CATÓLICA FACULDADE DE DIREITO
ESCOLA DE LISBOA

We the Peoples - The United Nations as a Global Legal Forum

(Optional)

Course Unit Information Sheet

Academic year: 2025/2026
Curricular year: -
Semester: 2nd
Working Hours: 100
Contact Hours: 20 (S)
ECTS: 4

Course: Law

Degree: *Bachelor*

Branch: *Core curriculum*

Study plan: *Aviso n.º 9088/2019, de 23 de maio*

Teaching staff:

Professor in charge of the curricular unit
Prof.ª Doutora Patrícia Galvão Teles

Other Professors of the curricular unit
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Language of instruction:

English

Functioning:

Elective Course

Teaching Hours: 20 | 4 ECTS

Teaching Method: Theoretical-Practical Classes

Intended learning outcomes:

As the United Nations commemorates its 80th Anniversary in 2025, it is a good opportunity to take stock regarding its function as a global legal forum, its successes and shortcomings. Indeed, in the past eighty years, great part of international law has developed under the umbrella or in connection with the United Nations. This course will examine how the United Nations has contributed to the development of International Law through its different organs and bodies, namely the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice and the International Law Commission.

Syllabus:

1. The Development of International Law by the United Nations
2. The General Assembly and International Law making
3. The Security Council and International Law making

4. The contribution of the International Court of Justice to the development of International Law
5. The special role of the International Law Commission in the progressive development and codification of International Law

Evidence of the syllabus coherence with the curricular units intended learning outcomes:

The program contents analyze and develop the different ways in which the United Nations can be seen today as a global legal forum. By discussing the contribution of its different organs and bodies for the development of international law over time and in more recent years, the students will be able to take a critical view as to the role of the Untired Nations as a global legal forum in the 21st Century.

Recommended prior learning (or curricular units whose prior attendance is recommended):

Public International Law

Teaching and assessment methods:

The course will be taught in theoretical-practical classes where the students, based on presentations made by the Professor and the reading of basic materials, will discuss the different topics covered. At the end of the course, a written paper will allow the assessment of the knowledge acquired during the course.

Evidence of the teaching methods and the intended learning outcomes:

The teaching methods, based on theoretical-practical classes where the Professor and students interact in the discussion of the contents proposed will stimulate research on the part of students and the presentation of a critical analysis in class, in order to take stock of the role of the United Nations as a global legal forum, namely its successes and shortcomings.

Bibliography:

D. Anderson, "Law-making Processes in the United Nations System – Some Impressions", *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law* (1974)

L. Gross, "The Development of International Law through the United Nations", In *Essays on International Law and Organization*, Springer (1984)

V. Lowe and C. Warbrick (Eds.), *The United Nations and the Principles of International Law: Essays in Memory of Michael Akehurst*, Routledge (1994)

C. Franz and L. Sucharipa-Behrmann (eds), *The United Nations: Law and Practice* (Kluwer Law International 2001), 25–37, 48–53 (general introduction to GA, SC, and ICJ)

J. Alvarez, *International Organizations as Law-makers*, OUP (2005)

P. Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*, Vintage (2007)

R. Higgins, *Themes and theories: selected essays, speeches, and writings in international law*, OUP (2009)

B. Simma et al (Eds.), *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, OUP (2012)

A. CASSESE, "Gathering up the main threads", in A. CASSESE (Ed.), *Realizing Utopia: The Future of International Law*, OUP (2012)

R. Higgins, "The United Nations at 70 Years: The impact upon International Law", *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 65 (2016)

M. de Serpa Soares, 'UN70: Contributions of the United Nations to the Development of International Law', (2016) 40 *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 99

R. Higgins et al (Eds.), *Oppenheim's International Law United Nations*, OUP (2017)

United Nations, *The work of the International Law Commission* (2017)

D. Azaria, '"Codification by Interpretation": The International Law Commission as an Interpreter of International Law', (2020) 31 *European Journal of International Law* 171

Seventy Years of the International Law Commission: Drawing a Balance for the Future, United Nations (ed.) (published by Brill) (https://legal.un.org/ilc/publications/pdfs/ilc_seventy.pdf)

Legislation:

- Charter of the United Nations
- Statute of the International Court of Justice
- Statute of the International Law Commission