

# International Relations

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW 16-18 YEARS OLDS

**immerse**  
EDUCATION

## About Immerse

**Immerse Education is an award-winning academic summer school provider offering programmes for 16-18 year olds in centres of academic prestige.**

The aim of these programmes is to provide participants with academically challenging content that develops their understanding of and passion for their chosen discipline. Through 40 hours of academic sessions, the programmes also offer young students unique and valuable insights into what it would be like to study their chosen subject at university.



This Syllabus Overview provides a summary of the topics and subject areas that participants can encounter during their studies with Immerse. It has been carefully created by our expert tutors who are current members of world-leading universities, and who have experience in teaching undergraduate students.

## Academic Sessions

The academic sessions at Immerse are arranged into modules to enable participants to explore a broad range of topics over the course of two weeks. The modules included in this syllabus overview are indicative but not prescriptive.

Tutors are encouraged to include their own specialisms and also focus on any particular areas of interest expressed by participants within the class. They may choose to provide further detail on a specific topic, or they may include new material and information that builds on the knowledge already developed during the programme.

## Personal Project

Each programme includes an element of individual work, generally termed the 'Personal Project'. This can take many forms but is commonly an essay or presentation delivered on the final day of the programme. Participants will receive feedback on this work which may also be mentioned in the participant evaluation which is provided in writing by the tutor once the programmes have ended.





## Preparatory work

Some tutors may ask participants to complete some preparatory work, such as reading or a series of exercises in advance of the programme. Participants are strongly encouraged to complete this work since it will be included in the opening sessions of the programme. Any preparatory tasks will be provided in advance of the programme directly to the participant.

## Academic Difficulty

**As all of our programmes are designed to provide a unique introduction to advanced material, the syllabus will be academically challenging at times.**

This is something to be excited about and all of our tutors will encourage and support participants throughout the programme. Immerse Education aims to develop every participant regardless of ability, and our tutors will adapt their teaching to individual needs.

# Aim of the International Relations Programme

The Immerse Education International Relations programme is designed to provide participants with insight into what international relations is, and what it would be like to study this broad discipline at university. Participants are encouraged to explore new material in-depth and to form independent and considered opinions and ideas based on sound research and practical knowledge. By the end of the programme, participants will have a good understanding, not only of university-level content, but also the variety of degree programmes available in subjects related to international relations. Beyond this, participants will also explore the career opportunities available to graduates in this field.





## Introduction to International Relations

This session will serve as an introduction to the field of international relations and examine the different disciplines that this encompasses. We will first look at the main goals, concepts, and ideas in the field of international relations that will be encountered in detail throughout the programme and discuss the place of international relations in the overall disciplines of political and social sciences. Participants will be encouraged to contribute their own suggestions to the following questions: What is international relations, who are its principal actors, where did it come from and what does it aim to do?

## Competing Twins: Realism and Liberalism

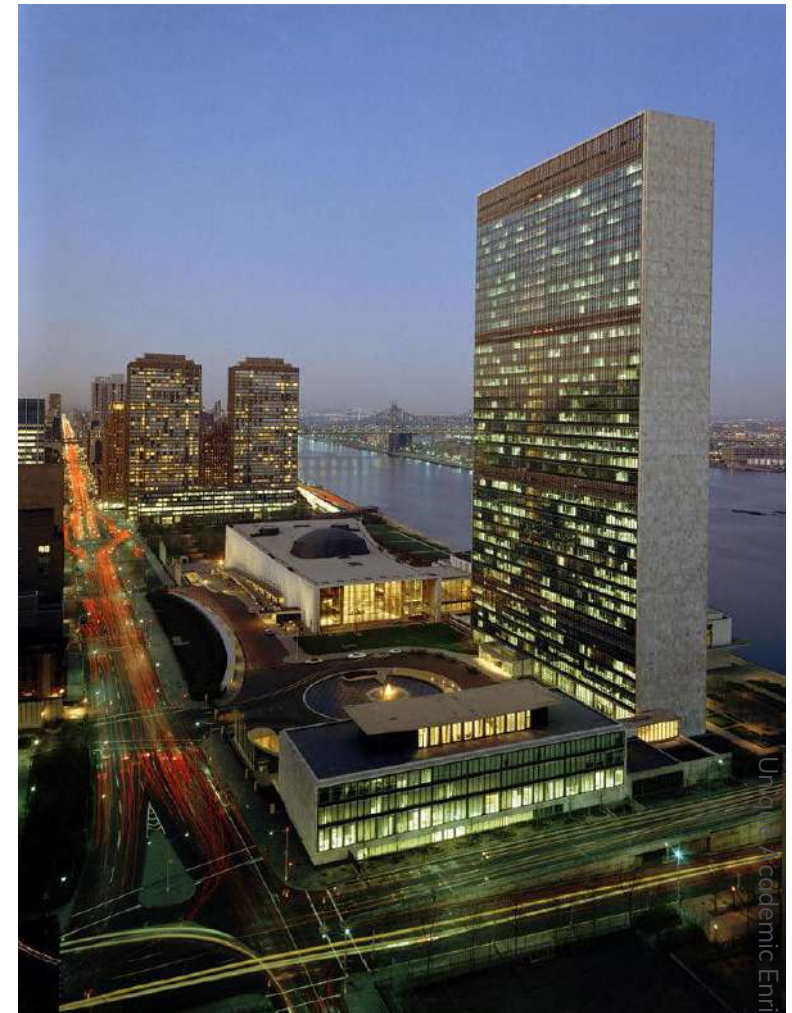
This session explores the two foundational approaches to international relations. Realism and liberalism are important schools of thought that offer competing theories about how international politics works. Both schools largely agree that states are the primary actors in international politics, but disagree about the mechanisms that condition state behaviour. Realism understands states as utility-maximising actors that compete in an anarchic environment, which forces them to prioritise physical security above all else. Liberalism argues that international anarchy is variable and that it can be mediated through international cooperation, trade, and the existence of global norms and institutions. We explore the assumptions of both schools in view of concrete historical and contemporary examples.

# The Role of Ideas in International Relations

The dominant traditions in the study of international relations in the West since World War II emphasise the rationality and material interests of national states as they construct their international relations. However, national states and other global actors are not merely driven by selfish motivations to secure more wealth and security for themselves. As new global priorities have emerged in recent decades, national states and other global actors have increasingly demonstrated their 'social' side in such fields as climate change, international human rights, and international aid. This class will explore the role of ideas in international relations, an approach that is typically captured by the term 'constructivism'.

## Institutions in Practice: The United Nations and its Challengers

This session will look at the place of international organisations in a world that is largely dominated by nation-states (and if we take a long-term historical view: by empires and city-states). What is the role of international organisations in governing international politics? We will explore this question through an examination of the creation and functioning of the United Nations system. As we explore the context in which the United Nations was formed, we will also consider the motivations and contradictions that we identify in its constituent parts and varying functions.





## The Project of a United Nations

Five years after World War II had ended, France and Germany came up with a plan to ensure their two countries would never again risk waging war against each other. The result was a treaty signed in Rome, creating the European Economic Community in 1957 – the foundations of today’s European Union. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the European Union in today’s increasingly globalised world? This session will focus on understanding the internal structure of the European Union and assess its capabilities as a political actor in internal and external affairs.

## Change and Continuity in US Foreign Policy

The United States has been the world’s pre-eminent superpower since the end of the Cold War. It has more military bases than any other country, it holds the world’s biggest arsenal of nuclear weapons and it spends more on its military than any other country on the planet. This session will take a close look at the chief determinants of US foreign policy. We will assess what factors shape US foreign policy, whether these factors also matter for other countries and to what extent the direction of foreign policy can be changed by new presidents taking office in Washington DC.



## TOPICS LIST

## Rising Powers and International Order: The Case of China

The challenge of rising powers to international stability has recently become one of the most researched areas in international relations. The growing economic, military, and diplomatic weight purportedly possessed by rising powers such as China, India, Brazil, and Russia is seen to herald a global transformation from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. Some scholars argue that this shift will end up generating future conflicts, as rising powers challenge the status quo and seek to expand at the expense of others. This session will explore this question by discussing China's growing international role.

## The Middle East in International Relations

The Middle East is regularly cast as the site of religious extremism and perennial conflict. Home to the world's three great religions and harbouring massive quantities of oil and gas, this vital region seems to invite geopolitical attention and external interference almost by default. Nowhere else do the failings of economic and political development so closely intertwine in producing international conflict. This session will look at the place of the Middle East in contemporary international politics, through its most important players. We will assess our preconceptions and the existing stereotypes surrounding the region and consider how these influence approaches to international relations.





## Conflict in the Middle East: The Iran-US Confrontation

We will spend this session understanding the turbulent Iran-US relationship. Beginning with the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, Iran has been ascendant in the Middle East, spreading its influence in a contiguous geographic arc from Tehran to Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut. Accelerated by the Arab Spring, Iran's rise has generated a perception among other Middle East countries that Iran aspires to be the region's hegemonic power. Iran sees itself as breaking out of prolonged isolation and stifling sanctions – precipitated by the 1979 Islamic Revolution. We will look at the following questions: What are the underlying drivers of the Iran-US confrontation and how should the international community act to mitigate them?

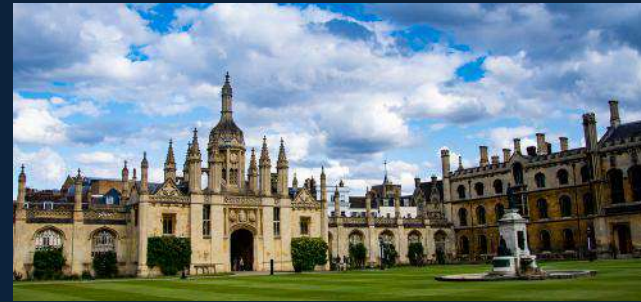


## Personal Project

Throughout the fortnight, participants will be working on their own personal project. Having been provided with a brief, participants should research and prepare a presentation for their peers. This will build upon an aspect of the theory that they have learnt over the course of the programme and is also an opportunity to showcase their ability to apply this to practical examples. The presentation is followed by questions from the audience and wider class discussion of particular points of interest. The tutor may also include feedback about the presentation in the written evaluation which is sent to participants after the programme has ended.

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