INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS: 
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

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Course description

This class will familiarize you with more than a dozen governmental and private-sector international organizations dealing with cross-border trade and financial flows. We will learn what they do and how they do it; examine how they have become more or less effective and relevant in light of the fast-paced globalization since the 1960s; study the challenges these institutions have faced and face currently; and discuss how they attempt to shape, but are also in turn shaped, by developments outside of their control.

The learning objective of this course, which will be tested in various ways, is to become familiar with the essential vocabulary, analytical tools, theoretical concepts, practical applications, institutional features, and economic and financial aspects of a variety of international economic organizations. You should learn how to apply concepts and theories from international economics and political economy to explain some of the workings of the global economy, and you will have the chance to develop and execute a research project to integrate theory and empirics, and to further develop your analytical and writing skills.

Course requirements and grading

During most of each class, I will cover the main ideas conveyed by the assigned readings, and during the remainder I will answer questions and guide a class discussion of the topic at hand. In order to reap the benefits from the course, you should plan on attending every class and on doing all of the required readings before coming to class. To encourage reading ahead of class, there will be a few “surprise” quizzes handed out during the semester, at the start of some of the classes. There is no need to purchase any books; all the required readings are posted on Blackboard.

You will compete for grades with your classmates, and to minimize grade inflation, grades are subject to the binding constraint that no more than one-third (1/3) of the class will receive an “A” or “A-” letter grade – no matter how high or low is the average score of the class in the individual assignments. Students scoring close to the class
average – whatever that average turns out to be – will be assigned a grade in the “B” range.

The course requirements are two multiple-choice exams to take place on Tuesday, October 6\textsuperscript{th} and December 1\textsuperscript{st}, respectively, plus one essay written on the topic specified at the end of this syllabus, to be delivered via e-mail by noon on Friday, December 11\textsuperscript{th} at the latest. The quizzes will contribute to 10% of the final grade; the exams will count for 25% each; and the essay will account for the final 40%.

Being a member of the AU academic community entitles each of us to a wide degree of freedom in the pursuit of scholarly interests. With that freedom, however, comes a responsibility to uphold the high ethical standards of scholarly conduct. By registering in this course, you acknowledge your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and are obliged to become familiar with the rights and responsibilities therein. All work done in class or outside of class, whether oral or written, is governed by its provisions. Academic violations include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, dishonesty in examinations whether in class or take-home, dishonesty in papers, work done for one course and submitted for another, deliberate falsification of data, interference with other students’ work, and copyright violations. The adjudication process and possible penalties are listed in AU’s Academic Integrity Code, available on the AU website (at www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.htm).

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to you. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. I will communicate class-specific information to you via AU e-mail and Blackboard, and you must inform me immediately of any absence due to illness. You are responsible for checking your AU e-mail regularly and for keeping yourself informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, you should refer to the AU Website (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact me and your respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.

Schedule and readings

August 25: Introduction to International Economic Organizations

Required readings:

September 1: Bilateral Investment Treaties and the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)

Required readings:

September 8: The International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Required readings:

September 15: The African Development Bank (AfDB)

Required readings:

September 22: The Paris Club

Required readings:

September 29: The Bank for International Settlements (BIS)

Required readings:

October 6: Exam #1: Multiple-Choice Questions

October 13: The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

Required readings:

October 20: The International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

Required readings:
October 27: Credit Rating Agencies

Required readings:

November 3: The Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS)

Required readings: 

TO BE ANNOUNCED

November 10: Sophisticated Financial Intermediaries (investment banks, hedge funds, and private equity funds)

Required readings:

TO BE ANNOUNCED

November 17: Discussion of Final Essay and Exam

November 24: No Class Meeting: Thanksgiving

December 1: Exam #2: Multiple-Choice Questions

December 11: E-mail Versions of Essay Due by 12 noon

Instructions for the Essay:

Choose to focus either on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for your paper with a maximum
length of 2,000 words, a ceiling from which footnotes, tables, charts and the bibliography are excluded. The paper should include quotes from at least five (5) serious academic or governmental sources excluding IMF or IBRD documents; namely, you can and should cite leading newspapers, magazines and blogs, as well as IMF or IBRD documents, but they don’t count toward the minimum.

During 2008 and the first half of 2009, the governments that own and run the IMF and IBRD encouraged and authorized those institutions to take a variety of initiatives to cushion the impact of the worldwide recession and disruption in financial markets on their member countries. Provide first of all a summary table of these initiatives, listing announcement and implementation dates; amounts committed and disbursed through mid-2009 or later; designated purposes, qualifications or requirements specified; and the names of the governments that took advantage of what was on offer.

Secondly (and this is where the 2,000-word limit applies), provide an assessment of these initiatives, citing how a sample of policymakers, civil-society leaders, local politicians, academics, and journalists or editorial or op-ed writers have welcomed or criticized them; cite any available evidence on whether the initiatives had their intended (or any unintended) effects; and give your own personal opinion on whether the IMF or IBRD “rose to the challenge” or failed to do so, and proved their usefulness – or their irrelevance.