

POGO 750-004: Global South & International Order

Fall 2025

Thursday 4:30 pm - 7:10 pm
Van Metre Hall 481

Professor: J. Luis Rodriguez, Ph.D.

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Student hours: Wednesdays 4:00 to 5:00 PM over Zoom

Link to schedule office hours: TBD

Course Description

This course focuses on the interests and preferences of developing countries in international politics. We will analyze how the Global South attempts to order international politics by reviewing their participation as audiences, supporters, challengers, and agents. We will focus primarily on their attempts to create, adapt, and enforce security rules and norms. The topic is especially relevant given the potential decline in U.S. material capabilities and international leadership, the rise and decay in power of developing countries, the growing demand for responses to increasing security tensions, and the disagreements between the West and the rest on how to respond.

The course explores international politics from the vantage point of developing countries. Part I reviews the concept of the Global South and theories to analyze power relations and asymmetries. Part II explores the main tools the Global South has used to promote their security preferences vis-à-vis great powers: multilateral institutions, international law, soft balancing, and South-South cooperation. Part III analyzes how rising powers, Latin American, African, and East Asian countries have attempted to limit the leeway of great powers. Finally, Part IV studies how the Global South has addressed traditional and new security and governance challenges, including war, nuclear weapons, humanitarian intervention, environmental problems, and emerging technologies.

Course Goals

The goal of the course is to ground the theories we engage with empirical and practice-oriented examples. Through this course the students will be able to:

- Identify the security interests and strategies of different developing countries,
- Examine how different developing countries interact with other states, international and regional organizations, multinational companies, and civil society organizations,
- Learn different writing genres: opinion pieces, reports for policymakers, and articles for academic journals, and

- Develop increased skills, confidence, and enthusiasm for informed debates on security studies and international politics.

Evaluation and Grading

In each class, I will lecture and present the state of the field on the topic we will cover in that session. After the lecture section, the class will be organized in a seminar format wherein I expect students to have read the assigned book and to participate on an equal level. The goal for each session will be to discuss and understand the assigned book through informed and active debates.

Most required readings for the course will be available through the George Mason library

Grades will be based on the following assessments:

<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
10%	Participation in class
10%	Presentation in class of readings assigned
20%	Policymaking two-page memo
20%	Presentation of research paper
40%	Research paper

Participation in class (10%): Students are expected to demonstrate their engagement with the readings by actively listening and contributing to in-class discussions. I will record grades each week on a ten-point scale. I will drop your two lowest participation grades when calculating your final grade for this component.

Presentation of readings in class (10%): Students will have to present one of the readings assigned for class once during the semester. The presentation will give a summary and criticism of the respective reading. The presentation should not exceed 10 minutes and should end with a discussion question.

Policymaking two-page memo (20%): Students will write a 1,000-word memo for the State Department of South Africa. This country is the president-designate for the first review conference of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The meeting will take place within the week of 30 November–4 December 2026 in New York. South Africa may face pressures from nuclear powers to challenge and weaken the TPNW. Your memo should identify a tool or combination of tools covered in Part 2 of the syllabus that South Africa could use to address this potential pressure.

Research Paper (60% total): Students will write an essay assessing whether the concept of the Global South is analytically useful to understand an area or domain of international politics. Students are free to choose which area or domain to focus on. To discuss and approve paper topics, students should schedule and have individual meetings with me by mid-October. I encourage you to do it earlier.

Presentation (20%): Starting on October 16th, students will present their work in progress in class. They must explain their topic, main question, main argument, supporting arguments, and potential references of your research paper. The presentations should not exceed 10 minutes.

Final paper (40%): Submit your paper via Canvas by December 9 at 11:00 pm.

- MA students are required to write a 2,000-word paper.
- PhD students are required to write a 4,000-word paper intended for a scholarly audience.

The word limits do not include references.

Grading Standards: Assignment evaluations in this course will be based on the grading scale outlined below.

Letter grade		Percentage	Interpretation
Excellent	A	95-100	Mastery of concepts. Can clearly apply concepts to new situations.
	A-	90-94	
Above average	B+	87-89	Strong understanding of concepts. Acceptable foundation for future work.
	B	83-86	
	B-	80-82	
Proficient	C+	77-79	Basic understanding of concepts. Questionable foundation for future work.
	C	73-76	
	C-	70-72	
Marginal	D	60-69	Weak understanding of concepts and foundation for future work.
Failure	F	0-59	Failed to demonstrate understanding of concepts and effort.

Part 1: Introduction

August 28: What is the Global South?

- Siba Grovogu, "A Revolution Nonetheless: The Global South in International Relations," *The Global South*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2011, pp. 175-190.
- L.H.M. Ling and Carolina M. Pinheiro, "South-South Talk," in Arlene B. Tickner and Karen Smith (eds.), *International Relations from the Global South: Worlds of Difference*, Routledge, 2020.

September 4: Hierarchies in the International Order

- Barry Buzan and George Lawson, "Establishing a Core-Periphery International Order" and "Eroding the Core-Periphery International Order," in *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity, and the Making of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

September 11– No class

Part 2: Tools to Constrain Power

September 18: Multilateralism and Diplomacy

- Stephen Krasner, "Introduction: The Argument," in *Structural Conflict: The Third World Against Global Liberalism*, University of California Press, 1985.
- Susan Strange, "Cave! Hic Dragones: A Critique of Regime Analysis," *International Organization*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1982, pp. 479-496.

September 25: International Law

- Christy Thornton, "Introduction: How Could Mexico Matter?" and "Conclusion: Hegemony and Reaction: The United States in Opposition," in *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy*, University of California Press, 2021.
- Adom Getachew, "A Political Theory of Decolonization," *Worldmaking after Empire*, Princeton University Press, 2019.

October 2: Soft Balancing

- Max Paul Friedman and Tom Long, "Soft Balancing in the Americas: Latin American Opposition to U.S. Intervention, 1898–1936," *International Security*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2015, pp. 120–156.
- Rohan Mukherjee and Darren J. Lim, "Hedging in South Asia: Balancing Economic and Security Interests amid Sino-Indian Competition," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2019, pp. 493-522.

October 9: South-South Relations

- Meera Venkatachalam and Dan Banik, "Moral geographies: Indian exceptionalism, Africa, and the politics of South–South cooperation," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 5, 2025, pp. 505-522.
- Fahimul Quadir, "Rising Donors and the New Narrative of 'South–South' Cooperation: What Prospects for Changing the Landscape of Development Assistance Programmes?" *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2013, pp. 321–338.

October 15: Submit your policymaking two-page memo on Canvas by 11:00 pm.

Part 3: Actors Constraining Power

October 16: Rising Powers

- Robert Gilpin, "Epilogue: Change and War in the Contemporary World," in *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Rohan Mukherjee, "China and the Liberal International Order," in *Ascending Order: Rising Powers and the Politics of Status in International Institutions*, Cambridge University Press, 2022.

October 23: Latin America

- Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Faletto Enzo, “The Internationalization of the Market: The New Nature of Dependence,” in *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, University of California Press, 1971.
- J. Luis Rodriguez and Christy Thornton, “The Liberal International Order and the Global South: A View from Latin America,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 5, 2022, pp. 626-638.

October 30: Africa

- Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh, “Obedient Rebellion: Conceiving the African Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone,” *International Affairs*, vol. 98, no. 1, 2022, Pages 145–163.
- Jonathan Fisher and Nina Wilén, “Introduction” and “What is ‘African’ about African Peacekeeping?” in *African Peacekeeping*, Cambridge University Press, 2022.

November 6 – No class

November 13: Asia

- Evelyn Goh, “Introduction: Order Transition in East Asia” and “Institutional Bargains: Taming and Legitimizing Unequal Power,” in *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

Part 4: Contemporary Challenges

November 20: The Global South and International Security

- Ketian Zhang, “Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing’s Use of Coercion in the South China Sea,” *International Security*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2019, pp. 117-159.
- Tom Long, “Small-State Security,” in *A Small State’s Guide to Influence in World Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2022.

November 27 – Thanksgiving Break, no class

December 4: The Global South and International Disorder

- G. John Ikenberry, “Three Worlds: the West, East and South and the competition to shape global order,” *International Affairs*, vol. 100, no. 1, 2024, pp. 121–138.
- Jorge Heine, Carlos Fortin, and Carlos Ominami, “The Global South and Active Non-Alignment,” in *The Non-Aligned World: Striking Out in an Era of Great Power Competition*, Polity, 2025.

December 9: submit your final paper on Canvas by 11:00 pm.

Logistical notes

Readings: Most readings assigned will be either on a reserve at the George Mason library or on Canvas.

Communication policy: All course-related communications should be conducted via George Mason email. I will try to respond within 48 hours. Unless it is an emergency, I will only email you on a 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM schedule and only during weekdays. I do not expect you to reply outside of that same schedule.

Punctuality and absences: I expect students to be in the classroom on time. If you cannot make a seminar session, inform me beforehand via email. Submit a 200-word reaction to the assigned readings for that day. The grade for that essay will count for your participation grade.

Technology policy: Just as you would not read a newspaper in class, please respect your fellow students by refraining from the use of electronic devices or applications other than those needed to participate. Please avoid the temptation to check your email, social media, or news outlets during class because it is likely to be disruptive to your learning experience. I encourage you to take hand-written notes. Recent evidence suggests that handwritten notes are more effective in learning than typed ones.

Late policy: Late assignment submissions will result in a standardized penalty. If you submit your assignment after the deadline but within 24 hours, 10 points will be subtracted from the grade. For example, a 95-point quality reaction submitted five minutes late would receive an 85 grade, 24 hours and 5 five minutes late a 75 grade. See the statement below for questions on accommodations.

Note: My policy with assignments favors flexibility. For this to work, though, I ask that my students favor transparency. If an issue comes up that might make things difficult for you, let me know in advance and we can work things through together.

Health and safety policy: All students taking courses with a face-to-face component are required to follow the university's public health and safety precautions. This section will be updated with the latest policies prior to the beginning of the course.

Additional notes

Library resources and librarian virtual office hours: Research assistance is available to students at on the [University Libraries website](#). From there you can access guides, databases, and more while on campus or off-site. Students can also contact the library's Virtual Reference service here, to speak with a librarian. Drop-in and chat with Lorena Jordan, the Schar School's Policy and Government Librarian about your research, assignments, or anything relating to your area of study. No appointments are needed. Thursdays weekly from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, Eastern Standard Time. [Use this link to connect via zoom](#).

Names and pronouns: If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and indicate how best to address you in class and via email. I use He/Him/His for myself and you may address me as Luis in email and verbally. Furthermore, Mason supports and recognizes that an inclusive and welcoming community is linked to our strategic goals and is key to building a sense of belonging and well-being. For this reason, students may use the tools we provide to [change their names and pronouns on Mason records here](#).

Campus closure or emergency class cancelation: If the campus closes, or if a class meeting needs to be canceled or adjusted due to weather or other concern, students should check Canvas and their email for updates on how to continue learning and for information about any changes to events or assignments.

Basic course technology requirements: Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use web-conferencing software (Canvas / Zoom). Students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

Privacy: Students must use their Mason email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.

Artificial Intelligence: All work submitted in this course must be your own original work; use of AI writing tools, such as ChatGPT, are prohibited in this course and will be considered a violation of academic integrity. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Academic Integrity.

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or

materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, coauthored pieces, and project reports.

- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. [The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures here.](#) Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services website](#) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor in advance of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course.

Students must use their GMU email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not

respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see University Policy 1202: [Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#). Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in [Student Support & Advocacy \(SSAC\)](#), Counseling and [Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), [Student Health Services \(SHS\)](#), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).

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