UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Public International Law - A-L

2526-2-A5810007-AL

Learning objectives

The course aims to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the international legal order, its fundamental principles, the relevant actors, and the normative dynamics governing it. Learning objectives are the following:
a) Knowledge and understanding:
Students will acquire a systematic understanding of the foundations of international law, including its principles, legal sources, subjects, and mechanisms of implementation and control. Particular attention will be devoted to the evolution of the international legal order concerning the protection of human rights, the repression of international crimes, and the maintenance of international peace and security.

b) Applying knowledge and understanding:

Students will be able to apply the concepts acquired to the analysis of concrete cases, assess international legal situations using the technical tools provided in the course, and address interpretative and practical challenges arising from international legal practice.
c) Making judgments:
The course fosters critical reflection on the dynamics of international law and the role of the actors involved, encouraging the development of independent judgment regarding the legitimacy, effectiveness, and coherence of international legal norms.
d) Communication skills:
Students will develop the ability to articulate complex legal concepts using precise and appropriate terminology relevant to the field of international law, both orally and in writing.
e) Learning skills:
Students will be equipped to pursue independent study of international law and stay critically informed about future legal and jurisprudential developments, including in preparation for further academic or professional training.

Contents

The course covers general aspects of international law and its evolution, with particular attention to the fundamental characteristics of the international community, its subjects and key actors, and the core values the international legal order seeks to safeguard: the maintenance of peace, the prohibition of the use of force, the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, and the repression of international crimes. The course also explores how international norms are created, interpreted, and implemented, with a focus on treaties, customary law, state responsibility, dispute settlement, and the relationship between international law and domestic legal systems.

Detailed program

The course will address the following topics in depth:
Structure and features of the international legal order
Subjects of international law:
States
International organizations
Peoples and the principle of self-determination
Insurgents and national liberation movements

The individual
International protection of human rights
Repression of international crimes committed by individuals
Prohibition of the use of armed force and the maintenance of international peace and security
Formation and legal effects of international treaties
Formation of customary international law
Rules governing international responsibility
Mechanisms for the settlement of international disputes
The relationship between international law and domestic legal systems

Prerequisites

Students are expected to have prior knowledge of basic legal concepts in private law and constitutional law.

Teaching methods

The course is delivered through in-person lectures. Lectures will be supported by supplementary materials (international documents, judgments, case studies). Active student participation is encouraged through guided discussions and critical analysis of international legal practice and case law.
2 ECTS credits of the course will be delivered online.

Assessment methods

Assessment will take place through a final oral exam. No written mid-term test is scheduled.
The oral exam will consist of two general questions based on topics covered in class and in the required readings.
In order to pass the exam, students must demonstrate an adequate level of competence on both questions.
Assessment criteria include:

- Theoretical knowledge of the topics addressed;
- Ability to apply knowledge to practical cases or current legal issues;
- Clarity of expression and correct use of legal terminology.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Mandatory textbook:

T. Scovazzi (ed.), Corso di diritto internazionale, Part I, 4th edition, Milan, Giuffrè Editore, 2024

T. Scovazzi (ed.), Corso di diritto internazionale, Part II, 3rd edition, Milan, Giuffrè Editore, 2022

Supplementary materials (selected and provided by the instructor):
International documents (e.g. UN Charter, treaties, resolutions)
Case law of international courts (e.g. International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court, regional courts)
Academic articles and case studies

Sustainable Development Goals

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS