

Carleton University — Fall 2026
Department of Political Science
<https://carleton.ca/polisci/>

PSCI 1200A: Politics in the World

Fridays, 11:35-1:25

location: confirm on Carleton Central

Office hours Online by appointment

Instructor: Alex McDougall | alexmcdougall@cunet.carleton.ca

Brightspace: [Homepage - PSCI1200A Politics in the World \(LEC\) Fall 2026](#)

I. Course Description

World politics in 2026 is in a state of turmoil. We are living through major changes in the role of the United States in the world, new and ongoing wars in places such as Iran, Lebanon, Israel, Ukraine, and sub-Saharan Africa, as well as broader changes in globalization, trade, migration, and new technology. We are also seeing renewed great-power rivalry, growing pressure on international institutions, and debates about whether the world is becoming more fragmented, more dangerous, and less predictable.

How can we begin to comprehend such changes? This course introduces students to the study of world politics with this context in mind. We will focus on fundamental concepts and theories while also exploring the issues of the day. While we probably will not answer these questions definitively, the course aims to give students tools for thinking about them, historical context for understanding them, and practice in reading critically so as to become better consumers of information and news about world politics - and more interested in politics generally.

The first half of the course examines realism, liberalism, the causes and conduct of war, great-power rivalry, nuclear proliferation, and military force. The second half turns to international institutions and political economy, including Bretton Woods, trade, exchange rates, finance, development, authoritarianism, and populism. Contemporary cases include Russia's war against Ukraine, U.S.-China rivalry, drones and the transformation of warfare, the global financial crisis, and the eurozone crisis.

II. Course Format

- A weekly in-person lecture on Fridays from 11:35 a.m. to 1:25 p.m.
- One weekly tutorial group led by a Teaching Assistant. Attendance, preparation, and active participation are required.
- An in-person midterm during regular lecture time and an in-person final examination during the formal examination period.

Lecture and tutorial locations, tutorial registration, and any room changes will appear on Carleton Central and Brightspace. Students should consult those sources before the first class.

III. Learning Outcomes

1. Describe and distinguish major approaches to international relations, especially realism and liberalism.

2. Apply course concepts and theories to war, military power, nuclear politics, international institutions, trade, finance, development, and regime change.
3. Analyze contemporary conflicts and economic crises using evidence from scholarly readings and case studies.
4. Develop clear, evidence-based written arguments about international political issues.
5. Communicate ideas effectively and respectfully in tutorial discussion.

IV. Texts and Readings

Textbook: Pevehouse, Jon C. W., Joshua S. Goldstein, Sarah E. Kreps, and Edward D. Mansfield. *International Relations*. 13th ed. Pearson, 2025. ISBN 978-0-13-811862-4.

There are also supplemental readings. These will be posted on Ares and Brightspace.

The regular weekly target is approximately 70-80 pages.

V. Evaluation at a Glance

Component	Weight	Due date
Tutorial-group participation	20%	Weekly
Short essay	15%	Friday, October 16, 2026, 11:59 p.m.
Midterm examination (in person)	25%	Friday, October 23, 2026, during lecture
Final examination (in person)	40%	Formal exam period, December 12-23, 2026

VI. Evaluation in Detail

Tutorial-Group Participation (20%)

Students are required to attend and participate in their assigned weekly tutorial group. These groups are led by teaching assistants (TAs). They are a little like discussion seminars, and are designed to help students engage actively with the readings, apply course concepts to contemporary cases, and practise discussing and debating issues in world politics. Assessment is based on consistent attendance, demonstrated preparation.

TA name	Email	Group number
Riley Black	RileyBlack@cmail.carleton.ca	A01
Kaia Goodhope	KaiaGoodhope@cmail.carleton.ca	A02
Joseph Kennedy	JosephKennedy3@cmail.carleton.ca	A03
Josee Lalonde	JoseeLalonde@cmail.carleton.ca	A04
Liz Marchand	LizMarchand@cmail.carleton.ca	A05
Riley Black	RileyBlack@cmail.carleton.ca	A06
Kaia Goodhope	KaiaGoodhope@cmail.carleton.ca	A07

Joseph Kennedy	JosephKennedy3@cmail.carleton.ca	A08
Maci Clements	MaciClements@cmail.carleton.ca	A09
Isaac Phillips	IsaacPhillips@cmail.carleton.ca	A10
Liz Marchand	LizMarchand@cmail.carleton.ca	A11
Isaac Phillips	IsaacPhillips@cmail.carleton.ca	A12
Maci Clements	MaciClements@cmail.carleton.ca	A13
Josee Lalonde	JoseeLalonde@cmail.carleton.ca	A14

Short Essay (15%) - due October 16

Students will write a 1,000-word essay in response to one of the questions below. The essay must use at least three sources and should combine course concepts with outside research. The essay must be written in a shared Word document created by the instructor or Teaching Assistants and shared with the student for editing. Students are expected to draft in that document throughout the assignment period so that the writing process is visible. The essay is due through Brightspace by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, October 9, 2026. Detailed submission and citation instructions will be posted with the assignment.

Essay Questions

Choose one of the following questions. Each question is anchored in a required course reading. Before beginning your essay, read the identified reading from the relevant week carefully, even if that week has not yet been covered in class.

1. Ukraine and the Melian Dialogue — Week 2: Realism

Before writing, read Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,” assigned in Week 2.

At the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia was vastly more powerful than Ukraine by most conventional measures. To what extent does the logic of the *Melian Dialogue* help us understand the choices facing Russia and Ukraine at the outset of the war? What would the Athenians have advised Ukraine to do? Looking at what actually happened after February 2022, what does the case tell us about the limits of the realist logic presented in the *Melian Dialogue*?

2. A Democratic China and the Thucydides Trap — Week 5: Russia, Ukraine, and China

Before writing, read Graham Allison on the “Thucydides Trap,” assigned for the week examining China and U.S.–China competition. You should also draw on the course material on realism and liberalism.

Imagine that China became a stable liberal democracy while its economic and military power continued to grow. Would this substantially reduce the danger of a “Thucydides Trap” between China and the United States, or would the basic logic of great-power competition remain? Compare what realist and liberal theories would predict, and argue which provides the more convincing answer.

3. Why Would Iran Want the Bomb? — Week on Nuclear Proliferation

Before writing, read Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb.” Sagan distinguishes among the security, domestic politics, and norms models of nuclear proliferation. [filecite?turn4file0?L10-L29](#)

Suppose Iran decided to develop and deploy a nuclear weapon. Which of Sagan’s three models would best explain that decision? Based on your explanation of *why* Iran would seek the bomb, would a nuclear-armed Iran be more likely to become a stabilizing deterrent or a destabilizing force in the Middle East? Your answer

should consider the implications of your chosen model rather than simply debating whether nuclear weapons are generally good or bad.

Midterm Examination (25%) - October 23

The midterm will be written in person during the scheduled lecture period and will cover Weeks 1-6. It will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions. No notes or electronic devices are permitted unless an approved accommodation provides otherwise. The abbreviated lecture on military force will follow the midterm.

Final Examination (40%)

The cumulative final examination will be held in person on campus during the formal examination period, December 12-23, 2026, with emphasis on material from Weeks 7-12. Students should plan to be available throughout the examination period. Eligible students seeking examination arrangements must follow University procedures by the published deadlines.

VII. Course Policies

E-Proctoring / CoMaS Contingency

The midterm and final examination are planned as in-person assessments. If circumstances require either assessment to move online or to use an in-person digital format, the course may use Carleton's mandatory e-proctoring system, CoMaS, administered by Scheduling and Examination Services. CoMaS runs on the student's computer during the assessment. Students are responsible for installing, testing, and ensuring that CoMaS functions properly before an assessment for which its use is announced. Failure to have CoMaS functioning properly during an exam may constitute a violation of the exam rules and may be grounds for an allegation under Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy.

Students should review the CoMaS instructions and test the software two to three days before an exam if its use is announced. Support is available from onlineexams@carleton.ca. Minimum requirements normally include a Windows 10-or-higher or macOS 10.14-or-higher desktop or laptop computer, a supported browser, high-speed internet, and a webcam where required. Tablets, Chromebooks, smartphones, and Windows-based tablets are not supported.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Generative AI tools, including ChatGPT and similar applications, may not be used to generate thesis statements, outlines, prose, citations, or analysis for any graded work in this course. Standard spelling and grammar tools are permitted. If students use any digital tool beyond basic proofreading, they should be prepared to explain that use to the instructor. Unauthorized AI use may be treated as an academic integrity violation.

Late Work, Missed Assessments, and Reusing Work

- The short essay will be penalized by three percentage points per day, including weekends, unless an academic accommodation or documented extension has been approved.
- The midterm must be completed at the scheduled time unless an accommodation or approved academic consideration applies. The final exam is governed by University regulations for formally scheduled examinations.

- Tutorial participation normally cannot be made up unless the absence is officially excused – and in this case marks are prorated.
- Students may not submit substantially the same work previously submitted in another course without prior written permission from the instructor.
- The general policy in this class is to not permit make up work or assignments.

VIII. Course Schedule and Required Reading List

Readings may be adjusted slightly depending on availability through Ares. Any change will be announced on Brightspace.

Week 1 | September 11 | Introduction to World Politics

What is world politics? Power, globalization, levels of analysis, and how theories help us interpret a changing international system. How to read and discuss a work of international-relations scholarship; applying levels of analysis to a current event.

Required readings

- Pevehouse, Jon C. W., Joshua S. Goldstein, Sarah E. Kreps, and Edward D. Mansfield. International Relations. 13th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2025. Chapter 1, pp. 1-37.
- Nye, Joseph S., Jr. The Future of Power. New York: PublicAffairs, 2011. Chapter 1, 'What Is Power in Global Affairs?', pp. 3-24.

Week 2 | September 18 | Realism

Classical and structural realism; power, anarchy, survival, and offensive realism. Is the Melian argument an early statement of realism? Compare Morgenthau's prudence with Mearsheimer's offensive realism.

Required readings

- Pevehouse, Jon C. W., Joshua S. Goldstein, Sarah E. Kreps, and Edward D. Mansfield. International Relations. 13th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2025: Chapter 2, "realist theories"
- Thucydides. 'The Melian Dialogue.' In The Peloponnesian War, translated by Martin Hammond, Book V, sections 84-116, pp. 301-310. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Morgenthau, Hans J. Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace. 7th ed., revised by Kenneth W. Thompson and W. David Clinton. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. 'Six Principles of Political Realism' and 'A Realist Theory of International Politics,' pp. 3-16..

Week 3 | September 25 | Liberalism and Cooperation

Under what conditions can cooperation emerge without a world government? Apply Kant and Axelrod to a contemporary institution.

Required readings

- Pevehouse, Jon C. W., Joshua S. Goldstein, Sarah E. Kreps, and Edward D. Mansfield. International Relations. 13th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2025, "Chapter 3, liberal and social theories"
- Kant, Immanuel. 'Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch.' In Practical Philosophy, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, 311-351. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 311-351.
- Axelrod, Robert, and William D. Hamilton. 'The Evolution of Cooperation.' Science 211, no. 4489 (1981): 1390-1396.

- Ikenberry, G. John. 'Why American Power Endures: The U.S.-Led Order Isn't in Decline.' *Foreign Affairs* 101, no. 6 (2022): 56-67.

Week 4 | October 2 | Why Do Wars Happen?

War as an instrument of policy; individual, domestic, and systemic explanations; bargaining failures and the five recurring causes of war.

Required readings

- Pevehouse, Jon C. W., Joshua S. Goldstein, Sarah E. Kreps, and Edward D. Mansfield. *International Relations*. 13th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2025, Chapter 5, "international conflict"
- Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. Book I, chapters 1-3, pp. 75-99.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. Rev. ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. Chapter 1, pp. 1-15, and Chapter 6, pp. 159-186.

Week 5 | October 9 | Great-Power Conflict: Russia-Ukraine and the Thucydides Trap

Competing explanations for Russia's invasion of Ukraine; rising-power rivalry between China and the United States; drones, adaptation, and the transformation of warfare.

Required readings

- Pevehouse, Jon C. W., Joshua S. Goldstein, Sarah E. Kreps, and Edward D. Mansfield. *International Relations*. 13th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2025, Chapter 4, foreign policy"
- Mearsheimer, John J. "Who Caused the Ukraine War?" *John's Substack*, August 5, 2024. <https://mearsheimer.substack.com/p/who-caused-the-ukraine-war>.
- Allison, Graham. 'The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?' *The Atlantic*, September 24, 2015. Assigned Ares PDF, pp. 1-11.

Week 6 | October 16 | Nuclear Proliferation and Deterrence

Why states seek nuclear weapons; deterrence, stability, and the claim that more nuclear weapons may be better; the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Required readings

- Chapter 6, "Military Force and Terrorism"; (sections on nuclear proliferation)
- Chapter 7, "International Organizations, Law and Human Rights. (sections on nonproliferation)
- Sagan, Scott D. 'Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb.' *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996/97): 54-86.
- United Nations. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. Opened for signature July 1, 1968; entered into force March 5, 1970. Preamble and Articles I-XI, assigned Ares PDF, pp. 1-10.

Week 7 | October 23 | In-Person Midterm and Military Force

IN-PERSON MIDTERM DURING LECTURE; ABBREVIATED LECTURE AFTERWARD

The midterm occupies the first part of the lecture. The shorter second part introduces the air-power debate and the limits of coercive bombing, using Ukraine as the case.

Required readings

- Pape, Robert A. 'Bombing to Lose: Why Airpower Cannot Salvage Russia's Doomed War in Ukraine.' Foreign Affairs, October 20, 2022. Assigned Ares PDF, pp. 1-9.
- Chapter 6, "Military Force and Terrorism"; (sections on land, sea, air power)

October 26-30: Fall break - no classes or tutorials

Week 8 | November 6 | Bretton Woods, Trade, Exchange Rates, and the International Financial Institutions

The postwar economic order; fixed and floating exchange rates; trade cooperation; the IMF and World Bank.

Required readings

- Chapter 8, "International Trade";
- Chapter 9, "Global Finance and Business" (sections on: currencies, exchange rates, the international monetary system, Bretton Woods, the IMF, and the World Bank.)
- Eichengreen, Barry. Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System. 3rd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. Chapter 4, 'The Bretton Woods System,' assigned selection, pp. 91-127.

Week 9 | November 13 | Financial Integration, the Global Financial Crisis, and the Eurozone

Financial globalization, the 2008 crisis, the institutional design of the euro, and the political aftermath of crisis management.

Required readings

- Chapter 9, "Global Finance and Business"; (sections on: capital flows, financial markets, sovereign debt, multinational business, and financial instability.)
- Chapter 10, "International Integration."
- Tooze, Adam. Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World. New York: Viking, 2018. Introduction and assigned opening selection, pp. 1-35.

Week 10 | November 20 | International Development and North-South Relations I

Competing meanings of development; modernization, dependency, institutions, capabilities, and the Washington Consensus.

Required readings

- Easterly, William. The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good. New York: Penguin, 2006. Chapter 1, pp. 3-33.
- Chapter 12, "The North-South Gap";

Week 11 | November 27 | International Development and North-South Relations II

Trade, industrialization, multinational production, labour standards, and the moral and political debate over sweatshops.

Required readings

- Krugman, Paul. 'In Praise of Cheap Labor: Bad Jobs at Bad Wages Are Better Than No Jobs at All.' *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 2 (1997): 34-44.
- Chapter 13, "International Development";

Week 12 | December 4 | Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Future of World Politics

What is populism, why has it resurged, and how do domestic regime trends reshape the international system?

Required readings

- Kotkin, Stephen. 'The Weakness of the Strongmen: What Really Threatens Authoritarians?' *Foreign Affairs* 105, no. 1 (2026). Assigned Ares PDF, pp. 1-15.
- Levitsky, Steven, Lucan A. Way, and Daniel Ziblatt. 'The Price of American Authoritarianism: What Can Reverse Democratic Decline?' *Foreign Affairs* 105, no. 1 (2026). Assigned Ares PDF, pp. 1-16.
- Cheeseman, Nic, Matias Bianchi, and Jennifer Cyr. 'The Illiberal International: Authoritarian Cooperation Is Reshaping the Global Order.' *Foreign Affairs* 105, no. 1 (2026). Assigned Ares PDF, pp. 1-15.

Political Science Course Outline Appendix

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

<https://carleton.ca/safety/resources/>

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Academic consideration for medical or other extenuating circumstances: Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University.

Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as

per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays) For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#).

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as *"presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own."* This can include:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

Department of Political Science (2777)	B640 Loeb
Registrar's Office (3500)	300 Tory
Centre for Student Academic Success (3822)	4 th floor Library
Academic Advising Centre (7850)	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre (6608)	501 Nideyinàn
Career Services (6611)	401 Tory