MSc in International Relations (IR)

### Information about the semester

- **Department:** Politics and Society
- **Study Board:** Board of Studies for International Affairs
- **Regulations and Curriculum:** [Curriculum for MSc in International Relations](#)
- **Semester:** 1st semester
- **Period:** Fall 2023

### Description of the semester

The semester provides the students with knowledge, skills and competences related to research design and problem-based project work, international politics and diplomacy, as well as an elective within one of the following fields: EU Studies, Global China Studies, or Global Gender Studies. Thus, the semester lays the foundation for project work on the subsequent semesters, and it provides the students with knowledge of the thematic and empirical framework of international relations, with a specific focus on international politics, conflict and security studies, as well as diplomacy, in addition to their chosen elective.

### Organization of the semester

The semester includes lectures, seminars, exercises, problem-based project work, supervision, readings groups, and simulation game. The lectures and seminars of the individual modules provide the framework for the problem-based project work, whereas exercises, readings groups and simulation game are designed to enable the students to gain an in-depth understanding of theories and empirical cases as well as to provide a practical, hands-on approach to the learning process. In their totality, the activities of the semester will enable the students to begin to develop the required competence profile, i.e., knowledge of theories and empirical cases within the field of international relations, ability to apply theories, methods and tools of the field to conduct sound analyses, and competences in cooperating on problem-based cross-disciplinary projects with international and intercultural perspectives.

### Semester coordination and secretariat

- **Study Secretary:** Katrine Sandø Stevn  
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- **Study Board Secretary:** Anne Vestergaard Larsen  
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- **Programme Coordinator 1st semester:** Lise Rolandsen Agustin  
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### Description of project modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title, ECTS credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Design and Semester project</td>
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<td>10 ECTS</td>
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### Location
1st semester

Coordinator

Malayna Raftopoulos

Language

Language of instruction: English

Content, Progress and Pedagogy of the Module

Objectives

- To provide students with an understanding of the main components of a research project including the linkages between problem identification, research questions, methodological choices and research designs.
- To give students further insight into a variety of social scientific research strategies, including qualitative and quantitative research designs and methods within the field of international relations.
- To enable students to understand and reflect critically upon various types of research designs.
- To enable students to select, describe and implement their own methodological choices and research designs addressing their research question, and to communicate their choices in their own project writing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

KNOWLEDGE

- the linkages between problem identification, research questions, methodological choices and research designs
- qualitative and quantitative social scientific methods within the field of international relations
- the application of qualitative and quantitative methods to answer international relations research questions

SKILLS

- can identify and delimit a research problem and create a research strategy suitable for answering the problem statement
- can apply their knowledge to select theories that serve the analytical purpose and at the same time remain critical to these theories.
- can collect empirical data systematically in order to solve a problem and integrate theory and empirical data on an interdisciplinary basis
- can make well-founded methodological choices in their own work
- can assess existing research in the field of international relations critically

COMPETENCES

- Can collaborate on project writing in an interdisciplinary team
- Can structure and clearly communicate knowledge obtained through project work
- Can critically reflect on and argue for choice of theory, research design and data selection in their project writing
- Can reflect on ethics and data protection in diverse settings, online as well as offline

Content

Based on knowledge and understanding of the main components of a research project, students will explore various methodological choices including concrete techniques of data selection, collection and analysis in
Qualitative and quantitative research. Focus will be on discussing quality criteria in the contexts of both qualitative and quantitative research designs in order to approach academic research designs critically. Emphasis will be placed on how students can apply and critically assess these methods in their own project work, in order to enable students to make well-founded and ethically sound choices in their own project work. Furthermore, students will gain insight into the use of digital tools for qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, and referencing, including considerations regarding ethics and data protection.

**Project organization**
- 1 semester project
- Minimum 3 student pr group

**Type of exam**
- Oral exam based on a project
- The examination for research design and semester project is an internally assessed group-based examination consisting of an oral examination on the basis of a written project. The topic of the project must be related to the modules of the semester.

1 student: min 15 pages, max 20 pages (only possible with a dispensation from the study board)
2 students: min 20 pages, max 30 pages (only possible with a dispensation from the study board)
3 students: min 25 pages, max 40 pages
4 students: min 30 pages, max 50 pages
5-6 students: min 35 pages, max 60 pages

*Duration of examination: The maximum duration of the examination is 20 minutes per student plus 10 minutes per project, up to a total limit of two hours. This includes time for grading and announcement of the result.*

Exam plan will be available on Moodle.

**Description of course modules**

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<th>Title, ECTS credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>International Politics and Diplomacy</td>
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**Location**

1st semester

**Coordinator**

Casper Sakstrup

**Language**

Language of instruction: English

**Objectives**

The objective of this module is:
- to provide students with knowledge of advanced theories on international politics, diplomacy.
- to enable students to apply distinct theoretical and methodological approaches of the field to the study of contemporary cases regarding international politics and diplomacy, for instance international law, international negotiations, conflict resolution, international political economy, and security politics.
- to enable students to analyze how different state and non-state actors influence political and diplomatic relations, conflicts and decision-making processes in the international realm including new digital forms of interaction.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
KNOWLEDGE

- theories and practices within the field of international politics and diplomacy, for instance international law, international institutions, international political economy, international negotiations and conflict resolution
- current issues and academic debates within the field of international politics and diplomacy.
- diplomatic practices and negotiation techniques.

SKILLS

- can apply theories within the module’s subject areas to analyze relevant cases and at same time remain critical to these theories.
- can identify relevant actors and understand their potential interests and demands in complex international situations.

COMPETENCES

- can reflect and argue on the basis of scientific knowledge
- can delimit and summarize complex international problem fields and communicate these findings to a target audience.
- can reflect upon the consequences of new forms of digital communication in relation to the subject field.

CONTENT

The module is an advanced, interdisciplinary module that presupposes knowledge of basic IR theories. The module takes its point of departure in the development and transitions of international relations by means of concrete case-studies and theoretical approaches from the literature on i.e., international law, international politics, and diplomacy. The focus will be on current debates and events, covering a variety of geographical settings and online and offline problem areas. Together with the electives, the module will provide inspiration for theoretical and practical work in the project module of the semester.

TYPE OF INSTRUCTION

- The module consists of lectures, exercises, student contributions, reading groups and a simulation game with position papers.
- Instructors: Casper Sakstrup, Li Xing, Malayna Raftopoulos-Chavarría, and Giovanni Giamello.

Type of exam

Written exam

The examination for International Politics and Diplomacy is an internally assessed written examination. The written exam consists of a 72-hour take-home assignment. The assignment paper must not exceed 8 pages.

Evaluation: Grading according to the 7-point scale.

1st semester electives

<table>
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<th>Title, ECTS credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Global Gender Studies</td>
<td>10 ECTS</td>
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Location

1st semester

Coordinator

Marlene Spanger

Language

Language of instruction: English
Objectives
The objective of this module is:

- To provide students with knowledge on theories, methods and practices within the field of gender and global studies.
- To enable students to analyze and discuss key elements of the research field of gender and global studies in relation to empirical cases and reflect on these on a scientific basis.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

KNOWLEDGE

- theories, methods and practices within the field of gender and global studies
- key issues and themes within the field of gender and global studies and various approaches to the study of these themes

SKILLS

- can apply knowledge within the module’s subject areas to select theories and methods that serve the analytical purpose and at the same time remain critical to these theories and methods
- can apply relevant theories and methods of the field to empirical cases

COMPETENCES

- can reflect upon and analyze policies as well as processes and actors within the field of international relations from a gender perspective
- can reflect and argue on the basis of scientific knowledge.

CONTENT

The module will provide students with knowledge about and insight into the area of gender and global studies. It will include discussions of specific cases and case studies in which gender, intersectionality and equality can be understood from national, regional and global perspectives, including in the context of institutions such as the EU and the UN. Emphasis will be placed on the theorization of gender and policies within the fields of development and international relations, on possibilities and limitations of international law and human rights, on the role of gender and diversity in international organizational settings, and on analyses of gender, equality, refugee and anti-trafficking policies exemplified in various contexts and parts of the world. The module will provide inspiration for theoretical and practical work within the field in the project module of the semester.

TYPE OF INSTRUCTION

- The course will include lectures, exercises, group work and seminars with student contributions.

Type of exam

Oral exam

The examination for Global Gender Studies is an internally assessed individual oral examination. The examination will take the form of a conversation between the student and the examiners about a question posed within the syllabus of the module.

Duration of examination: 20 min, including grading and announcement of result.
Preparation time: 20 minutes

Evaluation: Passed/not passed
Location
1st semester

Coordinator
Dominik Schraff

Language
Language of instruction: English

Objectives
The objective of this module is:

• to provide students with knowledge on the EU integration process and the relevant theories for its understanding
• to provide students with knowledge of today’s EU institutions and decision-making procedures
• to enable students to analyze and discuss the democratic dimensions of European integration

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

KNOWLEDGE

• knowledge of the historical development of the EU integration process
• main theories of EU integration
• detailed knowledge of the EU decision-making procedures
• understanding central debates on the democratic legitimacy of EU governance

SKILLS

• can select and apply relevant theories to understand EU integration processes and critically reflect on their strengths and weaknesses
• can reflect upon democratic dimensions of the European integration process
• can relate today’s EU politics to the historical development of EU integration

COMPETENCES

• can reflect and argue on the basis of scientific reasoning
• can discuss the strength and weaknesses of different theoretical approaches
• is able to apply theory to empirical data and analyze problem issues within the field of EU politics
• can communicate succinctly and precisely about key elements of EU politics and EU institutions to a targeted audience
• can use digital tools to identify and analyze key elements of EU institutions and decision-making processes.

CONTENT

This module introduces a specific set of skills and competences that provide the foundations for an in-depth understanding of European politics. Compared to other field of International Relations, European Politics is characterized by its own set of theories and unique institutions and practices. Most of the EU integration theories have their roots in classical IR theories but have been extended and adapted to the impressive and deep level of cooperation that developed in post-World War II Europe. Due to this deep integration, the EU has also become a player on the international arena, reshaping International Relations.

The module gives in-depth knowledge of the European Union (EU), where it comes from, what it is, how it works and how it relates to Member States and society. The module will focus on three key aspects: 1) ap-
proaches to understanding the development and nature of the EU; 2) today’s EU institutions, their tasks, orga-
ganization, and the relations between the institutions, as well as between the institutions and the Member States; and 3) the democratic dimension of EU politics. The module also introduces digital platforms and tools providing knowledge about EU institutions and decision-making processes.

**TYPE OF INSTRUCTION**
- The module consists of lectures, seminars and exercises.
- Instructors: Dominik Schraff, Anita Nissen

**Type of exam**
- Oral exam

The examination for EU Polity and Politics is an internally assessed individual oral examination. The examination will take the form of a conversation between the student and the examiners about a question posed within the syllabus of the module.

Duration of examination: 20 min, including grading and announcement of result.
Preparation time: 20 minutes

Evaluation: Passed/not passed
Global China: Politics and Institutions

10 ECTS, corresponding to a total work load of 270 hours.

**Location**

1st semester

**Coordinator**

Jesper Willaing Zeuthen

**Study Board**

SNIF, Aalborg Campus

**Language**

Language of instruction: English

**Objectives**

*The objective of this module is:*

- To provide students with a basic understanding of Chinese history, culture and contemporary political and social development and to introduce the students to a selection of relevant theoretical perspectives commonly applied in Chinese area studies.
- To provide the students with a solid understanding of China’s foreign policy and international relations linking this to domestic socio-political development as well as contemporary Chinese self-understanding and worldview(s) and addressing how and why China has reached its status within the international system today.
- To allow students to work independently with China-related issues and enable them to analyze contemporary Chinese society and international engagement from an interdisciplinary perspective.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**KNOWLEDGE**

- To provide students with a basic understanding of Chinese history, culture and contemporary political and social development and to introduce the students to a selection of relevant theoretical perspectives commonly applied in Chinese area studies.
- To provide the students with a solid understanding of China’s foreign policy and international relations linking this to domestic socio-political development as well as contemporary Chinese self-understanding and worldview(s) and addressing how and why China has reached its status within the international system today.
- To allow students to work independently with China-related issues and enable them to analyze contemporary Chinese society and international engagement from an interdisciplinary perspective.

**SKILLS**

- To provide students with a basic understanding of Chinese history, culture and contemporary political and social development and to introduce the students to a selection of relevant theoretical perspectives commonly applied in Chinese area studies.
- To provide the students with a solid understanding of China’s foreign policy and international relations linking this to domestic socio-political development as well as contemporary Chinese self-understanding and worldview(s) and addressing how and why China has reached its status within the international system today.
- To allow students to work independently with China-related issues and enable them to analyze contemporary Chinese society and international engagement from an interdisciplinary perspective.

**COMPETENCES**

- Can reflect and argue on the basis of scientific knowledge while respecting different perspectives.
- Can use their understanding of contemporary Chinese society and global engagement to work professionally in a China related context.

**CONTENT**
The module includes themes within China’s socio-political transformation, including traditions in China’s political and social history and the transitions in Chinese society after the beginning of the reform period, thereby informing a discussion of Chinese self-perception, Chinese perceptions of the world and global perceptions of China. This is used as the basis for understanding Chinese foreign policy and China’s engagement in global institutions, applying Chinese as well as Western perspectives and theoretical frameworks, and discussing how digital platforms affect domestic and international political engagement. This understanding of China’s global role is closely linked to central discussions in IR, and plays a crucial role for understanding the development of the current world order.

The module is linked to the Global China Studies module on the second semester, but it is possible to follow the modules individually.

**TYPE OF INSTRUCTION**

- **The module consists of lectures and seminars as well as exercises and student contributions.**
- **Period: Fall semester 2023. The lectures will be scheduled in September and October, and the exam will be in November. There is a total of nine lectures three hours each.**
- **Jesper Zeuthen, Li Xing and Wang Sen**
- **For information about the required readings etc. please see the relevant Moodle room.**

**Type of exam**

*Oral exam*

The examination for Global China Studies is an internally assessed individual oral examination. The examination will take the form of a conversation between the student and the examiners about a question posed within the syllabus of the module.

Duration of examination: 20 min, including grading and announcement of result.

Preparation time: 20 minutes, all material is allowed.

Evaluation: Passed/not passed

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