

# International Relations PhD exam

## Summer 2025

Answer one question from each of the assigned sections. Please clearly indicate which question you are answering. In each answer, you should develop a coherent argument in response to the question; your answer should critically engage and analyze, rather than simply review the literature. Use this as an opportunity to demonstrate the breadth and depth of your understanding of multiple literatures and their connections, as well as of major theoretical issues, scholars, methodological approaches, and cases. In all your answers, please be sure to reference specific scholars as appropriate.

### Theory

1. Over the past century, the United States has played a significant role in shaping international rules and institutions. Is the concept of a “liberal international order” just a synonym for American hegemony?
2. Invoking structural realist accounts of the international system, many scholars of IR argue today that we are moving into a period of multipolarity. Assess this claim and its implications for likely future patterns of conflict and stability.

### Methods

1. Some international challenges, such as climate change, have a temporal component. These are long-term problems that impose a temporal structure on the logic of action. Yet most global governance studies have a short-term focus, analyzing moments of decision, actions to achieve temporal equilibrium, and/or points of implementation. How can scholars better assess global governance challenges and solutions across time?
2. Design a comparative case study where outcomes vary. Clarify the research question that you seek to answer. Explain how you avoided selection bias in your selection of cases. Offer more than one potential explanation for variation in outcomes. Show how your comparative case study might answer your research question. Finally, address the study’s limitations along with directions for future research.

### Topics

1. To what extent can it be said that a previous “Washington Consensus” regarding international economics and multilateral governance is being replaced by a new “Beijing Consensus”?

2. A large strand of IR theory suggests that economic interdependence makes international cooperation more likely. The United States is interdependent with the global economy. And yet President Trump has undertaken a set of tariff campaigns this year against US allies as well as adversaries. What do these US tariff campaigns, along with the international reaction to them, suggest about theories of economic interdependence?