

# Global Studies program

## An introduction to global studies

Over time, interstate studies became "international relations", and then research into world order and its future. The discipline was then further divided into "theories of international relations", survey of "international organizations", or work on "international political economy", "conflict resolution" and "peace research", "geopolitics", etc. Stranger titles such as "polemology" (the comparative study of wars) or more specialized ones, like "geostrategy", are only occasionally employed.

So why, in this course, have we grouped them all under the heading "global studies"? For three reasons, at the very least.

First, by raising the level of analysis, globality is opposed to *locality*, *localism*, *local*, and *parochial*. We no longer live "at the time of our bell tower" as evoked after the Second World War by the famous Swiss historian Luthy (today, by analogy, the NIMBY mindset is not as effective as it used to be). Territorial States are in difficulty. And what unites them, sometimes without their inhabitants being conscious of it, will be highlighted here as an underlying narrative which shows their real interdependence often hidden behind their conflicts.

Second, and more generally, global is distinguishable from all that is *particular*. Without ignoring the differences between the units of observation, these units really have more in common than all those who think they are unique in the world. In order to realize that "the universal" is everywhere, we have to be aware of the different conceptions of life and power, but also and above all to overcome them.

Finally, though subdividing knowledge is useful to explore areas that would probably remain neglected if researchers did not specialize, sooner or later these specialist fields need to be combined and become more *general*, to enable trans-historical lesson-drawing from scattered, geographical observations.

And in addition to such academic benefits, there are strong scientific reasons for this approach.

For example, it is impossible to separate *nature* from *culture*, as our planet forms a far-reaching whole. Humans are animals too, and have a biosphere to protect, a "sixth extinction" to avoid, and this "transhumanist" responsibility (which brings all living things together around the human), comes from this new era that they dominate: "the Anthropocene".

A last remark: being global doesn't mean separating the present from the past on the pretext that we have to focus on events we have witnessed, because *the long run* historically matters. And we need to question what future is being forged before our eyes, which scenarios are the most or least probable, how to draw lessons from what has already happened to avoid committing the same miscalculations.

Three causal chains therefore form the heart of global studies:

- (1) the axis that goes from local/specific to general/universal;
- (2) the axis that goes from as-yet unconquered areas without known limits to sovereign territories with state borders;
- (3) the axis starting from the most distant past and ending in a science fictional future.

This is what the idea of "globalizing" our research object offers to those who embark on this venture.

It is possible to go even further and to see that the world itself is becoming more globalized than it has ever been.

Studies thus become global to mirror the globalization of their objects.

## A new method for a new object

Let's look at some examples.

In the past, national economies communicated with each other, of course; but it was still possible for countries to implement opposing economic policies – to stimulate supply or boost demand.

Today all "Keynesianism" has become impossible *within a state* (and only remains effective within large regional organizations such as the European Union). If you boost demand, consumers will import products made abroad. If you stimulate supply, the capitalists will place their profits in tax havens.

And on the labor side, raising wages and the level of social protection is a source of pride, a proof of humanism, and a factor of internal economic efficiency, except when the economy loses its edge facing less socially demanding foreign competitors.

Is it different for culture? How can a language, lifestyle or works of art easily be protected at the age of social networking and instant exchange of information that reaches the entire planet in seconds?

Can we consider political institutions as protective entities? Well, they are old (democracy began with antiquity), and supreme laws created them. They distinguish

between charters of individual rights, arrangements governing relations between public authorities, and questions of national sovereignty vis-à-vis international organizations.

All this converges to make them stronger than national economies, and less exposed to external change than social fabrics are.

Political Institutions have been set up in waves, albeit from the same initial source.

For example, the representative democracy that grew from the three 18<sup>th</sup> century (English, American, French) revolutions; the 19<sup>th</sup> century European revolutions between 1830 and 1848 which produced constitutions to protect the people; elective democracy in Central Europe and Latin America, which came in the wake of the fall of communism; the Arab revolutions which all occurred and almost all failed simultaneously; and the populism, antiparlamentarianism and anti-elitism building up throughout the world right now, with as noteworthy examples, the Philippines, Italy, the USA and the Netherlands.

Be it through fundamental laws, the organization of partisan competition, or ideological rivalries, singularities are fading away, and the once impervious political systems are breaking down; intellectual influences are spreading throughout the world; the copying and borrowing of new trends is unstoppable.

Finally, now that we are all connected – and thanks to these new kinds of "distant" social links that do not rely on face-to-face relations – our habits are constantly under observation. This is as true of the "social networks" as submarine telecommunications cables, fiber optics, satellite wave transmission, live news channels, etc.

In this vast movement globalizing social and international relations, we are all exposed to the same natural risks like disasters caused by climate change, and are victims of the same threats like Islamic terrorism or a nuclear winter. We are now carriers or recipients of the same ideas, like prioritizing gender or ethnic equality over the class struggle.

And we are all forced to decide on the scope of our sovereignty, to establish what is best suited to our needs and desires – local, state, regional, or world level governance?

We are also asked to choose between supranational and national legal institutions. Few of us escape these injunctions, few are immune to the constant need to justify everything that is thought, said, and done, so as never to hurt anyone and not to "insult the future."

As we can see, the combination of a globalized object and globalized knowledge inevitably leads to the globalization of ongoing research, thus leaving behind the traditional framework of intergovernmental studies.

## A new organization of the world

A last element of globalization also weighs on our future: new stakeholders are imposing themselves worldwide, managing to shake up governments and diplomacy. Multilateral organizations (such as the UN or the WTO), sector coordination (such as in the now highly decentralized and privatized Internet), international NGOs, business and

industry associations, think tanks, Nobel Peace Prize winners, foundations, funds, transnational banks, etc. – but also international protest movements, such as terrorism.

Besides, these heterogeneous entities network together, and cooperate sustainably, regardless of the sector of activity they were initially assigned. They interfere and decide wherever they go. Or, they block consensus, and by doing so are a significant nuisance for states and large IGOs.

This growing spectrum of associated or rival entities, and the threads they voluntarily or unwittingly weave, give birth to new, changing global norms, which are clearly incompatible with the idea of an *anarchical world* order that formed the foundations for the interstate relations theories we once relied on.

Global Anarchy means "lack of *global norms*", whereas these entities constantly create new ones.

Some of these norms even contradict former state-enacted ones. For example, the responsibility to protect that allows military intervention in a United Nations member state opposes the ban on interfering in its domestic affairs.

The protection of human rights that releases a defendant whenever the court proceedings fail to comply with European standards, results in judicial verdicts that contradict a UN member state's national law.

Other norms compete with pre-existing systems of values dating back thousands of years (such as Islamic, African, Andean, or Asian values).

Thus, a *world order* is being created that is *more complex and more complete* than the previous orders (or disorders), as reached during the earlier phases of globalization.

It is also *more enduring*, self-sustainable and long lasting than the previous phases of world history which were successively dominated by the ancient Mediterranean or Chinese, then Iberian, and finally Northern European civilizations.

This global order, though not perfect, is *more stable* than in the past, though it could be considered as a form of unstable equilibrium that is always under threat, and constantly being reconstituted.

It is close to optimal (meaning that it cannot be improved without risking ruining what is already satisfactory), which in turn makes it *sub-optimal* (there is room for manoeuvre before adjustment is no longer required).

Finally, it is a more peaceful order, although it would be more appropriate to use the term "*pacification*": what we have achieved is a moment in the history of humanity at which *processes* are emerging, without having reached a final state of durable and just peace.

We have fewer wars but we do not yet enjoy Peace with a capital P; the economic war is being won through redistribution, yet we are still a far cry from full social and geographical justice.

In short, the general philosophy of this course is that we are no longer in a situation in which states are the main if not the only world stakeholders. They no longer fully control collective decision-making and legitimately exercised violence against outlaws.

Their territorial sovereignty is incomplete; their military strategy increasingly depends on organizations that have superseded them (such as NATO); their behind closed doors armchair diplomacy is competing face-to-face with both the so-called "public diplomacy" (relying on "soft power" rather than "hard power") and the direct, transparent, and private relationships that NGOs and social networks make possible via the Internet.

## The content of the program

The Global Studies program consists of *three courses*.

### Global studies: the future of globalization

This focuses on the future of the globalization processes underway in all areas of social and international life. These processes face *resistance* that is worthy of study, which they often *overcome* thanks to their strength, speed and most importantly, constantly flowing sources of interconnection (flow of goods and services, information, ideas, human beings).

Instead of the age-old opposition between progressive and conservative, political and social movements end up dividing the *supporters of global change* (who side with institutional and economic arrangements placed above the country-level) and *supporters of stability and proximity* that are now disturbed by the delegation of power to distant decision-makers forging projects that are little discussed nationally (which they seek to protect themselves from).

Instead of nationalist struggles, the class struggle, or even the clash that theorists have named "materialist / post materialist" (including the interesting move from conflicts such as left / right, Democrat / Republican or Labor / Conservative, to gender and ethnicity conflicts), here we are witnessing *the "integrationist" versus "demarcationist" clash*.

### Global studies, from risks to threats

This course assesses the danger of natural hazards, their increasingly destructive force, the variety of ensuing disasters, but also the increasing weight of demographic and migratory phenomena on international realities.

It examines influential world policy makers' reactions to these risks, the threats they pose to each other, be it military or economic, their unequal capacity and willingness to face these challenges, the reorganization of the system of powers which until now ensured a semblance of order in the disorder of things, the shifting of the once rich/poor, East-West axis towards an axis from the "global north" to the "global south".

In short, the course highlights major powers' unequal capacity to react to the new dangers, the rising and other powers, and the international actors' vulnerability to the same problems, unsolvable in the short term. It's every person for herself.

The existence of "global public harms" has thus led to concern about the production and distribution of "global public goods".

### Global Studies: World Order, Cultures and Organizations

This course shows how today's cultures and civilizations, political philosophies and ideologies, political regimes and multilateral governmental and non-governmental organizations operate to *overcome these challenges* and to assure most of the world's population benefits from physical security and social protection.

Throughout the world, there have always been cases of specificity versus universality, similarity vs. difference, intolerance of others vs. recognition of their equal value.

Over at least the last five thousand years, groups and *alliances* have been formed. Because we are confronted to the multiplicity of problems and the acceleration of change, better organization of world affairs is needed: *agencies with global competences* to enable states to cooperate; and interstate institutions to cooperate with each other.

In the long term, these efforts could lead to the beginning of a *world government*. Or not.

### What is special about the program

First, there are extensive readings supplementing those indicated in the initial, separate courses. They provide an excellent opportunity to understand the whole course as it was initially thought out. There are more of them and they are more complete, some being more academic than descriptive, more concise than analytical, and therefore more demonstrative than illustrative.

And, of course, everything is crowned by an evaluation process, which will enable you to obtain 4 ECTS credits under conditions that guarantee the rigor and fairness of the grading system. The originality of this lies in the fact that the evaluation will be prepared during the course's final stages, which explain the requirements clearly.

All of these additions will require extra work for those seeking certification, whether in terms of weekly workload, or for the particular follow-up in the weeks at the beginning and end of the program.

Learners completing each of the 3 courses separately without ECTS credits will spend approximately six hours over ten non-consecutive weeks (i.e. 2 weeks, then a two-week break, then four and again four). The candidates seeking certification will need to spend ten hours per week over twelve weeks non-stop.

The main advantage of this for-credit program is the coherence of the reasoning in the design of this teaching that appears more clearly when it is attended in full and in logical order with all the extra sections.

The course leads from the creation of the world in which all peoples were at war to a situation of just peace, therefore it addresses successively:

- (1) the survival of vulnerable social groups facing the challenges of cohabitation with a difficult environment and imperialist neighbors (hence the study of anthropology and history is a must)
- (2) the time when sovereign states work alongside each other within temporary and sectorial organizations (hence the study of law and economics matter), which eventually leads to:
- (3) networks of universal institutions mediating in local conflicts and leading peacemaking efforts to tackle the drivers of high-intensity violence (and this is why geography, sociology of organizations, the psychology of leadership, and even futurology are especially useful).

Welcome to this set of resources designed to deal both analytically and concisely with heterogeneous phenomena and processes that are sometimes too recent to allow for sufficient retrospect.

But it is these very difficulties that force us to reflect upon the changes that they induce concretely in our lives and in our habits with minimum theory.

And these changes become even more apparent when they are reviewed as a whole than tackled one by one.