
Law 5370/13744 – INTERNATIONAL LAW

Professor Chris Mirasola

Email: cmirasola@uh.edu | Office: 430B

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Semester: Fall 2026

Course Location & Time: Room TBD; M/W 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Instruction Mode: Face-to-Face

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00 AM-1:00 PM in my office. Also by appointment (arrange by email).

Assistant: Njari Sharif

Course Description

It scarcely has been more important to understand international law. International conflicts are mounting. Assumptions about the nature and purpose of international organizations which have structured international politics since the end of World War II are being challenged. The terms by which the United States conducts its foreign relations are shifting. This class aims to make sense of all these changes through a deep introduction to the sources, methods, and doctrines of international law. The course begins by introducing students to the structure of the current international legal system and the sources of international legal obligation. Students learn how to discern the customary sources of international law, interpret treaties, read judicial opinions, and understand the scope and nature of peremptory norms (among other sources of legal obligation). The course then explores the powers, privileges, and immunities of the major actors in the international legal system, with a particular emphasis on the state. The class then discusses remedies which exist when states fail to uphold their international legal obligations. The course ends by surveying select topics in international law (e.g., the laws of war, international human rights law, and international criminal law).

Course Prerequisites:

None.

Course Materials

The primary text is JAMES CRAWFORD, BROWNLIE'S PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW (9th edition, 2019). In addition to new copies available at the university bookstore (and elsewhere),

there are many used copies available through online retailers.

We will also heavily rely on supplemental materials, all of which are available via our Canvas site.

Use of CANVAS

This course makes considerable use of CANVAS. Updates regarding readings and assessments will all be communicated via CANVAS as well as in-person during class.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will have the tools to speak, write, and think like an international lawyer. This means that you will understand, and have facility using, the various sources that comprise international law. You will understand the most important doctrines concerning the rights and duties of states and how international law treats international organizations, individuals, and corporations. With this foundation, we will introduce more specific topics within international law.

This class is designed for those who have little or no background in international law and will provide you with the tools needed to delve deeper into more specific issue areas, whether that be in future coursework, on your own initiative, or as a practicing attorney. It is also designed for those who don't expect to delve further into international law. Class sessions will be interactive, and you will have multiple opportunities to increase your proficiency with integrating multiple sources of law to answer legal questions.

Assessment

Your grade will be determined as follows:

10% -- Participation. This includes responding to cold-calls and submitting the small assignments we will periodically complete during class. These assignments will be graded complete/incomplete (i.e., the substance of your responses will not be graded).

10% -- In-class Exercise. Details regarding the in-class exercise will be distributed later in the semester. It will be graded complete/incomplete (i.e., the substance of your response will not be graded).

15% -- Midterm Exam. Details regarding the in-class midterm will be distributed later in the semester. The exam will take place during our regularly scheduled class time. It will be essay-based and will be open book.

65% -- Final Exam. Details regarding the final exam will be distributed later in the semester. It

will be essay-based. You will have access to any printed materials you'd like to bring, but will be conducted via the "closed" mode for EBB (meaning you will not have access to your computer files or the internet).

Attendance

UHLC requires students to attend 80% of classes to take the final exam. This class will take attendance electronically, with an attendance code being provided at the beginning of each class. Please reach out to my administrative to communicate any absences required due to illness, etc.

Class Preparation/Expectations

My aim is to create a collaborative classroom environment where we discuss difficult legal questions in a professional, respectful manner. This entails a number of duties on my part.

First, I will be transparent in my expectations for the class. You will have advance notice about expectations regarding assessments well before they occur. And I will post to CANVAS any slides used during class.

Second, I will ensure that our class discussions and readings expose the wide range of views that exist regarding the international law issues we discuss.

Third, I will conduct class in a manner that promotes everyone's participation in discussions. Practically, this means that you should expect a mix of cold-calls and requests for volunteers. It also means that we will operate under the **Chatham House Rules**. In a nutshell, these rules provide that participants are free to use the information received during class, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. This rule is meant to encourage frank discussion and allow everyone to try out arguments. If you have any questions or concerns about class discussions—or feel in any way uncomfortable speaking in class for any reason—please come see me.

As part of the Chatham House rule, any audio or visual recording of class is prohibited.

The only exceptions to this policy will be announced by me in writing, such as to arrange for the law school to record any make-up classes that might become necessary.

The success of this class will also depend on you all. First, this includes making a good-faith effort to prepare for each class session. Each assignment for this class will require close reading, and it will therefore take time for you to complete. Reading international legal materials, especially at the very beginning, will involve encountering lots of new terminology, concepts, and writing styles. So, make sure to budget sufficient time to read assignments.

Second, in terms of classroom conduct, I expect that discussions will be respectful, especially when folks disagree. I encourage you to speak up and share your views throughout the semester.

Artificial Intelligence

Generative artificial intelligence is a form of machine learning that creates new and original output based on the data it has been trained on, in response to prompts. Examples include generative “large language models” (LLMs), such as ChatGPT. LLM output can include text, images, music, code, and more. This syllabus policy covers the textual output of generative LLMs (AI-Generated Text). Because AI-Generated Text can often mimic human intelligence, it could potentially be used as a substitute for a student’s own work product. Such use is potentially problematic to the extent that it becomes a substitute for internalized student understanding of the material or creates a dependency on AI-Generated Text, which may be strictly prohibited in settings that include the bar examination.

Therefore, subject to the exceptions immediately below, your continuing enrollment in this course constitutes your pledge not to generate or to use any AI-Generated Work Product—whether from yourself or others—in relation to any assessment in this course. The term “assessment” means *any graded or ungraded work product for this course that is submitted to the instructor, presented in a class session, or used in an oral or written graded assessment for this course.*

The following AI-Generated Work Product uses are narrowly defined exceptions to the preceding prohibition:

- You may generate and use AI-Generated Text for class preparation, although you must disclose the full extent of that use if I ask. You may generate and use AI-Generated Text for study supplements to aid with general understanding of course content. This could take different forms that include creating examples or explanations of a concept, generating diagrams and flow charts, “gamifying” course content, creating flash cards for study, or creating sample questions and answers.
- You may generate and use AI-Generated Text for an outline that summarizes the course content.
- You may use AI-Generated Text for the purpose of language translation.
- You may use AI-Generated Text when specifically authorized for class exercises.

Use of Computers and Other Electronics in Class

Out of respect for other students and the classroom environment, during class sessions computers should be used only for the purposes of accessing electronic class materials or taking notes. This prohibits computer use for internet surfing, chat rooms, e-mail, or other uses not related to the class. I reserve the right to treat violations of this policy as either a lack of preparation, a constructive lack of attendance, or, in appropriate circumstances, as a disruption of the class. In addition, during class please disable the speaker on your computer and refrain from displaying wallpaper, screen savers, or other material on your laptop computer screen that can reasonably be

expected to offend or distract your classmates. Also, please ensure that all other noise-making electronics, such as watches, cell phones, etc., are silenced.

Honor Code

The [UHLC Honor Code](#) applies to all aspects of this course. You are responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with the Honor Code. Please inquire if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code's provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a pledge by you under the Honor Code to comply with the Honor Code in relation to this course and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please reference the separately distributed reading schedule for the assigned readings for each class. All readings are required unless otherwise noted. Exams will test the content covered in classroom sessions and the readings.

The following is our intended schedule of topics for the semester. Since syllabi are living documents, I may make adjustments both before the semester and as the semester proceeds.

I. International Law and the International System

8/24 – Class Introduction & Overview of the International Law and the International Legal Order

8/26 – Sources of International Law, the United Nations, & International Adjudications (Part I)

8/31 – International Adjudications (Part II)

9/2 – Treaties (Part I)

9/7 – NO CLASS (Labor Day Holiday)

9/9 – Treaties (Part II)

9/14 – Customary International Law (Part I)

9/16 – Customary International Law (Part II)

9/21 – General Principles of International Law & Peremptory Norms

II. Assessment 1

9/23 – Group Exercise

III. Actors in the International System

9/28 – Legal Personality of States and International Organizations

9/30 – Nationality of Individuals and Corporations & Statelessness

IV. The Privileges and Duties of States

10/5 – State Jurisdiction & the Alien Tort Statute

10/7 – State Immunity, the Foreign Sovereign Immunity Act, & the Privileges and Immunities of International Organizations

10/12 – State Responsibility for Wrongful Acts (Part I)

10/14 – State Responsibility for Wrongful Acts (Part II)

V. Assessment 2

10/19 – Midterm [*Please Note: The Law Center administration has not fixed the permissible dates for midterm exams, so scheduling may change whenever that decision is made. Any syllabus changes will then be made.*]

VI. Select Topics in International Law

10/21 – Prohibition on the Use of Force & the *Jus ad Bellum*

10/26 – The Laws of War (Part I)

10/28 – The Laws of War (Part II)

11/2 – International Human Rights Law (Part I)

11/4 – International Human Rights Law (Part II)

11/9 – International Criminal Law

11/11 – Midterm Review & Flex Day

11/16 – International Economic Law

11/18 – Class's Choice

VII. Class Wrap-Up

11/23 – Critiques of International Law

11/25 – NO CLASS // THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/30 – Final Review & Class Summary

VIII. Assessment 3

TBD – Final Exam (exam period is from Dec. 2 through Dec. 10)

GENERAL UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON POLICY INFORMATION

The University wants you to have the following general information about resources and policies at UH:

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

The University of Houston has a number of resources to support students' mental health and overall wellness, including CoogsCARE and the UH Go App. UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers 24/7 mental health support for all students, addressing various concerns like stress, college adjustment and sadness. CAPS provides individual and couples counseling, group therapy, workshops and connections to other support services on and off-campus. For assistance visit uh.edu/caps, call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let's Talk location in-person or virtually. Let's Talk are daily, informal confidential consultations with CAPS therapists where no appointment or paperwork is needed.

Need Support Now? - If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call CAPS crisis support 24/7 at 713-743-5454, or the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct:

Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is a "responsible employee" for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.

Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids:

The University of Houston is committed to providing an academic environment and educational programs that are accessible for its students. Any student with a disability who is experiencing barriers to learning, assessment or participation is encouraged to contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center (Dart Center) to learn more about academic accommodations and support that may be available to them. Students seeking academic accommodations will need to register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure timely implementation of approved accommodations. Please contact the Dart Center by visiting the website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/> calling (713) 743-5400, or emailing jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU.

More Student Support

The Student Health Center offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to schedule an appointment.

The A.D. Bruce Religion Center offers spiritual support and a variety of programs centered on well-being.

The Center for Student Advocacy and Community (CSAC) is where you can go if you need help but don't know where to start. CSAC is a "home away from home" and serves as a resource hub to help you get the resources needed to support academic and personal success. Through our Cougar Cupboard, all students can get up to 30 lbs of FREE groceries a week. Additionally, we provide 1:1 appointments to get you connected to on- and off-campus resources related to essential needs, safety and advocacy, and more. The Cougar Closet is a registered student organization advised by our office and offers free clothes to students so that all Coogs can feel good in their fit. We also host a series of cultural and community-based events that fosters social connection and helps the cougar community come closer together. Visit the CSAC homepage or follow us on Instagram: @uh_CSAC and @uhcupbrd. YOU belong here.

Women and Gender Resource Center:

The mission of the WGRC is to advance the University of Houston and promote the success of all students, faculty, and staff through educating, empowering, and supporting the UH community. The WGRC suite is open to you. Stop by the office for a study space, to take a break, grab a snack, or check out one of the WGRC programs or resources. Stop by Student Center South room B12 (Basement floor near Starbucks and down the hall from Creation Station) from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday.

Recording of Class:

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

Resources for Online Learning:

The University of Houston is committed to student success, and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website (<https://uh.edu/power-on/learning/>). Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including: obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, Blackboard, and Canvas; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

UH Email:

Please check and use your CougarNet email for communications related to this course. Faculty use the CougarNet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. To access your CougarNet email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your CougarNet credentials. Visit University Information Technology (UIT) for instructions on how to connect your CougarNet e-mail on a mobile device.

Security Escorts and Cougar Ride:

UHPD continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. The security escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety, please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs.

Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called “Cougar Ride” that provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/af-university-services/parking/cougar-ride/>.