

1. **Course Name: Many Faces of International Law**

2. **Faculty Name: Rohini Sen**

3. **Credit Type: Law**

4. **Cross Listed: Yes**

5. **Course Description**

Mainstream International Law Scholarship (MILS), despite its Eurocentrism, is often presented as the sole and universal narrative of International Law and its practice. However, while there is robust scholarship on various critical interventions that challenge a singular, a-historic account of the discipline, these counter narratives to MILS are rarely included in its teaching with the same enthusiasm. Critical approaches to International Law (in other words, International Law *as it really is*) are either subsumed into MILS as criticisms of the mainstream or, are introduced as elective courses (such as this) as specialisations ‘following the mainstream’. The risk with such formulations lie in the fact that they:

- a) Conflates criticism with critique
- b) Assume that critique means ‘theory’, reducing theory to something extrinsic to doctrines.
- c) Reifies MILS and its deeply unequal foundations,
- d) Retains the misplaced idea of international law’s universality and ahistorical contours/

This course, while categorized as an elective, is an effort to set the story straight and diffuse this false universalism. The idea behind this course is to understand international law for *what it is, what it does and what it can and cannot be*.

The aim is to critically engage with it as a site of ‘critical instability; as a powerful tool of hegemonic politics and control and as a site of change and resistance. With this in mind, the course will ***revisit and reframe some core concepts and ideas of international law(s) through encounters, historic events, institutions and processes, mostly from the vantage of its peripheral subjects.***

Learning/teaching public international law in India treads a fine balance between legal positivism (‘learn the law’) and critique (‘law in context, as a social process’). Keeping these considerations in mind, this course will explore the forms, boundaries and limits of international laws through some illustrative questions:

- What is the relationship between mainstream and critical approaches to international law?
- How can we engage with critical approaches meaningfully?
- Can we reframe core international law concepts more equitably?
- Where does knowledge about international law come from?

As stated before, Many Faces of International Law is a course that re-frames core ideas and concepts of public international law as commonly taught/understood in law school curriculum. While this is usually offered as an elective to those who have completed a MILS course (PIL

course), it may be taken as a standalone subject as well and will hopefully, in future, be one of the many ways of teaching international law that is mainstreamed.

6. Course Aims

This course hopes to inculcate critical thinking and the ability to conceptually reorient. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Display the ability to think critically, reflexively about international legal norms, their histories and contexts.
- Carefully examine the historical forces, political undercurrents and ideological battles that inform the different narratives of international law.
- Have an overall understanding of law as a social process and why it is necessary to think about it through interdisciplinarity.
- Make written/oral/any other mode of creative presentations which are self-reflexive, coherent, demonstrate critical thinking and, offer interesting insights.

7. Teaching Methodology

The course is usually conducted through a combination of lectures, seminar style discussions and embodied learning with group work. Weekly readings are assigned to students for class discussions, reflections and presentations. The instructor introduces every module and core concepts through lectures and base-materials (a journal article, book-excerpts, and cases).

Students are expected to complete 70% of the assigned readings each week.

8. Course Design and Overview (Weekly Plan)

Week	Topics
1.	Reading International Law in Context Introducing some popular international law cases and concepts through their historical, social and political contexts.
2.	Sources of International Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critically understanding the ‘traditional’ sources of international law - Evaluating the limits of Doctrine as Method - Engaging with some ‘new’ sources beyond Article 38(1)(d)
3.	Imperialism, Empire and Legacy: International Legal Actors and Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding the framework of ‘Critical Instability’ of International Law - Analyzing three key moments in international law using this framework Decolonization, PSNR, Investor-state relationships
4.	Imperialism, Empire and Legacy: International Legal Actors and Processes (contd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding the role of development as powerful force in shaping international law - Understanding the role of corporations in shaping international law
5.	

	Critique and Mainstream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding the complex relationship between terms such as mainstream and critique through concepts and people. - Introduction to TWAIL as an approach, its journey and future projects
6.	TWAIL: Methodology, Projects and Paradoxes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussing limits and limitations of TWAIL as a project - Understanding its core engagement with Marxist concepts and frameworks - Discussing a different methodological move of International Law in small places.
7.	Feminist Approaches to International Law: Toolkit an Toybox <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introducing the history and framework of TWAIL Feminisms - Case studies through International Conflict Feminisms
8.	Feminist Approaches to International Law: Reading Against the Grain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case studies from the Feminist Judgement Project
9.	Unpacking Sovereignty and Territoriality in International Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does sovereignty work as a process through ideas of gender? - Colonization and its continued impact on modern sovereignty and territories (case study) - Different imaginations of sovereignty through indigenous legal landscapes (case study)
10.	Money, Debt and International Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role and power of international financial institutions on international law - Odious debt as a legal counterpoint to colonial extraction (case study)
11.	Common Heritage of Mankind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding the role of oceans in the making of international law - Three legal turns in ocean governance - Learning to see the ocean as an expansive, interconnected force (documentary screening)
12.	Knowledge-making in International Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is knowledge and expertise in international law? - How are dominant narratives produces in such knowledge-making? - What is our relationship to such knowledge? -
13.	Religion and International Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does religion influence the international legal framework? <p>a) historically, b) conceptually, c) materially. b)</p>
14.	REVISION WEEK [Note: There shall be teaching classes scheduled during the fourteenth week subject to the JGU Academic Calendar circulated by the Office of the Registrar, JGU and any official declaration of non-working days by the JGU Registrar.]

9. Ten Essential Readings

1. Anghie, Anthony. Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law (CUP, 2004).

2. Buss & Manji (eds), *International Law Modern Feminist Approaches* (Hart, 2005).
3. Chalmers and Pahuja (eds), *Routledge Handbook of International Law and the Humanities*.
4. *TWAIL Handbook*, 2026
5. C.H. Alexandrowicz, 'An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies: (16th, 17th and 18th Centuries)' (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).
6. Pahuja, S. (2011). *Decolonizing International Law: Development, Economic Growth and the Politics of Universality* (Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
7. *The Battle for International Law: South-North Perspectives on the Decolonization Era*, *The History and Theory of International Law* (Oxford, 2019)
8. Loveday Hodson and Troy Lavers (eds), *Feminist Judgements in International Law*, Bloomsbury Publications, 2019
9. Irene Watson, *Aboriginal People, Colonialism and International Law*, *Raw Law*, Routledge 2016
10. Margaret Davies, *Eco Law- Legality, Life and Normativity of Nature*, Routledge 2022.