

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# FUELLING DEBATE





“ There’s very little that’s ‘black and white’ in Politics and International Relations, and we operate in the grey areas where the real learning happens. We learn through evaluating evidence and drawing inferences from an ever-changing mix of theory, models, data and lived experience. As a social science, we exist in a world where we’re continually testing ideas, challenging concepts and inching towards greater insight into the political world. That demands interesting people with curious minds – exactly what we’re looking for in our students.

You will find us a safe space for learning, but an argumentative place where you’ll be challenged, supported and be given the opportunity to thrive.

I firmly believe studying Politics and International Relations must be rigorous and engaging – but it also must be fun. What inspires me is when our graduates describe their time with us as stretching; built around serious study; but with the opportunity to work with passionate people who make the whole experience enjoyable. ”



**Dr Adam Humphreys**  
Head of the Department of Politics  
and International Relations  
[reading.ac.uk/politics](https://reading.ac.uk/politics)





# GENDER ROLES AT THE POLLS



**Dr Rose de Geus**

**Are voters sexist? Do women make for better political leaders? And is support for the populist radical right gendered? Through research, Dr Rose de Geus engages directly with these questions as she hopes to understand how ideas about gender shape global politics for both voters and politicians.**

Having initially specialised in International Relations and Comparative Politics, Rose's interest in gender and electoral politics developed when working in Canada and the UK during run ups to general elections. Her current research focuses on how voters view women politicians before and after they come to office, why women remain under-represented in politics and how gender norms affect election outcomes.

Norms around gender, how men and women should behave, and ideas about what it takes to be a political leader affect the decisions that voters make at election time. It means that women who run for office face a unique set of circumstances in which they need to convince voters of their suitability. This in turn can put parties off from selecting women, and it can discourage ambitious women from entering politics.

Through her research Rose hopes to open up the conversation about gender in politics ultimately leading to a fairer and more inclusive political system which better represents people from all genders and backgrounds.

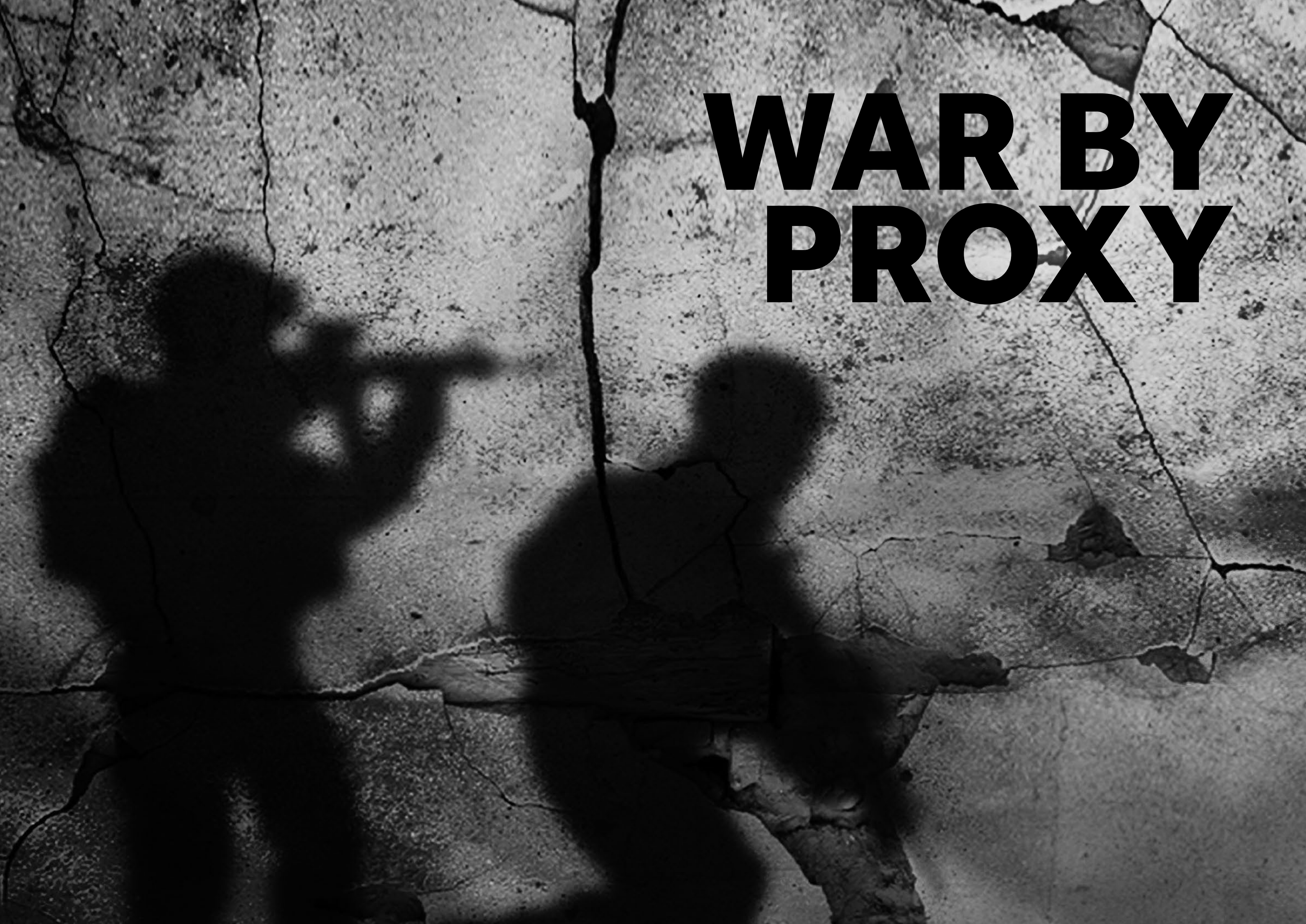
Involving students in these cutting-edge debates and encouraging engagement with these contemporary issues is critical to Rose. In her third-year module 'Gender and Politics' students examine these questions, using real-world examples and a variety of different research methods to inform their work. Students conduct their own gender-based analysis into political debates, speeches, tweets of a politician, cabinet appointees or into legislation to better understand how gender shapes political institutions and processes. Rose says that 'teaching students to apply a gender lens to politics reveals to them how gender norms can act as a constraint in politics – for both men and women. The skills students learn in the module help them think of ways to improve our current system and develop a fairer political system that benefits everyone.'

“ Teaching students to apply a gender lens to politics reveals to them how gender norms can act as a constraint in politics – for both men and women. ”





# WAR BY PROXY







**Dr Vladimir Rauta**

**The last decade has seen a rise in the frequency of proxy wars. This has significantly shaped conflict and its consequences in several geopolitically significant areas, from the Middle East to the Horn of Africa.**

A proxy war is a conflict in which one party, often a great power, sponsors rebels and other non-state groups to fight on its behalf. This is a key feature of recent conflicts in Syria and Libya and also of how Russia has fought in Ukraine. But why would states delegate their war-fighting to rebels?

Vladimir's research has shown that we can think of proxy war as an indirect military strategy that avoids the need for direct military confrontation with the opponent.

By analysing the contemporary dynamics of political violence in the Middle East, he has identified a range of strategic goals that states pursue when they resort to proxy wars. However, his research has also shown that this involves risky trade-offs that can generate serious unintended consequences.

"Proxy wars are a defining feature of contemporary conflict and one of the most exciting areas for students of international relations to explore."

Vladimir's research informs two modules offered by the Department of Politics and International Relations. In Part 1, *War and Warfare* introduces students to different types of war and encourages them to think critically about their causes and drivers. In Part 3, *Dynamics of Civil War* invites students to examine the many processes taking place when states experience organised internal violence: how rebels seek external support, how they govern, and how they fight. Vladimir employs an interactive teaching style and encourages students to use real-world examples in their discussions. He hopes to train the next generation to understand and explore vital issues such as the causes and consequences of proxy wars.



**“ Proxy wars are a defining feature of contemporary conflict. ”**



# RISK

“ My academic work doesn't always give me a neat answer, but it changes the way I think about politics – it helps me see more clearly and critically what is at stake in political debates. ”



**Dr Alice Baderin**

**We live in an uncertain world, a world full of risk – from economic insecurity to threats associated with climate change and the development of new technologies. At the University of Reading Dr Alice Baderin is bringing problems of risk and insecurity to the forefront of thinking about social justice.**

Risk is everywhere and is high up on the political agenda, but it raises hard political and ethical problems. Informed by her research, Alice has designed a third-year undergraduate module called 'Risk' to address these questions. For example, what do we mean when we say, 'it's better to be safe than sorry'? Should we take a precautionary approach to the regulation of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence or gene editing?

Should we leave these questions to the experts, or should the general public play a role in decisions about how to regulate risks? Underlying these questions are issues of justice, fairness and democracy that are core to the discipline of political theory.

This module shows students recent developments in the ethics and politics of risk and helps them to think through the implications for how we ought to lead our political lives. Alice's students will gain a new perspective on everyday political events, exploring the values that underlie some of the important political choices that face us.

Coming from an applied social research background, Alice's work in political theory is empirically informed. By bringing together political theory with evidence from opinion surveys, Alice hopes to generate new perspectives on issues in the field. What better place to start than with the next generation?





A large nuclear explosion mushroom cloud is shown against a blue sky. The cloud is bright orange and yellow at the base, transitioning to white and light blue at the top. The explosion is reflected on the ground below, which is a flat, sandy desert landscape. The text "AFTER SHOCK" is overlaid in the center of the image.

**AFTER SHOCK**





**Dr Joseph O'Mahoney**

**In 1974 India exploded a nuclear weapon, blowing up all preconceptions about the spread of nuclear technology. Dr Joseph O'Mahoney's research examines how this weapons test had far-reaching consequences for nuclear politics as we know it today.**

Joseph is interested in what happens when international norms are broken – norms are an understanding that there is a rule of behaviour – and India's nuclear test provides a prime example. This test had global public and governmental implications: the public realised the dangers of having nuclear fuel available in nuclear power stations, while at governmental level, it spurred restrictions on the export of nuclear materials and led to an increase in countries signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. India's explosion therefore strengthened the international norm regarding nuclear conduct, because it caused restrictions on the spread of nuclear technology.

Joseph explores this research and the present-day outcomes of historical events in his second-year undergraduate module 'Politics and Nuclear Weapons' at the University of Reading. He aims to inform his students about the reality of nuclear weapons – many people believe the nuclear threat has vanished since the end of the Cold War, but Joseph believes that is incorrect. This module looks at historical events to see how they influence the modern-day, for example, North Korea's nuclear tests, and the border tensions between India and Pakistan, both of whom possess nuclear weapons. This module draws on real world events and is informed by the very latest research and developments.

Joseph is passionate about both his research and teaching and enjoys combining them. He recently had an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP) student work with him on his project, cataloguing and analysing Canadian archival diplomatic documents relating to the India test. UROP enables students to gain an in-depth knowledge of a subject and research experience. Joseph's student was so inspired by his UROP placement that he has chosen to continue his journey as a researcher on a master's degree.

**“ I hope that if we better understand the dynamic that caused India's nuclear explosion to strengthen that norm, rather than weaken it, then we can better appreciate the likely impact of any future violations. ”**







# LEARN FROM EXPERTS

## At Reading, you will learn from active participants in the political world.

### Our academics

Our academics regularly feature both in academic literature and the media, offering their expertise on current issues. It's natural that our teaching is research-led and relevant, with our academics being so active in modern-day politics.

Our staff offer particular expertise in UK, EU and American politics and in the UN. 97% of our research outputs are rated 4\* (world-leading) or 3\* (internationally excellent), meaning that the University of Reading is 6th in the UK for Politics research outputs.<sup>1</sup>

“The University hosted BBC Radio 4's 'Any Questions?', at which I helped and met panellist David Lammy MP. It's amazing experiencing first-hand politics and talking to those who really make a difference.”

**Cait Pilkington**  
BA History and Politics

### Our teaching

Community is at the heart of our Department; together staff and students create a friendly and inclusive environment.

Our Politics and International Relations department is a welcoming and lively environment where staff know their students' names and career aspirations. Our academics forge excellent student-staff relationships through our academic tutor system, small-group teaching and opportunities to participate in exciting events, seminars and conferences.

We are here to help you develop academically and as individuals, and to support your aspirations for your studies and future career.

### Our visiting speakers

To complement our academics' expertise, we have hosted a variety of guest speakers including:

- John Bercow, former Speaker of the House of Commons
- Alastair Campbell, former Downing Street Director of Communications
- Andrea Leadsom, former Cabinet minister
- Matthew Barzun, former United States Ambassador to the UK

Interacting with our regular visitors provides an insight into the different opportunities available to you after graduation and gives you the chance to build your network.

# IMMERSE YOURSELF

We offer pioneering modules so you can approach the subject from different angles, and focus on small-group teaching to achieve direct engagement between our students and staff.

### Examples of the topics we cover:

- **Feminism and Political Theory** – develop critical and reflecting thinking on a variety of contemporary feminist topics with broad concerns such as abortion, commercial surrogacy, prostitution and pornography.
- **Model United Nations** – test your academic skills in the political arena through a simulation of the UN in action.
- **The Media and Politics** – prepare, host and run a weekly politics radio show, which has previously featured special guests including Eddie Izzard and Alastair Campbell.
- **The Middle East** – participate in a crisis simulation, involving negotiation and conflict resolution.
- **The Politics of Climate Change** – engage in important political challenges and debates on climate change and analyse how and why decisions are made whilst considering underlying ethical issues.
- **International Terrorism** – explore the diverse aims, motivations, and justifications of contemporary terrorists and their historical antecedents whilst identifying the impact and effects that terrorism has had on government, the security forces, the media, the public, and international politics.

“The politics modules gave me the opportunity to develop my skills, the freedom to expand my interests, and offered practical experience, empowering me to aim high with my career.”

**Fiona Paterson**  
BA Politics and International Relations, currently on the Civil Service Fast Stream

<sup>1</sup> Times Higher Education analysis of the REF 2021, unit of assessment Politics and International Studies, when scoring by 'GPA Output'





# MAKE AN IMPACT

Our degrees aim to equip you for a rewarding career in government, the public sector, NGOs, not-for-profit organisations and a variety of other fields.

## Placement opportunities<sup>1</sup>

Boost your undergraduate degree by taking an integrated year in industry, a summer placement, or a two week work experience, supported by our dedicated placement team.

The Politics and International Relations Department's Placement Coordinator will guide you through the career planning process and support you in identifying organisations suited to your individual career interests; reviewing your CV and application forms; building your confidence for interviews, tests and assessment centres; and receiving feedback.

Past placement destinations have included:

- Cabinet Office
- Department of Health and Social Care
- Office for National Statistics
- Disney
- Microsoft

## Career prospects

91% of our graduates are in work and/or study 15 months after the end of their course.<sup>2</sup>

Our graduates enter diverse fields such as media, business, government departments, technology, banking, publishing, and a wide range of other careers. Graduate career destinations have included:

- Office for National Statistics
- Civil Service Fast Stream
- Department for International Trade
- Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
- Cabinet Office

<sup>1</sup> Subject to availability, see inside back cover.

<sup>2</sup> Graduate Outcomes Survey 2019/20, based on first degree undergraduate responders.

# ALUMNI PROFILE

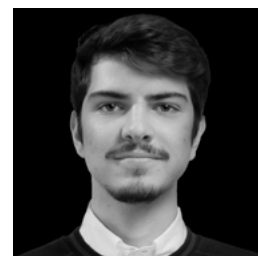
Holly Gibbs studied BA Politics and International Relations at the University of Reading, taking advantage of opportunities to set herself up for the competitive world of journalism.

Holly chose to study at Reading because of its focus on the passion and determination of its students. This ethos led to her not only gaining a degree, but also a successful career.

Working on 'The Media and Politics' second-year undergraduate module – which involves producing a weekly politics radio show – gave Holly the confidence to realise that her dream of working in broadcasting was achievable. Holly credits her experiences on this module, and the incredible support from her lecturers, for helping her achieve her job as part of Sky News' weekly debate show, The Pledge.

Holly's job is to research and produce content for The Pledge, ensuring the panellists are knowledgeable of the topics for discussion, as well as producing online creative material. Politics features heavily on the show, so Holly's background really helps and she's confident that her degree is well respected in the industry. Holly is dreaming big with her career and her ultimate goal is to cover a US presidential election.

“I am so grateful I chose to study at Reading – I would not be where I am today if I had gone anywhere else.”



“The placement opportunity is a rare experience providing you with an incredibly expansive view of real-world situations, a scope of opportunities for the future and will help you in delivering proper solutions.”

I undertook my placement year at FORCYD B.V, a forensic investigation company specialising in eDiscovery, cyber forensics and document review in Amsterdam as a junior consultant.

I was given major support during the application processes via regular CV/Cover letter workshops and individual mock interviews with the department staff which greatly helped my preparation for upcoming interviews.”

**Enrico Scaffidi-Argentina**  
BA International Relations and Economics with Placement Year





# GO INTERNATIONAL

Studying abroad on your undergraduate degree can open up a whole new area and perspective of the world to you.

The international nature of our courses means that spending time abroad perfectly complements your studies, while also enhancing your employability.

You can either spend time studying abroad in your second year, as part of our Model United Nations module, or you can apply to Study Abroad for one semester, one year, or on a summer school.

We have an ever-increasing number of opportunities for studying abroad throughout the world, including in the USA, Canada, Europe, Asia and Australia.<sup>1</sup>

“ Studying Abroad gives you the unique opportunity to make your subject country specific, such as studying Canadian politics in the capital of Ottawa. ”

**Grace Diddams**  
BA English Literature and Politics

# A HOME FROM HOME

Our community is made up of people from around the globe and our use of small seminar groups encourages dynamic discussion among you all.

## Our community

As a department, we're big enough to make a difference but small enough to know our students as individuals. You will have the opportunity to meet with your academic tutor regularly, to ensure you're getting the best out of your time at Reading. We're informal and inclusive and everyone is part of our close-knit community.

## International students

We want to make your transition to university, and to the UK, as easy as possible. The University's International Student Advisory Team offer support on issues such as visas and immigration, and understanding UK culture. You can also benefit from the STaR Mentor Scheme, matching you with a current student mentor at the University before you start here.

If you don't have British A levels or the equivalent, our International Foundation Programme (IFP) is an access course which will provide you with the skills you need to start undergraduate studies in most degrees at Reading. The IFP gives you the option to choose modules in Politics.

“ The Politics Society welcomes all students, and we run regular meetings, socials and speaker events in a friendly environment. ”

**George Dibley**  
BA Politics and Economics,  
President of the Politics Society, 2019–2020

<sup>1</sup> Subject to availability, see inside back cover.







“ Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

Barack Obama



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

## BA POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This flexible course allows you to specialise in two of the main branches of politics (political theory, comparative politics, and international relations) or to continue with all three. You will have the opportunity to take modules from other departments, incorporate a work placement and study abroad.\* In the third year, you will write a dissertation and study specialist, optional modules, which draw on the research conducted in the department.

## BA WAR, PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This course focuses on the study of warfare and strategy within international politics, drawing on the department's research in this field. This specialist focus can be complemented with modules in either political theory or comparative politics, while you also have the opportunity to take modules from other departments, incorporate a work placement and study abroad.\* In the third year, you will write a dissertation and study specialist, optional modules, which draw on the research conducted in the department.

## JOINT COURSES:

### BA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ECONOMICS

This course provides a thorough introduction to both subjects, combining the specialist study of international relations with a grounding in economics, producing an appreciation of the key forces driving today's globalised world order. You can choose to take advantage of work placement and study abroad opportunities\* and in the third year, you can construct your own portfolio of specialist, research-led modules in both subjects and write a dissertation in either International Relations or Economics.

### BA POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

This course provides a thorough introduction to both subjects, combining the specialist study of politics (including comparative politics and political theory) with a grounding in economics, producing an appreciation of the key forces driving contemporary democratic society. You can choose to take advantage of work placement and study abroad opportunities\* and in the third year, you can construct your own portfolio of specialist, research-led modules in both subjects and write a dissertation in either Politics or Economics.

Politics and International Relations can also be studied jointly with a variety of other subjects – here is our full list of joint honours degrees:

- BA English Literature and International Relations
- BA English Literature and Politics
- BA Modern Languages and International Relations
- BA History and Politics
- BA Philosophy and International Relations
- BA Philosophy and Politics
- BA Philosophy, Politics and Economics
- BA History and International Relations

Visit [reading.ac.uk/politics](https://www.reading.ac.uk/politics) for more information.



### Important Information

This brochure was issued in 2023 and is aimed at prospective undergraduate students wishing to apply for a place at the University of Reading (the University) and start a course in autumn 2024. The University makes every effort to ensure that the information provided in the brochure is accurate and up-to-date at the time of going to press (May 2023). However, it may be necessary for the University to make some changes to the information presented in the brochure following publication – for example, where it is necessary to reflect changes in practice or theory in an academic subject as a result of emerging research; or if an accrediting body requires certain course content to be added or removed. To make an informed and up-to-date decision, we recommend that you check [reading.ac.uk/study](https://reading.ac.uk/study).

The University undertakes to take all reasonable steps to provide the services (including the courses) described in this brochure. It does not, however, guarantee the provision of such services.

Should industrial action or circumstances beyond the control of the University interfere with its ability to provide the services, the University undertakes to use all reasonable steps to minimise any disruption to the services.

### Copyright and trademarks

© University of Reading, 2023.

The University of Reading name and logo are registered trademarks. All rights reserved.

### Topics

Topics are provided as a taster of the areas of study that may be available on each course. Information is correct at the time of going to press (May 2023), for a list of compulsory (core) modules please check [reading.ac.uk](https://reading.ac.uk) for the most up to date information. Teaching staff on specific courses mentioned in this brochure may be subject to change.

### Joint courses

Our joint courses may have extra requirements, including English language requirements. Please check the individual course pages on our website for further details. Year abroad and placement fees Some courses include an optional or compulsory year abroad or placement year. During this year you will only pay a partial fee which is currently set at 15% of the normal tuition fee. Check the website for the latest information: [reading.ac.uk/fees-and-funding](https://reading.ac.uk/fees-and-funding)

### Placements

Programmes with a Professional Placement Year (also known as 'Year in Industry' or 'Placement Year') are fully dependent on students securing their own placement opportunity, normally through a competitive recruitment process. The University provides dedicated career and application support for placement year students. Students who do not secure a placement or who are unable to complete the placement year due to extenuating circumstances, have the option to transfer to a three year variant of their programme with agreement from their School/Department.

### Study abroad

The partnerships listed are correct at the time of publication (May 2023). For up to date information on the University's partnerships contact [studyabroad@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studyabroad@reading.ac.uk)

Where Study Abroad is not a compulsory part of the degree programme, the University of Reading cannot guarantee that every applicant who applies for the scheme will be successful. Whilst efforts are made to secure sufficient places at partner institutions, the number of places available and the University's partners can vary year-on-year. In all cases, the University cannot guarantee that it will be possible for applicants to choose to study abroad at a particular institution.

Further, certain courses and/or institutions may require you to satisfy specific eligibility criteria. It can be a competitive process. For further information on the University's Study Abroad Scheme please contact [studyabroad@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studyabroad@reading.ac.uk)



Department of Politics and International Relations

[reading.ac.uk/politics](https://reading.ac.uk/politics)

 /UoRpolitics  
 @UoRPolitics

Ask us a question  
[reading.ac.uk/question](https://reading.ac.uk/question)

