

1. Informations générales :

Titre du cours :	Public international law and dispute resolution: Navigating the Legitimacy Crisis		
NOM de l'enseignant·e :	Nikolaos Karmis	Semestre :	☐ Printemps
Public visé :	☐ 1 ^{ère} année ☐ 2 ^{ème} année ☐ 1 ^{ère} année et 2 ^{ème} année	Langue :	☐ français ☐ anglais
Nombre maximal d'étudiant·es :	☐ 20 ☐ 30 ☐ 40 ☐ 50 ☐ Pas de maximum	Organisation du cours :	☐ 9 séances de 2h sur 9 semaines ☐ 12 séances de 1h30 sur 12 semaines ☐ 12 séances de 1h30 sur 6 semaines ☐ 6 séances de 3h sur 12 semaines

2. Résumé du cours :

This course introduces students to the foundational principles of international law and their application to contemporary global conflicts. It explores the primary sources of international law, the criteria for establishing state responsibility, and the roles of key institutions in the resolution of disputes. Students will engage critically with legal theory and examine landmark cases adjudicated by international courts and tribunals.

Moving beyond a strictly doctrinal approach, the course situates international law within the broader landscape of global politics. It considers how legal frameworks both shape and respond to pressing contemporary challenges, including growing concerns about the erosion of legal norms, the persistence of lawlessness in international affairs, and the perception of international law as facing an existential crisis. Particular attention is given to the proliferation of international organizations, the emergence of new actors such as cities and private entities, and the increasing influence of quasi-judicial bodies.

The course also engages with cutting-edge developments in the field, including debates over the legitimacy of international legal institutions and the evolving sources of international law, as well as the blurring of boundaries between public and private authority. It examines innovative forms of contestation, including scientific and visual evidence as tools for legal and political engagement.

Throughout, students are encouraged to reflect on how international law is mobilized, resisted, and reimagined in a world marked by both experimentation and entrenched power structures, as well as by recurring claims that the international legal order is under strain or in decline. By the end of the course, students will have developed not only a strong understanding of the foundations and transformations of public international law, but also the analytical skills to critically assess its claims to legitimacy and neutrality, and to evaluate whether narratives of crisis, breakdown, or resilience accurately capture the dynamics shaping contemporary global governance.

This course explores the structure, function, and evolving role of international courts and tribunals in the global legal order. It provides a comprehensive overview of how disputes between states, individuals, and international organizations are addressed through various judicial mechanisms beyond national jurisdictions.

The course also addresses procedural and substantive issues such as jurisdiction, admissibility, judicial independence, evidence (including scientific and technological developments), and the binding nature of decisions. It considers the limits of international adjudication, including the inability of most tribunals to annul national laws, and their primary function of issuing binding or declaratory decisions. As a concluding objective, the course invites students to critically assess the growing number of international courts and tribunals and their impact on the unity of international law. While often described as a “proliferation,” this development has not led to significant fragmentation in practice. Ultimately, this course aims to demonstrate that the multiplication of international adjudicatory bodies strengthens the rule of law by encouraging states to resolve disputes through legal means rather than political discretion. Even where disputes are complex or politically sensitive, the very process of identifying and applying legal norms fosters dialogue, stability, and a more predictable international legal order.

The aim of the course is to counter, at least partially, the assertion that international law amounts to lawlessness.

3. Pré-requis éventuels :

none

4. Modalités de contrôle des connaissances et des compétences envisagées :

Final exam

5. Description détaillée du cours (facultatif)

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