



BJØRKNES

UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE

**Study Abroad in Oslo, Norway
Bjørknes University College
Peace and Conflict Studies**

**Course Descriptions
Fall 2018**

All international students should take three courses, which amounts to a full semester (30 credits). Below you will find course descriptions of five courses, of which you should choose three:

- *The Geopolitics of the Arctic*
- *Global Armed Violence*
- *War and Peace in the Middle East*
- *The Nobel Peace Prize*
- *International Political Thought*

In addition to the core courses, international students have the opportunity to participate in an introduction course on Norway (see final page for description).

The Geopolitics of the Arctic (10 credits)

The Arctic is experiencing fast and unprecedented economic, environmental, political, and security challenges, which provides new opportunities for international cooperation but also a potential for regional competition and even conflict. For example, the reduction of the Arctic ice cap is now exceeding earlier climatic model predictions.

The increasingly ice-free Arctic waters are creating greater accessibility to the Arctic region. New opportunities for natural and mineral resource extraction and consequently production, in combinations with new routes of transportation may not only fuel economic growth in the Arctic, but may also attract outside stakeholders. However, a potential increase in commercial activity in this remote region is to a certain extent on a collision course with the fragile Arctic ecosystem and poses a number of different security challenges. This includes search and rescue, oil-spill prevention and response, mitigating measurements with respect to environmental changes and border protection.

As the region takes on greater economic and strategic importance, the Arctic is in need of an increased prioritization and strong leadership among the Arctic states. For example, investment is needed to develop limited infrastructure and strategic facilities, and enhanced cooperation and coordination among Arctic nations is necessary in order to prevent increased tension.

Learning outcomes

The candidate shall be able to...

Knowledge

- ✓ Explain the concept of 'geopolitics'.
- ✓ Gain knowledge about the state of, and importance of the Arctic region in general.
- ✓ Consider the environmental changes that are taking place above the Arctic region.
- ✓ Account for some of the most important dynamics which shapes this region.
- ✓ Understand some of the basic ways natural resources may be used as a geopolitical instrument.

- ✓ Understand the importance of Svalbard to Norway and the region.
- ✓ Know about and refer to central treaties and other documents dealing with the Arctic.

Skills

- ✓ Assess the importance of the Arctic region to the various nation-states located in the Arctic.
- ✓ Evaluate the importance of natural resources for Arctic development.
- ✓ Evaluate and discuss the importance of international rules, regulations and institutions in the Arctic.
- ✓ Discuss potential factors for conflicts in the Arctic.
- ✓ Evaluate and consider future geopolitical scenarios in the Arctic.
- ✓ Make use of International Relations Theory in assessing the politics of the Arctic.

Competence

- ✓ Discuss potential factors for conflicts in the Arctic.
- ✓ Evaluate and consider future geopolitical scenarios in the Arctic.

Assessment

Requirement:

The requirement must be passed in order to register for the final exam.

- ✓ Policy brief/short essay; memo: 500 words (pass/fail)

Exam:

This course consists of two separate exams that together constitute the final grade. Both exams must be passed in order to pass the course. You can retake one or both exams.

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 2500 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F)
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F)

Lecturers

This course is developed and taught in cooperation with the prestigious [Fridtjof Nansen Institute](#) (FNI). The two main lecturers are *Dr. Svein Vigeland Rottem*, Senior Research Fellow and *Andreas Østhagen*, Research Fellow and PhD at University of British Columbia (UBC) (ongoing). They will also bring in a team of experts.

War and Peace in the Middle East (10 credits)

This class examines the international relations of the Middle East through a historical and theoretical lens. What are the contemporary legacies of colonial involvement in the Middle East? How did the Cold War shape the modern Middle East? How has U.S. unipolarity affected contemporary Middle Eastern politics? What explains the United States' current policies toward the Middle East: is it security? Is it to secure natural resources such as oil? Is it the influence of domestic groups? Is it ideology and culture?

This course will mainly focus on a few big players in the region – Iran, Egypt and Israel. In doing so, the course will examine the historic and current clash – or not - of interests, cultures and ideologies taking place between the great powers of international politics (such as Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States) and the Middle East. The class will begin by looking at the colonial history of the region, and end by looking at the Arab Spring, the development of the so-called Islamic State (IS) and the Syrian civil war. The course will incorporate topics such as great power politics in the Middle East, focusing particularly on the United States and its bilateral relationships with Egypt, Israel, and Iran; “orientalism;” the Cold War; the importance of oil; the “war on terror;” the Arab-Israeli peace process; and the significance of history, religion, and culture in understanding the politics of the region.

The course will provide students with the tools necessary to understand one of the most conflict ridden regions in the world by illuminating the role played by various great powers intervening and withdrawing from the Middle East.

Learning outcomes

The candidate shall be able to...

Knowledge

- ✓ Understand the general political history of the Middle East since the First World War.
- ✓ Assess the role that great powers such as Great Britain, the Soviet Union/Russia and the United States have played and continue to play in regional politics.
- ✓ Understand and analyze core concepts of the class as defined by the syllabus
- ✓ Understand the general history of the bilateral relationships between the United States and Egypt; the United States and Iran; and the United States and Israel.
- ✓ Analyze the role the United States has played in the Middle East since the Second World War.

Skills

- ✓ Critically evaluate current research on the international relations of the Middle East
- ✓ Critically evaluate current research on U.S.-Middle East relations.
- ✓ Compare and contrast various causal explanations for U.S. policy in the Middle East.
- ✓ Understand the impact of colonialization on Middle Eastern political development.
- ✓ Discuss and present key topics.
- ✓ Argue for and against explanations of key topics in written form.

Competence

- ✓ Identify and discuss academic issues related to research on the Middle East and U.S. policy.
- ✓ Have a general understanding of Mideast political development in the context of great power involvement.
- ✓ Define and evaluate the main theoretical concepts introduced in class, such as “orientalism,” “imperialism” and others.

Assessment

Requirement:

The requirement must be passed in order to register for the exams.

- ✓ Seminar participation (pass/fail)

Exam:

This course consists of two separate exams that together constitute the final grade. Both exams must be passed in order to pass the course. You can retake one or both exams.

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 3500 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F)
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F)

Lecturer

Dr. Hilde E. Restad, Associate Professor of International Studies. She holds a PhD in Foreign Affairs from University of Virginia and her research focus on US foreign policy. Hilde is commenting on US politics in Norwegian and International media frequently. In 2014 she published her main work so far; *American Exceptionalism: An Idea that Made a Nation and Remade the World* (Routledge)

Global Armed Violence (10 credits)

Every year in excess of half a million people die as a result of armed violence and many more suffer its consequences. In this module we examine the issues surrounding armed violence. We distinguish between different types of armed violence, examine the scale of the problem and consider how armed violence affects different regions and different groups. We examine some of the principle theories that consider the motivations of those who commit acts of violence, including theories that lay an emphasis on, inter alia, gender, age, criminality, urbanity, and economic factors such as inequality, poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment. The course will examine the various policy options advocated in armed violence reduction strategies at all levels, from the local through to the international. Along with developing a thorough understanding of the complexities associated with armed violence, students are expected to conduct original research on methodological factors associated with measuring the scale of the problem, writing skills associated with developing a policy brief in a given area of armed violence research, and advocacy skills that place an emphasis on critically appraising policy options with a view to implementing effective armed reduction strategies.

Learning outcomes

The candidate shall be able to...

Knowledge

- ✓ Have a clear understanding of the various forms of armed violence.
- ✓ Understand the scale of the problem in all its forms.
- ✓ Have an appreciation of the ethical and moral issues associated with the problem of armed violence.

- ✓ Distinguish how it impacts different people and groups depending on - inter alia - location, age, gender, class.
- ✓ Develop a thorough understanding of the various theoretical approaches that explain armed violence in its various forms.
- ✓ Have a good understanding of the policy options associated with armed reduction strategies.

Skills

- ✓ Have a clear understanding of the methodological challenges associated with measurement of armed violence, particularly lethal violence.
- ✓ Display a thorough understanding of the challenges associated with ensuring that armed violence strategies are effective.

Competence

- ✓ Discuss whether a new definition of armed conflict is needed.
- ✓ Use relevant statistics on global armed violence.
- ✓ Gain knowledge about the global state of violence.

Assessment

Requirement:

The requirement must be passed in order to register for the exams.

- ✓ Policy brief/short essay; memo 800 words (pass/fail)

Exam:

This course consists of two separate exams that together constitute the final grade. Both exams must be passed in order to pass the course. You can retake one or both exams.

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 2000 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F)
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F)

Lecturer

Dr. Christopher White, Associate Professor of International Studies. Chris holds a PhD from London School of Economics (LSE). He is a specialist in political theory and British politics. He has also worked, amongst other places, at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the UK House of Commons.

The Nobel Peace Prize – What, Why and to Whom? (10 credits)

The Nobel Peace Prize is arguably the world's most prestigious political award – maybe the most prestigious award overall – and it engenders debate, inspiration, and controversy every time it is handed out. Where does the prize come from, what does it represent and advocate, and who gets it?

We will primarily analyze the following three themes during the course, with the aid of readings, lectures, and classroom discussions:

- Nobel and his will: What does it say, which values does it advocate, and how can it be interpreted today?
- The idea of peace, especially as it is expressed through the history of the peace prize.
- Selected laureates from Nobel history: who were they, and what did they advocate.

Learning outcomes

The candidate shall be able to...

Knowledge

- ✓ Gain knowledge of the background to and historical development of the Nobel Peace Prize.
- ✓ Become familiar with the biographies and ideas of Alfred Nobel and a selection of laureates.
- ✓ Have a general understanding of the process of nominating and selecting the laureates.
- ✓ Understand the will of Alfred Nobel and know the controversies and debates related to the interpretation of his will.
- ✓ Be able to define, evaluate and explain the concept of peace, and how the prize has influenced our understanding of peace.

Skills

- ✓ Assess the significance and impact of the prize itself.
- ✓ Evaluate and discuss previous and future laureates.
- ✓ Critically discuss peace as a concept and to what extent the prize has redefined peace.

Competence

- ✓ Actively participate in discussions about the Nobel Peace Prize.
- ✓ Use relevant literature to study biographies.
- ✓ Employ critical thinking on a broad range of issues related to peace.

Assessment

Exam:

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 3000 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F)
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F)

Lecturer

Professor Henrik Syse, part-time Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Bjørknes University College, Research Professor at PRIO (Peace Research Institute Oslo), Editor for Journal of Military Ethics, and from 2015 to 2021 one of the five permanent members of the Nobel Committee. Learn more about Henrik [here](#)

International political Thought (10 credits)

This course provides students with a set of conceptual and analytical tools in order to acquire a deeper and more nuanced understanding of international relations. The course surveys the various schools of thought in international politics, it provides an account of the evolution of thinking in international relations theory and relates theory to current debates in international affairs. The objectives of the course are to promote a more abstract and critical space for thinking about a wide and intellectually demanding range of literature, and to develop the ability to articulate this thought clearly and concisely in both written and spoken form. Major themes include: normative theory, methodology and epistemology, theories of international relations – realism, liberalism, hermeneutics, Marxism and critical theories – and issues pertaining to human nature, science and the environment

Learning outcomes

Knowledge

- ✓ Display a thorough understanding of some of the most important theoretical perspectives on the international relations agenda.
- ✓ Understand in a more sophisticated way issues, events and controversies in the international political realm.
- ✓ Be sensitive to the methodological, normative and philosophical complexities associated with political theorizing.
- ✓ An appreciation of the disciplinary history of international relations theory, and core assumption that inform the subject.

Skills

- ✓ Draw on the theoretical debate in order to better develop student's own political views, particularly in the international domain.
- ✓ Relate theory to practice – by understanding how theory shapes the options political actors choose when examining policy options.
- ✓ Develop debating and didactic skills.

Competence

- ✓ Understand the relevance and significance of 'theory' in everyday political life.
- ✓ Improved self awareness of the underlying assumptions that inform political views.
- ✓ Sensitivity to the complexities that characterize political life.
- ✓ Sensitivity to the 'western' nature of much international relations theorizing.

Assessment

Exam:

- ✓ Take home exam (individual essay); memo: 3000 words (+/- 10 % excluding front page and reference list) (60 % of the grade, grading system A – F)
- ✓ 3 hour written exam (40 % of the grade, grading system A – F)

Lecturer

Dr. Christopher White, Associate Professor of International Studies. Chris holds a PhD from London School of Economics (LSE). He is a specialist in political theory and British politics. He has also worked, amongst other places, at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the UK House of Commons.

Additional course**Norway – A Brief Introduction** (not for credit)

The program also includes “Norway – A Brief Introduction” (not for credit) to help you navigate Oslo and the Norwegian social, cultural and political landscape.

For you to make the most out of your time in Oslo, we want you to acquire some basic knowledge about Norway, Oslo and general "Norwegian-ness." This short and fun mini course will introduce you briefly to subjects such as Norway's political history, our splendid geography, Norwegian society, culture, current politics and more. As part of the course Bjørknes organizes various excursions to places of interest in and around Oslo. By the end of the course you will not only be better equipped to make sense of and understand Norwegian society, but also to make sure that you enjoy all the great things Norway has to offer!

Lecturer

Bjørnar Østby, Lecturer. Bjørnar finished his Master's degree from London School of Economics (LSE) in 2017 and is now a full time lecturer at Bjørknes University College.

For more information

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