

**POL 109H1F - Might and Right: Power and Justice in International Relations
Fall 2025**

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Office hours: By appointment
Location: By phone or on Zoom
Course website: Quercus

Course Description:

Welcome to POL109 – Might and Right: Power & Justice in International Relations! This course will introduce you to two key characteristics of global politics – the use of might and power, and the pursuit of rights and justice. In the first unit of this course, we will focus on might and power, examining why states go to war, how states fight, how states repress and the causes of civil war. Each week in this unit we will analyze important current and historical cases of the use of might and power, and explore their relationship with the pursuit of rights and justice.

In the second unit of this course, we will focus on the pursuit of rights and justice by examining the origins of the global human rights system, the creation of the International Criminal Court, humanitarian intervention, the work of human rights NGOs, and the impact of “the state” on rights and freedoms. As we examine these rights and justice-related topics, we also investigate the extent to which they relate to might and power. To explore each week’s topics, we will draw not only from current research in Political Science, but also from the insights of some of the most profound, influential and controversial thinkers.

Course Objectives:

This course has four main objectives:

- 1) To give you an opportunity to learn about some key issues and events in global politics, as well as the ideas of a number of influential thinkers and scholars
- 2) To provide you with an opportunity to engage in a fair and open-minded way with some of the most pressing questions and controversies surrounding global politics today
- 3) To give you an opportunity to develop and improve your reading, analytical, writing and presentation skills
- 4) To provide you with an opportunity to see how a degree in Political Science is useful for variety of different professions, including working in academia, advocacy, consulting, government, and law, among many others.

Course Format – Lectures & Tutorials

This course will consist of twelve (12) weekly 2-hour lectures as well as nine (9) 1-hour tutorials. Tutorials will begin in week #3 and conclude in week #11/12. To learn more about your tutorial group and schedule, please consult ACORN.

Marking Scheme & Course Requirements

Evaluation for this course will be based on the following four components. To learn more about each assignment, including guidelines to follow and how you will be graded, please visit our Quercus course page, under the menu “Assignments.”

Assignment Name	Value	Deadline
Tutorial Worksheets & Participation	20%	Throughout the term
In-Class Mid-term	20%	October 20 th , 2025
Video Essay	25%	December 1 st , 2025
Exam	35%	To be held during the final exam period

Course Readings & Materials:

The readings for this class are designed to be both accessible *and* challenging. Some of the readings you might find hard to understand, and at times even incomprehensible. This is all part of the plan! Academic writing can often be complicated and it can take time fully understand what an author is trying to say. This is more often the case with some of the historical writings with which we will be engaging. Each week review and make sense of the readings as best as you can, giving yourself lots of time and making notes on key points made and any questions that arise. In lectures and tutorials, our discussions will be centered on these readings in order to enhance your understanding of them.

To access the readings, you do not need to purchase any articles, books or textbooks. All readings will be posted on our course’s Quercus page under the section entitled “Pages.” Links to other materials, including documentaries and short films, will also be provided on Quercus.

Assignment Submission & Plagiarism Detection:

All assignments that will be graded must be submitted on time via Quercus. Students are strongly advised to keep draft work and hard copies of their assignments until the marked assignments have been returned and grades posted online.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

On the Use of Generative AI (i.e ChatGPT)

In this course, the use of ChatGPT and other related tools for all assignments is prohibited. If its use is detected in any form, its use may constitute an academic offense.

Late Penalties

The penalty for late assignments is 5% per day. If the assignment is not submitted within one week (7 days including the weekend) after the due date, a mark of zero will be assigned. Late work must also be submitted to directly via Quercus.

Extensions & Absences:

To be fair to all students in the course, extensions on assignments will only be granted for reasons of health, family emergency or accessibility. If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number).

For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>.

For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Re-Grading Policy

If you believe that an individual item of term work has been unfairly marked, you may ask the person who marked the work for re-evaluation. You have up to 2 weeks from the date of return of the item of term work to query the marking. If you are not satisfied with this re-evaluation, and it has been done by a TA, you may appeal to the instructor in charge of the course. Such re-marking will involve the entire piece of work, and may raise or lower the mark.

Any appeal of a mark provided by the course instructor may only be made for an item worth at least 20% of the course mark. Such appeals must be made in writing to the Undergraduate Director within 2 weeks after the work was returned, explaining in detail why the student believes that the mark is inappropriate. The appeal must summarize all previous communications between the student and previous markers of the work. You must submit the original marked piece of work plus a clean, anonymous copy along with the assignment/essay topic.

If the department believes that re-marking is justified, the department will select an independent reader. You must agree in writing to be bound by the results of the re-reading process, or abandon the appeal.

Where possible, the independent reader will be given a clean, anonymous copy of the work. Without knowing the original assigned mark, the independent reader will determine a mark for the work. The marking of the work should be considered within the context of the course of

instruction for which it was submitted. If the new mark differs substantially from the original mark, the department will determine a final mark, taking into account both available marks.

Office Hours

For this course, your TA is your first point of contact and will be available over email and during office hours to address any questions you have. I will also be available to meet in-person, over Zoom and or the phone. If you would like to speak with me, please email me and we can set up a convenient time to connect.

Email Policy:

You can contact me anytime via email and I will get back to you within 24 hours from Monday to Friday. I will not be checking email on the weekend. While I am happy to correspond via email, please note that discussions with me are often a more productive use of time.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

The University and this course treat cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

Potential offences in papers and assignments include:

- using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor;
- making up sources or facts;
- obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams cheating includes:

- using or possessing unauthorized aids;
- looking at someone else's answers;
- misrepresenting your identity, or falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

If you have concerns about plagiarism, please come speak to me directly. As you prepare your essays, please make sure to review this link for useful guidance:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

Accessibility:

I am committed to creating a course environment that is accessible for all students. If you require accommodation for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please feel free to discuss this with me and get in touch with Accessibility Services as soon as possible:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>

Harassment & Discrimination

The University of Toronto is a diverse community and as such is committed to providing an environment free of any form of harassment, misconduct, or discrimination. In this course, I seek to foster a civil, respectful, and open-minded climate in which we can all work together to develop a better understanding of key questions and debates through meaningful dialogue. As such, I expect all involved with this course to refrain from actions or behaviours that intimidate, humiliate, or demean persons or groups or that undermine their security or self-esteem based on traits related to race, religion, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance or record of offences.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Mental health is a growing concern among students. If you are in need of some assistance, please feel free to come speak to me. The University has also a number of services available to help you with your emotional wellbeing. Visit Health & Wellness for more information:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>

Educational Supports

If you require any assistance with the course material and assignments, please come speak with me and I will do my best to help you. For additional support, you may want to visit one of U of T's writing centres (<https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/>) as well as U of T's Academic Success Centre (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/>).

Course Schedule & Readings

Week #1 (September 8th, 2025) – Course Introduction and a Brief Overview of Might & Right in International Relations

*****In preparation for our first class, please review the course syllabus. You might also want to review this article on reading skills: <http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

Unit 1: Might & Power in International Politics

Week #2 (September 15th, 2025) – Why Do States Fight? (Reading = 46 pages)

- Thucydides, and Jeremy Mynott, *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Book I Sections 1-23 (pp. 3-16) & 66-88 (pp. 39-53).
- Taras Kuzio, "Imperial Nationalism as the Driver Behind Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," *Nations & Nationalism* Vol. 29 (2023), pp. 30-38.
- John Mearsheimer, "The Causes and Consequences of the Ukraine War," *Horizons* No. 21 (Summer 2022), pp. 12-27.

Week #3 (September 22nd, 2025) – How Do States Fight? (Reading = 25 pages)

*******Tutorials begin**

- Richard Hartigan, "Francesco de Vitoria and Civilian Immunity," *Political Theory* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Feb 1973), pp. 79-91.

- Henry Stimson, “The Decision to the Use the Atomic Bomb,” *Harper’s Magazine* (February 1947).

Week #4 (September 29th, 2025) – How Do States Repress? (Reading = 48 pages)

*******Tutorial #2**

- Roger Boesche, “Aristotle’s ‘Science’ of Tyranny,” *History of Political Thought* Vol. 14 No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 1-25.
- Seva Gunitsky, “Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability,” *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 13 No. 1 (March 2015), pp. 42-54.
- Ronald Deibert, “The Autocrat in Your iPhone: How Mercenary Spyware Threatens Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2023).

Week #5 (October 6th, 2025) – Why Do Civil Wars Happen? (Reading = 32 pages)

*******Tutorial #3**

- Thucydides, and Jeremy Mynott, *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Book III Section 69-85 (pp. 206-216).
- Richard Maclure & Myriam Denov, “I Didn’t Want to Die So I Joined Them”: Structuration and the Process of Becoming Boy Soldiers in Sierra Leone,” *Terrorism & Political Violence* Vol. 18 (2006), pp. 119-135.
- Kristian Skrede Gleditsch *et al.*, “Transnational Dimensions and the Myth of Civil Wars as National Events,” *CSCW Policy Brief* (2010). Available at: <https://www.prio.org/download/publicationfile/252/Transnational-Dimensions-Myth-Civil-War-CSCW-Policy-Brief-1-2010.pdf>

******Thanksgiving Monday (October 13th, 2025) – There will be no lecture this week (a make-up class will take place on Tuesday December 2nd). Tutorials (#4) will run as usual and will include a “Midterm Review” session.**

Week #6 (October 20th, 2025) – In-Class Midterm

READING WEEK (October 27th – October 31st, 2025) – NO CLASS OR TUTORIAL

Unit 2: Rights & Justice in International Politics

Week #7 (November 3rd, 2025) – What is the global human rights system and where did it come from? (Reading = 40 pages)

*******Tutorial #5**

- Aryeh Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement: A History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), chapter 1.
- Ann Taket & Fiona McKay, “The Global Human Rights System,” in Fiona McKay & Ann Taket (eds.), *Health Equity, Social Justice and Human Rights* (Routledge, New York: 2020), pp. 8-29.

Week #8 (November 10th, 2025) – What is the International Criminal Court and why was it created? (Reading = 60 pages)

*******Tutorial #6**

- Surya Subedi, “The Concept in Hinduism of ‘Just War’,” *Journal of Conflict & Security Law* Vol. 8 No. 2 (October 2003), pp. 339-361.
- Christopher Hall, “The First Proposal for a Permanent International Criminal Court,” *International Review of the Red Cross* No. 322 (March 1998), pp. 57-74.
- William Schabas, *An Introduction to the International Criminal Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-20.

Week #9 (November 17th, 2025) – What is militarized humanitarian intervention and can it ever be justified? (Reading = 49 pages)

*******Tutorial #7**

- Edwin van de Haar, “David Hume and Adam Smith on International Ethics and Humanitarian Intervention,” in Stefano Recchia and Jennifer M. Welsh (eds.), *Just and Unjust Military Interventions: European Thinkers from Vitoria to Mill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 154-175.
- Sean Richmond, “Why is Humanitarian Intervention So Divisive? Revisiting the Debate Over the 1999 Kosovo Intervention,” *Journal on the Use of Force and International Law* Vol. 3 No. 2 (2016), pp. 234-259.

Week #10 (November 24th, 2025) – How are data on human rights violations collected and under what conditions can they be trusted? (Reading = 61 pages)

*******Tutorial #8**

*******Tutorial this week will include a “Peer Review” session**

- “An Introduction to Human Rights Advocacy,” *YouTube*. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghUSEHe7Wug>
- Diane Orentlicher, “Bearing Witness: The Art and Science of Human Rights Fact-Finding,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal* Vol. 3 (1990), pp. 83-135.
- Gilbert Burnham et al., “Mortality After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-Sectional Cluster Sample Survey,” *The Lancet* Vol. 368 (October 2006), pp. 1421-1428.

Week #11 (December 1st, 2025) – Was the advent of “the state” a positive or negative development for human rights? (Reading = 49 pages)

*******Video Essay Due via Quercus**

*******Tutorial #9 (virtual)**

- Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Brief Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1-13.
- John Lanchester, “The Case Against Civilization: Did Our Ancestors Have it Better?” *New Yorker* (September 11, 2017).

- Jeff Cornassel & Marc Woons, “Indigenous Perspectives on International Relations Theory,” *E-International Relations* (January 23, 2018). Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/72490>
- Cengiz Gunes & Cetin Gurer, “Kurdish Movement’s Democratic Autonomy Proposals in Turkey,” in Efraim Nimni & Elcin Aktoprak (eds.), *Democratic Representation in Plurinational States: The Kurds in Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 159-175.

Week #12 (Tuesday December 2nd, 2025) – Final Exam Review