

POL 338 QUEER IR

Fall 2025

Instructor: Joel Cantó Roche.

Email: joel.cantoroche@mail.utoronto.ca

Class Time and Location: Tuesday 9-11, RW 140.

Office hours: Tuesdays, 11:30-12:30 or by appointment.

Office Location: Sidney Smith Hall, or online via Zoom.

Course Description

Are states straight? This course will tackle this and other questions at the intersection of sexuality and international relations. The first part of the course takes a critical look at fundamental concepts in international relations such as anarchy, sovereignty, security, and cooperation. The second part applies Queer IR theory to case studies such as the spread of radical right-wing populism in Europe and the Americas, international funding contingent on adoption of LGBT rights, and the institutionalization of SOGI terminology at the UN. By the end of the course, students will be able to use Queer theory to articulate the strengths and limitations of core theoretical concepts in international relations and explain contemporary global politics as related to the regulation of sexuality and gender.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Professionalism and Participation:

- To practice arriving prepared for group meetings.
- To listen and consider the arguments and perspectives of others.
- To actively engage course concepts with colleagues in-class through writing and speaking.

Critical Thinking and Writing Skills:

- To critically engage IR paradigms and core concepts.
- To expand knowledge and understanding of contemporary global issues.
- To develop written argumentation, organization, and evidentiary skills.

Extension and Collaboration Skills

- To create original work that synthesizes course concepts.
- To connect real world examples to Queer and IR theory.
- To collaborate with colleagues.
- To explore simple coding skills and their usefulness in Political Science learning and pedagogy.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1) Professionalism and Participation

a. Active Participation (5%)

Active participation in class is required to receive full marks in this course. This involves 1) preparing for each class in advance by doing the readings, taking notes, and formulating questions, 2) bringing course materials (readings, notebooks) with you to class, 3) listening to your colleagues and the professor, and 4) sharing your own insights. Your completion of 1-4 will be evaluated through the occasional graded in-class activity or worksheet. These activities will be graded for completion only. They will not be announced in advance. I will not return this graded work to you in class, but you can retrieve it during my office hours.

b. Bi-Weekly Online Reading Quizzes (5 quizzes=25%)

It is required that you complete five (5) online reading quizzes this term. The goal of these quizzes is to increase your familiarity with assigned texts prior to coming to lecture. *These weeks are marked on your syllabus.* The format of the quizzes will be multiple-choice. You have 2 attempts. Late quizzes will receive a 0%. *No exceptions.*

2) Critical Thinking and Writing Skills

a. Take Home/In Class Midterm Exam (20%)

For this assignment, students will prepare three (3) 5-paragraph argumentative essays in response to specific questions at their own pace outside of class using the preparation worksheet provided. This will serve as the study guide. For each essay, you must advance an argument that directly addresses the questions. This argument must be clear and coherent and supported by evidence from at least three (3) different course theorists per question, and you cannot use the exact same theorists for each question. This means you will refer to at least four (4) separate theorists on your preparation worksheet. You must paraphrase and directly quote the readings. Students will submit their preparation worksheet in class on the day of the midterm and write two of the three essays again in person. The essays must be organized and demonstrate college-level writing. I will not grade the content of study guides, only that you have fully completed them. Incomplete worksheets will receive 0%. Submission of the preparation worksheet will count as 10% of your exam grade. The grading rubric for this assignment is posted on Quercus. *See due date on the syllabus.*

b. Take Home/In Class Final Exam (30%)

This assignment is identical to your midterm, only slightly longer. For this assignment, students will prepare four (4) 5-paragraph argumentative essays in response to specific questions at their own pace. This will serve as the study guide. For each essay, you must advance an argument that directly addresses the questions. This argument must be clear and coherent and supported by evidence from at least three (3) different course theorists per question. You cannot use the exact same theorists for each question. This means you will refer to at least five (5) separate theorists on your exam. Each essay must be organized and demonstrate college-level writing. I will not grade the content of the preparation worksheets, only that you fully completed them. Incomplete worksheets will receive 0%. Submission will count as 10% of your exam grade. Students will submit their preparation worksheet to me at the final exam and write 3 of the 4 essays again in person during the Final Exam period. You will not know in advance which 3 questions I will pick for you. The grading rubric for this assignment is posted on Quercus. *Due date determined by FAS.*

3) Collaboration and Creative Skills

a. Narrative Queer Videogame (20%)

Cynthia Weber calls on scholars to foster a “Queer curiosity” as a method in International Relations. What are you curious about? In groups of 5, students will create a short narrative videogame using [Twine](#) that uses Queer IR to investigate and explain a contemporary global issue related to Queer migration. Don’t worry, I’ll show you how to do it step by step. 1) You must reread the readings on Queer migration week; 2) Choose from the available storylines (Queer migrant traits – social class, gender, sexuality; reasons for migration – discrimination, career opportunities; host state – Canada, United States, the European Union, Tunisia) 3) You must conduct research on the issue using at least three reputable (e.g. scholarly, newspaper, artistic) sources; 4) You must draw on at least two authors from the second half of the course (Unit 2) to explain to your audience how understanding the contemporary issue fills the gap you have identified; 5) You must upload the link to our Quercus shell in discussion post format so all your colleagues

can see it. 6) Each group member must complete the “Narrative Queer Videogame Participation Survey” available on Quercus. Remember that the idea is to educate your audience in a play-like manner. The grading rubric for this assignment is posted on Quercus. *See due date on the syllabus.*

COURSE POLICIES

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

“The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another’s differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.”

I do not tolerate racist, transphobic, homophobic, ableist, sexist, classist—or otherwise violent—language or comportment under any circumstances, including online formats. Please see also the University’s policy on civility, available at: http://dlrssywz8ozqw.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2016/09/Policies_Human-Resources-Guideline-on-Civil-Conduct_08Sep2016.pdf

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

This course is assigned a graduate assistant to help me with grading your work. Being a graduate student is difficult. Please be kind and show them the same respect you show your professors and colleagues.

GRADES

Please do not email me regarding grades. I will not send you your grades via email. If you are concerned about your status in the course, come see me during office hours.

I do not give extra credit under any circumstances. All assignments and opportunities to earn credit in a course must be extended to each member of the class in order to just and equitable. All assignments are evaluated using the exact same set of criteria (the rubric) available to all students before any assignment is submitted. Please do not ask me to adjust your grade. If you feel I have committed a grading error, feel free to visit me during my office hours. In that case, I am happy to re-grade your assignment.

I do not respond to student requests after the term is over to “bump up” final grades. This is unfair to the other students in the course. The grading scheme, determined by the University, is as follows:

Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage
A+	4.0	90 - 100%
A	4.0	85 - 89%
A-	3.7	80 - 84%
B+	3.3	77 - 79%
B	3.0	73 - 76%
B-	2.7	70 - 72%
C+	2.3	67 - 69%
C	2.0	63 - 66%
C-	1.7	60 - 62%
D+	1.3	57 - 59%
D	1.0	53 - 56%
D-	0.7	50 - 52%
F	0.0	0 - 49%

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is no textbook. Readings are available through Quercus (see below). All reading assigned for a given date should be completed before arriving to class.

COURSE WEBSITE

You can access the course website by logging into the University of Toronto's Portal (q.utoronto.ca). Once you are logged in, if you are registered in the course on ROSI, you should see POL338, Section L0101 listed under "My courses." Simply click on that link to access the course website. This website plays a central role in the functioning of the course, and you are therefore strongly advised to visit it frequently. Important administrative and other announcements will be posted on it regularly, and it will also feature links to documents and readings required for the course.

EMAIL

There are many of you. There is one of me, and my demanding thesis dreams of being written. If you are absent, please do not email me to ask what you missed or to explain why you could not attend. If you must email, *please put Queer IR/POL338 in the subject line*. Please wait for a response in the range of 24 hours during weekdays. I do not answer e-mails on evenings or weekends. This means there may be a delay in my responding to you.

LATE WORK

If you foresee problems with meeting coursework deadlines, please contact me as soon as possible. Do not wait until the due date has passed to contact me. Because of the purpose (class prep) of your online quizzes, late quizzes will not be accepted. Other assignments will receive a one-time late penalty of -20%. All late work must be submitted by the last day of class, or it will receive a 0%. I only grant extensions past the end of the term in exceptional circumstances. Only valid and documented reasons will be considered for requests to receive an extension/make up on the midterm prep sheet and test. Missed final exams are handled through FAS.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>.

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>).

ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>

Accessibility Services Letter: This sort of letter may address needed accommodations or document on-going disability issues that have made absence or lateness unavoidable.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMODATIONS

If you require accommodation regarding assignment deadlines or other course requirements due to religious observance, please come see me within the first three weeks of class.

ABSENCE AND ILLNESS

Absence Declaration (Updated for Winter 2023)

For Winter 2023, the University will be continuing use of the Absence Declaration form. Students are to complete the Absence Declaration form, available to them directly on ACORN, anytime they are absent from academic work. No additional information or documentation is required. You may also use UoT Verification of Illness or Injury Form, and/or the College Registrar's letter. More information at <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academics/student-absences>.

Effective in January 2023: The number of consecutive days in the future that students can declare using the tool in ACORN will change from 14 to 7 calendar days. This means students will be able to declare their absence up to seven days from the current day, plus two days retroactive.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Students can access a wide range of programs and services to support their health and wellbeing. Many of these programs are listed at: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>

For Students - U of T

- U of T Health & Wellness uoft.me/5EB
- 416-978-8030
- Support if Students are Feeling Distressed uoft.me/5EC
- U of T My Student Support Program (My SSP) uoft.me/5ED
- Community Safety Office communitysafety.utoronto.ca/ 416-978-1485
- U of T Safety & Support safety.utoronto.ca

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Your mental health is important. Throughout university life, there are many experiences that can impact your mental health and well-being. As a University of Toronto student, you can access free mental health and wellbeing services at Health & Wellness (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>) such as same day counselling, brief counselling, medical care, skill-building workshops, and drop-in peer support. You can also meet with a Wellness Navigation Advisor who can connect you with other campus and community services and support. Call the mental health clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 5 to book an appointment or visit <https://uoft.me/mentalhealthcare> to learn about the services available to you.

You can also visit your College Registrar to learn about the resources and supports available: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>

If you're in distress, you can access immediate support: <https://uoft.me/feelingdistressed>

SCHEDULE OF READINGS*

*Subject to change

Unit I: What is IR? What is Queer IR?

Week 1 (9/2): Taking the Queer Turn

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary reading): Richter-Montpetit, Melanie. 2018. "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (in IR) But were Afraid to Ask: The 'Queer Turn' in International Relations." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. 46 (2) 220–240.

Read (Recommended classic reading): Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. *Theory of international politics*. Chapters 3 (pp. 38-60) and 6 (Anarchic Structures, pp. 102-128). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Together

- Discussion of course outline, expectations, and assignments.
- Watching and discussion of Hillary Clinton's 2011 speech at the UN.

Week 2 (9/9): Queer and Feminist Approaches to IR

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Enloe, Cynthia. 1989. "Gender Makes the World Go Round: Where Are the Women?" Pp. 1-36 in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. University of California Press.

Weber, Cynthia. 2016. "Queer Intellectual Curiosity as International Relations Method: Developing Queer International Relations Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks." *International Studies Quarterly*, 60: 11-23.

Together

- Discussion of readings; synthesis with previous week.

Do/Due: **First online quiz due by Monday at 5pm (Weeks 1 and 2)**

Week 3 (9/16): Sovereignty and the Nation State

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Weber, Cynthia. 2016. "Chapter 1: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge" in *Queer International Relations*. Oxford University Press.

Carver, Terrell and Laura Lyddon. 2022. "*Sovereign States, Warring States, Queer States.*" Pp. 17-54 in *Masculinities, Gender and International Relations*. Bristol University Press.

Together

- Discussion of readings.

Week 4 (9/23): Engendering the State System

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Peterson, V. Spike. 1999. "Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1(1): 34-65.

Ruskola, Teemu. 2010. "Raping Like a State," *57 UCLA Law Review*. 1477.

Simpson, Audra. 2016. "The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty." *Theory and Event* 19(4).

Read (Recommended classic reading): Walby, Sylvia. "Gender, nations and states in a global era." *Nations and Nationalism* 6.4 (2000): 523-540.

Do/Due: Sign up for group for Narrative Queer Videogame

Together

- Discussion of readings.
- Discussion of midterm expectations.

Week 5 (9/30): Decolonial Queer Perspectives

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Weerawardhana, Chamindra. 2017. "Profoundly Decolonizing?: Reflections on a Transfeminist Perspective of International Relations." *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*. 16(1): 184-213.

Picq, Manuela Lavinias. 2019. "Decolonizing Indigenous Sexualities: Between Erasure and Resurgence." In *The Oxford Handbook of Global LGBT and Sexual Diversity Politics*, edited by Michael Bosia, Sandra M. McEvoy, and Momin Rahman. Oxford University Press.

Do/Due: **Second online quiz due by Monday at 5pm (Weeks 3, 4 and 5)**

Together

- Discussion of readings.

Week 6 (10/7): MIDTERM on Unit 1

On your own

Complete Midterm Prep Sheet

Do/Due: Midterm Prep Sheet

Together

Midterm Exam

Unit 2: Applications

Week 7 (10/14): Strings Attached: Queer Critiques of Development and Foreign Aid

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Weber, Cynthia. 2016. "Chapter 3: 'The Perverse Homosexual' in International Relations: 'The Underdeveloped' and 'The Un-Developable' in *Queer International Relations*. Oxford University Press.

Jolly, Susie. 2000. "'Queering' development: Exploring the links between same-sex sexualities, gender, and development." *Gender & Development* 8(1): 78-88.

Together

- Discussion of readings.

Week 8 (10/21): Queer Critiques of War and State Violence

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Nellans, Lily. "A Queer(er) Genocide Studies." *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, 14(3): 48-68.

Kapadia, Ronak K. 2019. "Up in the Air: Aerial Power and the Visual Life of Empire in the Drone Age." Pp. 44-75 in *Insurgent Aesthetics: Security and the Queer Life of the Forever War*. Duke University Press.

Do/Due: **Third Online Quiz due by Monday at 5pm (Weeks 7 and 8)**

Together

- Discussion of readings.

READING WEEK

****NO CLASS ****

Week 9 (11/4): Queer Migration – General Concepts

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Weber, Cynthia. 2016. "Chapter 4: The Out-of-Place and On-the-Move 'Perverse Homosexual' in International Relations: The Unwanted Im/migrant and The Terrorist" in *Queer International Relations*. Oxford University Press.

Balaguera, Martha. 2018. "Trans-migrations: Agency and Confinement at the Limits of Sovereignty." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43(3): 641-664.

Read (Recommended): Luibhéid, Eithne. "Queer/migration: An unruly body of scholarship." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14.2 (2008): 169-190.

Together

- Discussion of readings.
- Discussion of Narrative Queer Videogame.

Week 10 (11/11): Queer Migration – Individual Cases and Context

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings):

Asylum in Europe – Individual Cases

Mole, Richard. *Queer migration and asylum in Europe*. UCL Press, 2021.

The Polish Case – Contextual Effects

Ayoub, Phillip M., and Lauren Bauman. "Migration and queer mobilisations: how migration facilitates cross border LGBTQ activism." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45.15 (2019): 2758-2778.

Do/Due: ****Fourth online quiz due by Monday at 5pm (Weeks 9 and 10)****

Together

- Discussion of readings.

Week 11 (11/18): “Gay Rights Are Human Rights”?

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Weber, Cynthia. 2016. "Chapter 5: “The Normal Homosexual” in International Relations: “The Gay Rights Holder” and “The Gay Patriot” in *Queer International Relations*. Oxford University Press.

Langlois, Anthony J. 2020. "Making LGBT Rights into Human Rights." In *The Oxford Handbook of Global LGBT and Sexual Diversity Politics*. Oxford University Press.

Read (Recommended Classical reading): Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Duke University Press, 2018.

Together

- Discussion of readings.

Week 12 (11/25): Anti-LGBTQ Backlash in International Relations

On your own

Read (Compulsory contemporary readings): Ayoub, Phillip, and Kristina Stoeckl. 2024. "The global resistance to LGBTIQ rights." *Journal of Democracy* 35(1): 59-73.

Chandler, Andrea. 2021. "Russia's laws on 'non-traditional' relationships as response to global norm diffusion." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 25(4): 616-638.

Do/Due: ****Narrative Queer Videogame****

Do/Due: ****Fifth Online Quiz due by Monday at 5pm (Weeks 11 and 12)****

Together

- Discussion of readings.

Finals Week

Do/Due: Final Prep Sheet & Final Exam.