credits)	PSIR300 Theories of International Relations 3 ECTS
	Department	Department of Political Science and Philosophy
	Level	Undergraduate
	Term	Fall 2026
	Instructor	Ayaz Rzayev
	E-mail:	ayaz.rzayev@khazar.org
	Classroom/hours	
	Office hours (online)	By appointment
Prerequisites	None	
Language	English	
Compulsory/Elective	Compulsory	
Required textbooks and course materials	Core textbook Sørensen, G., Møller, J., & Jackson, R. (2022). Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches (8th ed.). Oxford University Press. Core reader Art, R. J., & Jervis, R. (Eds.). (2017). International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues (13th ed.). Pearson. Supporting theory texts Dunne, T., Kurki, M., & Smith, S. (Eds.). (2013). International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. Devetak, R., & True, J. (Eds.). (2022). Theories of International Relations (6th ed.). Bloomsbury Academic. Contemporary supplementary readings for Weeks 14-15 Keynes, S., & Bown, C. P. (2026). How to Win a Trade War: An Optimistic Guide to an Anxious Global Economy. Simon & Schuster. Prasad, E. S. (2026). The Doom Loop: Why the World Economic Order Is Spiraling into Disorder. PublicAffairs. Wang, D. (2025). Breakneck: China's Quest to Engineer the Future. W. W. Norton & Company. Miller, C. (2022). Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology. Scribner.	
Course description	This course introduces the principal theories and approaches in International Relations (IR). The course examines foundational theoretical approaches including realism, liberalism, constructivism, the English School, post-positivist approaches. Students will explore how these theories explain key aspects of international politics. The final part of the course examines competing perspectives on international political economy, trade conflict, economic security, technological competition, great-power competition, and international order. Throughout the course, theoretical claims are connected to historical and contemporary cases. Particular attention is given to causal mechanisms, the assumptions behind different theories, and the kinds of evidence that can support or challenge an explanation.	

Course objectives	• Understand the development, subject matter, and purpose of IR as a field of study. • Distinguish among classical, structural, and neoclassical realist explanations of international politics. • Explain strategic interaction, the causes of war, and the political uses and limitations of force. • Analyze balance-of-power and alliance dynamics and explain foreign-policy decisions across systemic, state, and individual levels. • Compare liberal, institutionalist, international society, constructivist, critical, and post-structural approaches. • Apply IR theories to international political economy, economic security, technological competition, great-power competition, and international order.		
Course outcomes	• Define and explain the core concepts and levels of analysis used in International Relations. • Compare the assumptions, causal mechanisms, strengths, and limitations of major IR theories. • Analyze how uncertainty, information, commitment problems, and the security dilemma can contribute to war. • Assess defence, deterrence, compellence, coercive diplomacy, and nuclear crisis stability. • Compare systemic, domestic, bureaucratic, organizational, and psychological explanations of foreign-policy decisions. • Evaluate how institutions, rules, identities, norms, markets, interdependence, and technology shape international outcomes. • Construct and communicate a clear, evidence-based theoretical argument		
Teaching methods	• Lecture • Group discussion • Case analysis		
Evaluation	Methods	Date/deadlines	Percentage (%)
	Midterm evaluation	To be determined by the Dean's Office	30
	Active participation	Throughout the semester	5
	Quiz and/or book review	Choice declared by Week 3	10
	PPT (presentation)	Topic by midterm; delivery Weeks 12-15	15
	Final exam	To be determined by the Dean's Office	40
	Total		100
Policy	Students are expected to: • attend classes regularly and participate in the combined lecture and seminar format; • complete the assigned readings before class;		

- engage actively and respectfully in classroom discussion;
- prepare thoughtful and informed presentations and written work;
- submit assignments on time and follow assignment instructions carefully.

Attendance

Students are required to comply with the attendance policy of Khazar University. Full-time students are expected to attend all classes unless they are ill or have received permission for an approved absence. A student should submit an absence request in anticipation of an absence whenever possible. To remain eligible to take examinations, students must not miss more than 25% of class hours through unapproved absence. Otherwise, examination eligibility requires the approval of the School Dean. Repeated unapproved absences or sustained non-participation may lead to withdrawal from the course.

Grading scheme

During the semester, grades are allocated as follows:

- 30/100 - midterm examination;
- 40/100 - final examination; and
- 30/100 - in-class activities, including active participation, quizzes or book review, and presentation.

Active participation (5/100)

Active participation requires consistent preparation and meaningful engagement. Students should listen carefully, contribute to group discussions, ask relevant questions, and respond constructively to the arguments of others. Participation is evaluated by the quality and consistency of engagement, not simply by frequency of speaking.

Quiz and/or book review (10/100)

Students may either complete five short quizzes, administered in oral or written form as determined by the instructor, or submit one analytical review of an instructor-approved book. The chosen option must be declared by Week 3. A book review must identify the author's central argument, explain its causal mechanism, connect it to at least two course concepts, and assess one strength and one limitation.

PowerPoint presentation (15/100)

Presentations must explain an approved international relations topic rather than merely summarize information. Students will be evaluated according to:

- the focus of the presentation;
- conceptual accuracy and strength of the argument;
- clarity and coherence of the content;
- appropriate use of evidence, examples, facts, and statistics;
- quality of analysis and response to questions; and
- completion within the allotted 15-20 minute period.

Presentation topics must be selected by the midterm examination and delivered in class during Weeks 12-15. Topics should be drawn from the course materials; any topic outside the syllabus requires prior approval from the instructor.

Academic misconduct

Academic honesty is essential to the integrity of Khazar University. Plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, and multiple submission are prohibited and will be penalized according to University regulations.

Plagiarism

	Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, data, or work without proper acknowledgement. Direct quotations must use quotation marks and identify the source. Paraphrased ideas must also be cited, and written assignments must include a reference list when sources are used. Students who submit plagiarized work, or knowingly provide material for plagiarism, may receive a zero for the relevant assignment and may be subject to further disciplinary action. <i><u>Rules of professional conduct</u></i> Students must help create a favorable academic and professional environment during class. Unauthorized discussions, disruptive conduct, and unauthorized use of electronic devices are prohibited. Behavior that seriously interferes with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or with other students' ability to benefit from the course will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the class in accordance with University procedures. <i><u>The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence</u></i> The use of AI in an academic setting is regulated by “Rules for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence” of Khazar University. When using AI, students are expected to uphold the principles of academic integrity, transparency, and reliability. Students take full responsibility for the accuracy of their academic work. In all cases where AI is used (for example, in an assignment, presentation, or report), this fact must be clearly declared, and the tool and methods used must be states.	
	Topics	Readings
Week 1 15/09/2026	Introduction to International Relations	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 1, pp. 3-29, and Ch. 9, pp. 255-266. <u>Supplementary:</u> Devetak & True (2022), Ch. 1, pp. 1-18.
Week 2 22/09/2026	Classical Realism	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 3, pp. 68-79. <u>Required supplement:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 1: Thucydides, pp. 10-16, and Morgenthau, pp. 19-28. <u>Optional:</u> Dunne, Kurki, & Smith (2013), Ch. 3, pp. 59-76.
Week 3 29/09/2026	Structural Realism	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 3, pp. 82-96. <u>Required supplement:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 2: Waltz, pp. 48-70, and Mearsheimer, pp. 70-78. <u>Optional:</u> Dunne, Kurki, & Smith (2013), Ch. 4, pp. 77-93.
Week 4 06/10/2026	Strategic Interaction and the Causes of War	<u>Compulsory:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 3: Schelling, Fearon, and Jervis, pp. 87-124. <u>Supplementary:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 3, pp. 79-82.

Week 5 13/10/2026	The Political Uses of Force	<u>Compulsory:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 5: Art and Schelling, pp. 195-218. <u>Optional:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 7: Jervis and Schelling, pp. 259-274.
Week 6 20/10/2026	Balancing Theories	<u>Compulsory:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 4: Walt, pp. 153-161. <u>Required supplement:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 3, pp. 95-98, and Ch. 11, pp. 337-346.
Week 7 27/10/2026	Foreign Policy Analysis and Decision-Making	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 9, pp. 249-272.
Week 8	Midterm	No reading
Week 9 03/11/2026	Liberalism	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 4, pp. 104-124. <u>Supplementary:</u> Dunne, Kurki, & Smith (2013), Ch. 5, pp. 94-113.
Week 10 10/11/2026	Cooperation and International Institutions	<u>Compulsory:</u> Dunne, Kurki, & Smith (2013), Ch. 6, pp. 114-131. <u>Required supplement:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 4: Keohane, pp. 181-188. <u>Optional:</u> Devetak & True (2022), Ch. 11, pp. 207-223.
Week 11 17/11/2026	International Society	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 5, pp. 138-159. <u>Supplementary:</u> Devetak & True (2022), Ch. 5, pp. 77-96.
Week 12 24/11/2026	Social Constructivism and Critical Perspectives	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 7, pp. 192-211. <u>Required supplement:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 2: Wendt, pp. 78-86. <u>Critical perspectives:</u> Devetak & True (2022), Ch. 7, pp. 120-128 (critical theory), and Ch. 9, pp. 164-179 (post-structuralism).
Week 13 01/12/2026	Theoretical Perspectives on International Political Economy	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 6, pp. 170-188. <u>Required supplement:</u> Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 8: Gilpin, pp. 282-299. <u>Optional:</u> Devetak & True (2022), Ch. 6, pp. 97-118.

Week 14 08/12/2026	Trade War, Interdependence, and Economic Statecraft	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 10, pp. 278-284 and 293-299; Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 8: Copeland, pp. 299-307, and Rodrik, pp. 307-313. <u>Required contemporary reading:</u> Keynes & Bown, How to Win a Trade War (2026), Ch. 8, "The Defense: Identify Vulnerabilities." <u>Optional:</u> Prasad, The Doom Loop (2026), Ch. 3, "Globalization: Cohesion or Disarray?"; Keynes & Bown, How to Win a Trade War (2026), Ch. 12, "The Attack: Export Restrictions."
Week 15 15/12/2026	Technology, Great-Power Competition, and Future of International Order	<u>Compulsory:</u> Sørensen, Møller, & Jackson (2022), Ch. 12, pp. 354-360 and 365-373; Art & Jervis (2017), Ch. 15: Posen, pp. 532-541. <u>Required contemporary reading:</u> Wang, Breakneck (2025), Ch. 3, "Tech Power." <u>Optional:</u> Miller, Chip War (2022), Chs. 49, "Everything We're Competing On," 51, "The Assault on Huawei," and 54, "The Taiwan Dilemma."
Week 16	Final Exam	No reading