

## International actors

### Titulaires

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### Mnémonique du cours

POLI-D446

### Crédits ECTS

5 crédits

### Langue(s) d'enseignement

Anglais

### Période du cours

Deuxième quadrimestre

### Campus

Solbosch

## Contenu du cours

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

While we will in this course encounter a wide variety of factors and actors that drive globalization, its empirical focus is rather on one of the crucial sites from which they manage to do so: "International Organizations" or IOs, here mainly understood as Intergovernmental Organizations or IGOs. We will amongst others try to understand IO's heterogeneous and multifaceted social realities, their impact on international order, states and societies. We will also look at the main IOs as well as at the theories in IR and organizational sociology that have tried to shed light on these organizations. 2 As a consequence of what precedes, IOs cannot solely be grasped through their transnational bureaucracies and intergovernmental cooperation. Their study also invites a reflection on the role of the manifold actors and collective agents with whom they interact: International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), Multinational corporations, elite networks etc. Beyond the mere question of interaction, the issue is equally how these international institutions are shot through with transnational and transgovernmental networks from which they are virtually inseparable. Finally, to understand IOs one must account for the fact that, in their context, governments are not necessarily consistent actors, nor their strategies necessarily internally consistent. In order to come to terms with this complexity, the question that will guide us throughout this course is how IOs impact on (and are affected by) these different actors: does the main impact of IOs lie in their function as fora or arenas in which governments coordinate their action? Under what conditions do IOs of different sorts acquire an autonomy of their own? How do they draw non-state actors (NGOs; private firms; physical persons) into the "game" of collective decision-making and how can the resulting interactions, struggles and their inherent complexity and emergent effects, be analysed? To put these questions pertaining to "international actorness" at the forefront has four advantages compared to more single-handed accounts of IOs: 1/ Rather than taking the fuzzy contours of the object "IOs" as determining the structure

and outline of the course, it allows organizing it along a more analytical thread. 2/ Rather than taking notions of "(collective) actors", "(collective) action", interaction, agency or "actorness" for granted, it allows problematizing and questioning them. 3/ This approach might shed new light not only on IOs but also on the nature of the more traditional "actors" of international relations: national governments; 4/ While IOs are generally analysed either as mere fora or as full-fledged actors themselves, it might allow exploring a third option: that the relations of interdependency upon which they thrive (and that they increase) constrain and transform the actors themselves and their interrelations. STRUCTURE

Throughout its twelve classes, this course will constantly rely on examples, illustrations and case studies while simultaneously endeavouring to familiarize the students with the conceptual tools that might shed light upon them. In other words, empirical data and theoretical reflection will be interwoven in each of the classes. The course is divided into three sections. The first section will present the major concepts, definitions and approaches through which IOs and their impact on international cooperation can be grasped. The second section will deal with the relations and interactions between IOs and other types of organizations in international politics, as well as with their impact on international order. The third section deals with current changes, struggles and trends within IOs and will try to highlight how they might affect international orders.

## Objectifs (et/ou acquis d'apprentissages spécifiques)

The main objectives of this course are: 1. to present the main IOs, their function and political uses throughout different policy-areas; 2. to introduce the major concepts and current academic debates relating to IOs (mainly but not exclusively in IR theory); 3. to offer analytical perspectives on the way in which IOs reframe the relations and interactions between the main actors of IR. After having followed this course, students will be able to: 1. better understand the functioning of IOs, and to critically reflect on their rationales, their actors, their social uses and utilities and their endogenous and exogenous dynamics; 2. assess the role and impact of IOs on diverse international actors while differentiating between policy-sectors and regions 3. ascertain how IOs reframe questions of democracy, accountability, power and political legitimacy in the contemporary world. TEACHING METHODS The course will take the form of twelve classes of two hours each. Prior to the classes, one or two texts have to be read by each student: these readings are mandatory and must be read in a careful and reflexive way. The texts are to allow the students to grasp the topics and issues presented during the course, to participate in discussions... It is highly advisable to write a summary of the text once you have read it in order to facilitate the revisions for the exam. The texts can be found in electronic version on the Université Virtuelle.

## Pré-requis et co-requis

### Connaissances et compétences pré-requises

There are a few prerequisites to attend this course. 1. First, students must be acquainted with social sciences. They must have at least attended in previous years about five basic courses in fields such as anthropology, sociology, history, political science, issue areas... 2. Second, students must be fluent in English.

## Méthodes d'enseignement et activités d'apprentissages

### TEACHING METHODS

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## Références, bibliographie et lectures recommandées

See Virtual Campus

## Autres renseignements

### Lieu(x) d'enseignement

Solbosch

### Contact(s)

Christian.Olsson@ulb.ac.be

[http://repi.ulb.ac.be/fr/membres\\_olsson-christian.html](http://repi.ulb.ac.be/fr/membres_olsson-christian.html)

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## Méthode(s) d'évaluation

Examen écrit

### Examen écrit

Question ouverte à développement long

## Méthode(s) d'évaluation (complément)

The final exam will include three questions pertaining to the course and the required

readings. They are to be in answered in two hours (1 page per question). It will be a closed

book exam, except for one dictionary. The questions can be answered either in French or in

English.

## Construction de la note (en ce compris, la pondération des notes partielles)

### EXAM AND GRADING

The final exam will include 3-5 questions pertaining to the course and the required readings. They are to be in answered in two hours and in a limited space (between a few lines and half a page depending on the question). The exam might include text-extracts or images to be analysed. It will be a closed book exam, except for one dictionary. The questions can be answered either in French or in English. In at least one of the questions, you will be asked to sum up the argument of one of the required readings. The questions will require theoretical and factual knowledge of the elements seen throughout the course and readings. To answer you will need to make use of your analytical skills. You will also have to show an ability to take a critical distance, to put into perspective, to abstract from acquired knowledge. Finally, you will have to demonstrate your academic writing skills (please use full sentences), your capacity to use relevant terminology and bring forward a line of argumentation in a convincing, clear and structured way.

## Langue(s) d'évaluation principale(s)

Anglais

## Autre(s) langue(s) d'évaluation éventuelle(s)

Français

## Programmes

### Programmes proposant ce cours à la faculté de Philosophie et Sciences sociales

MA-PINT | **Master en sciences politiques, orientation relations internationales** | finalité Sécurité, paix, conflits/bloc 1, finalité Monde/bloc 1 et finalité Mondialisation et politiques publiques/bloc 1 **et** MA60-POLI | **Master en sciences politiques (60 crédits)** | option JOUR/bloc U

### Programmes proposant ce cours à la Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management

MA-ECON | **Master en sciences économiques** | finalité Economic Governance and Public Policy in Europe/bloc 2