



Vilnius University



Institute of International Relations & Political Science
European Studies Center

Small States in the International Politics

COURSE SYLLABUS

2024/2025 ACADEMIC YEAR
SPRING SEMESTER
THURSDAY 9.45, ROOM 302

INSTRUCTOR: GEDIMINAS VITKUS
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Rationale of the Course

The research of small states as participants of international politics has gone through times of both exclusive interest and fatal skepticism. Nevertheless, this topic remains in the spotlight of the discipline of international relations. Therefore, it is self-evident that specialists in international relations should be familiar with this branch of the discipline as well, should know the basic research and the results obtained during it.

On the other hand, acquaintance with small states as specific actors in world politics also has a normative meaning, which is presupposed by the wider aspirations to know social reality. If we consider the development of human society as a series of social experiments, a kind of process of seeking a better social organization through trial and error, then the experience gained by small states is no less valuable and interesting than the traditionally much more explored policy practices of great powers.

Course Structure

The course consists of theoretical and practical parts. The theoretical part introduces the main theoretical ideas and concepts that are applied in the analysis of domestic and foreign policies of small states.

The practical part deals with specific cases of small states. For obvious reasons, we will pay attention to the case of Lithuania and the other two Baltic states. The aim of this exercise is to introduce to the historical experience of the Baltic States in order to develop deeper

understand the way of thinking of contemporary politicians and decision-makers of the Baltic States in dealing with current challenges.

However, the course will not be limited to the Baltic States. The course participants themselves will be invited to contribute to the study of small states, i.e. to select any small state, to study its experience, to present it at a seminar and to write a term paper on this basis.

Accordingly to above mentioned purpose the course is subdivided into the following sections:

1. Theoretical Part: Small States Theory

- ✓ Small State definition problem
- ✓ Sources of Small State Power
- ✓ Small State Shelter Theory

2. Practical Part: The Case of the Baltic States

- ✓ Introduction into Historical Background of the Baltic States
- ✓ The Baltic States in the 20 century
- ✓ Return to the Western World: the Baltic States in 1990-2004
- ✓ Security and Defence of the Baltic States after 2004.

3. Oral Presentations of selected Small State cases

Readings and assignments

Every week the instructor will provide information on readings and assignments for the next class. As a rule all necessary materials are available at the Vilnius University Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) emokymai@vu.lt.

Requirements/Grading

The grade for this course is cumulative. Assignments are given during the semester. Points are awarded for completing each task. These points are cumulative. The final grade is the sum of accumulated points. Final grades in this course consists from:

- ✓ critical reading analysis assignment #1 = 10%
- ✓ critical reading analysis assignment #2 = 10%
- ✓ critical reading analysis assignment #3 = 10%
- ✓ quiz = 10%
- ✓ written essay on selected Small State (min. 3500 words) = 30%

- ✓ oral presentation on selected Small State = 20%
- ✓ regular attendance (failure to attend more than three classes automatically leads to reduction of the final grade by 1 point) = 10%

Academic Writing

Except for the critical reading analysis assignments, which may be in draft, written essay has to comply with the standards used in published academic work with regard to style, annotation and bibliography.