

Course Form for PKU Summer School International 2026

Course Title	Title in English: An Introduction to International Organizations Law
	Title in Chinese: 国际组织法导论
Teacher	Peter Quayle, Chen Yifeng
First day of classes	6 July 2026
Last day of classes	17 July 2026
Course Credit	3 credits
Course Description	
Objective:	
This summer course introduces the law both enabling and governing every international organization. The objective is to possess students of a foundational understanding of international organizations law.	
Pre-requisites /Target audience	
Some exposure to general international law is advantageous, but not a pre-requisite. The course is relevant to all students interested in multilateralism today.	
Proceeding of the Course	
The course is taught over 10 sessions, compromising x3, 50-minute classes, each day and one field trip.	
Assignments (essay or other forms)	
The course is taught through lectures, structured seminars based upon assigned readings and student presentations on set subjects.	
Evaluation Details	
Students are assessed through in-class participation (50%) and a final 3,000 word essay (50%).	
Text Books and Reading Materials	
Jan Klabbers, <i>An Introduction to International Organizations Law</i> (CUP, 2022)	
Academic Integrity (If necessary)	
CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to adjustment)	

Session 1: History and Theory of International Organizations	Date:
1.1, Lecture: International Organizations in the 19th Century 1.2, Lecture: The League of Nations, 1920-1946 1.3, Seminar: Theorising International Organizations	
1. What are the origins of today's international organizations? 2. Why were international organizations 'invented'? 3. What lessons did the League of Nations teach post-WWII international organization formation?	
Klabbers, Ch. 1, Introduction Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, 'Why States Act through Formal International Organizations' (1998)	
Students should begin by reading the chapter set from <i>Klabbers</i> , before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.	
Session 2: Constituent Instruments and Treaty Interpretation	Date:
2.1, Lecture: Constituent Instruments and Treaty Interpretation 2.2, Seminar: ICJ Advisory Opinions— <i>First Admissions</i> and <i>Second Admissions</i> 2.3, Seminar: Functionalism	
1. How do we authoritatively interpret the treaty-basis of an international organization? 2. What do the <i>Admissions</i> cases tell us about the correct interpretation of constituent instruments? 3. What is the meaning and the significance of the theory of 'functionalism'?	
Klabbers, Ch. 4, International Organizations and the Law of Treaties ICJ Advisory Opinion, <i>First Admissions</i> (1948) ICJ Advisory Opinion, <i>Second Admissions</i> (1950) Jan Klabbers, 'The EJIL Foreword: The Transformation of International Organizations Law' (2015), only read pages 22-29, 'An Outline of Functionalism'	
Students should begin by reading the chapter set from <i>Klabbers</i> , before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.	
Session 3: Member States and Governance Structures	Date:
3.1, Lecture: Member States and Governance Structures I 3.2, Lecture: Member States and Governance Structures II 3.3, Seminar: ICJ Advisory Opinion— <i>Effects of Awards</i>	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What governance organs do international organizations habitually possess and why? 2. What are the conventional ways of distributing Member State influence within an international organization? 3. What is the relationship between the way in which Member States are represented and the legitimacy of an international organization? 	
<p>Klabbers, Ch. 10, Institutional Structures</p> <p>ICJ Advisory Opinion, <i>Effects of Awards</i> (1954)</p> <p>Martti Koskenniemi, 'The Police in the Temple Order, Justice and the UN: A Dialectical View' (1995)</p>	
<p>Students should begin by reading the chapters set from <i>Klabbers</i>, before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.</p>	
<p>Session 4: International Legal Personality and Powers</p>	<p>Date:</p>
<p>4.1, Lecture: International Legal Personality and Powers I</p> <p>4.2, Lecture: International Legal Personality and Powers II</p> <p>4.3, Seminar: ICJ Advisory Opinions—<i>Reparation for Injuries and Use of Nuclear Weapons in Armed Conflict</i></p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kind of legal personality do international organizations possess and why? 2. What's the distinction between a limited and general competence of international entities? 3. In what circumstances could the action of an international organization be legally characterized as <i>ultra vires</i>? 	
<p>Klabbers, Ch. 3, The Legal Position of International Organizations</p> <p>ICJ Advisory Opinion, <i>Reparation for Injuries</i> (1949)</p> <p>ICJ Advisory Opinion, <i>Use of Nuclear Weapons in Armed Conflict</i> (1996)</p>	
<p>Students should begin by reading the chapter set from <i>Klabbers</i>, before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.</p>	
<p>Session 5: Secretariats</p>	<p>Date:</p>
<p>5.1, Lecture: Leaders of International Organizations</p> <p>5.2, Lecture: International Civil Servants</p> <p>5.3, Seminar: International Administrative Tribunals</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are the leaders of international organizations chosen? 2. What powers and responsibilities do the leaders of international organizations possess? 3. What are the legal attributes of the international civil service? 	

<p>Klabbers, Ch. 11, The Bureaucracy</p> <p>Chris de Cooker, 'Proliferation of International Administrative Tribunals' (2022)</p> <p>World Bank Administrative Tribunal, Decision No. 1, <i>de Merode et al v The World Bank</i> (1981)</p>	
<p>Students should begin by reading the chapter set from <i>Klabbers</i>, before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.</p>	
Session 6: Privileges and Immunities	Date:
<p>6.1, Lecture: Privileges and Immunities I</p> <p>6.2, Lecture: Privileges and Immunities II</p> <p>6.3, Seminar: Liability and Accountability</p>	
<p>1. What is the legal basis of the privileges and immunities of international organizations?</p> <p>2. What is the distinction between 'functional' and 'absolute' immunity?</p> <p>3. What is the purpose of the privileges and immunities of international organizations and how does this relate to their accountability?</p>	
<p>Klabbers, Ch. 1, Privileges and Immunities and Ch. 14, Issues of Responsibility</p>	
<p>Students should begin by reading the chapters set from <i>Klabbers</i>, before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.</p>	
Session 7: Financing	Date:
<p>7.1, Lecture: Funding and Expenditure</p> <p>7.2, Seminar: ICJ Advisory Opinions—<i>Effects of Awards</i> and <i>Certain Expenses</i></p> <p>7.3, Seminar: International Financial Institutions</p>	
<p>1. In what ways are the operations of international organizations funded?</p> <p>2. What constitute expenses of an international organization?</p> <p>3. How do international financial institutions achieve their purposes?</p>	
<p>Klabbers, Ch. 6, Financing</p> <p>ICJ Advisory Opinion, <i>Certain Expenses</i> (1962)</p> <p>Gerard Sanders, 'The Historical Roots of International Financial Institutions and Their Impact on the Purposes and Governance of these Organizations' (2022)</p>	
<p>Students should begin by reading the chapter set from <i>Klabbers</i>, before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.</p>	
Session 8: Field Trip	Date:

Field Trip: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Headquarters

1. In what way is the AIIB similar to and dissimilar from other international financial institutions?
2. How is the AIIB governed?
3. What is the legal status of the AIIB within the jurisdiction of its Member States?

MPEIL, Xuan Gao and Peter Quayle, 'Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank'

Students should read the assigned entry from the Max Planck Encyclopedia of International Law.

Session 9: Typologies of International Organizations

Date:

- 9.1, Lecture: Typologies of International Organizations
- 9.2, Student Presentations: International Organizations Today I
- 9.3, Student Presentations: International Organizations Today II

1. What are the principal types and significance of categorizing international organizations?

N/A

Working in small groups, students will be assigned an international organization and prepare a presentation about its constituent instrument, membership, governance structures, privileges and immunities, financing basis, leadership and bureaucratic profile.

Session 10: Evolution of International Organizations

Date:

- 10.1, Lecture: Suspension, Withdrawal and Dissolution
- 10.2, Lecture: Adaptation, Supersession, Obsolescence?
- 10.3, Seminar: International Relations and International Organizations

1. Under what circumstances are Member States suspended from and able to withdraw from an international organization?
2. What has to happen if an international organization is dissolved?
3. Are international organizations essential to international relations?

Klabbers, Ch. 9, Dissolution and Succession

Andrew Guzman, 'International Organizations and the Frankenstein Problem' (2013)

Jacob Katz Cogan, 'Representation and Power in International Organization: The Operational Constitution and Its Critics' (2009)

Students should begin by reading the chapter set from *Klabbers*, before reading other assigned journal articles and cases. Students must be prepared to be called upon in class to summarize journal articles and cases, e.g., facts, legal controversies, rival arguments, theories etc. and participate actively in discussion.