

International Criminal Justice

SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

6-17 July 2026



Any general questions for the Summer School support team? Contact amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl.

Course Details

Title	International Criminal Justice
Coordinator(s)	Adina Nistor, Barbora Hola
Other lecturers	A range of guest speakers
Form of tuition	Interactive seminars and field trips
Approximate contact hours	45 hours
Approximate self-study hours	35 hours

Practical information

Coordinating lecturers

Adina Nistor a.nistor@vu.nl ; cellphone: +31637477225
 Barbora Holá b.hola@vu.nl ; cellphone: +31630454834

Course description

International crimes and gross human rights violations pose a threat to international peace and security and call for effective action. An effective response, however, is often hampered by a lack of knowledge on the true nature and aetiology of international crimes. Acquiring such knowledge is essential when designing effective measures and interventions to prevent and stop these crimes. Such knowledge must be multi- and interdisciplinary, but few academics and professionals working within the field are trained for such an undertaking.

This *Summer School on International Criminal Justice* aims to create a better understanding of the complex nature of international crimes, its perpetrators and the reaction by the international community. By taking an interdisciplinary approach, students examine the juridical and empirical sides of these mass atrocities and by combining theory, interactive discussions and visits to the International Criminal Tribunals in The Hague students will quickly develop a basic understanding of the most important issues concerning international criminal justice.

While the focus of this summer school is on very serious issues, the programme also offers a good balance between studying and learning on the one hand and meeting other people and having fun on the other hand. As a group, we will have enough time to get to know each other, during the trips and lunches and dinners. We will get to know both the cities of Amsterdam and The Hague!

Learning objectives

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Summarise the central concepts of international criminal justice;
- Critically reflect on the development of international criminal justice;

- Analyse the shortcomings of international criminal justice;
- Formulate their opinion on different modes of transitional justice and their effects;
- Work in a small group to prepare for a presentation;
- Attractively present the findings of an explorative study.

Course Schedule *(please note that the entire schedule is tentative)*

Week 1

Date	Time	Activity	Location
Sat/Sun	-	Arrival in Amsterdam	-
Mon 6	09:00-10:00	Campus tour (organised by Amsterdam Summer School)	VU Campus
	10:00-11:00	Welcome and introduction Adina Nistor & Barbora Hola	t.b.a.
	11:00-13:00	Lecture 1: International crimes Joris van Wijk	t.b.a.
	15:00-	Pub quiz Amsterdam Summer School	VU Campus
Tue 7	10:00-12:00	Lecture 2: International Criminal Justice: where, when, how? Adina Nistor & Barbora Hola	t.b.a.
	13:00-15:00	Lecture 3: Punishment at International Criminal Justice Barbora Hola	t.b.a.
Wed 8	<i>Morning</i>	<i>Time to work on assignment 1</i>	
	13:00-17:00	VU Social Program	Amsterdam
Thu 9	10:00-12:00	Lecture 4: Perspectives of an International Defence Lawyer [speaker to be confirmed]	t.b.a.
	13:00-15:00	Lecture 5: Victim Centred Justice for International Crimes [speaker to be confirmed]	t.b.a.
Fri 10	10:00-12:00	Lecture 6: Culture at the International Criminal Court – Adina Nistor	t.b.a.
	13:00-15:00	Lecture 7: Traumatized Witnesses and their Testimonies at International Criminal Courts and Tribunals [speaker to be confirmed]	t.b.a.
	15:30-18:30	Movie screening + debate and drinks	t.b.a.

Week 2

Date	Time	Activity	Location
Sat/Sun	-	Saturday: VU Social program	-
Mon 13	10:00-12:00	Lecture 8: International criminal law goes domestic: The surge of domestic prosecutions of international crimes - Lachezar Yanev	
	13:00-15:00	Lecture 9: Refugees, war criminals and terrorists Maarten Bolhuis	
Tue 14	10:15-16:00	Excursion: International Criminal Court + Kosovo Specialist Chambers	The Hague
Wed 15	Morning	Time to work on assignment 2	
	13:00-17:00	VU Social Program	Amsterdam
Thu 16	10:00-12:00	Lecture 10: National investigations of international crimes [speaker to be confirmed]	-
	12:00-14:00	Lecture 11: Challenges of Prosecuting International Crimes – Case of Ukraine [speaker to be confirmed]	
Fri 17	12:00-14:45	Assignment 2, graduation ceremony	
	15:00-17:00	Goodbye drinks (organised by Amsterdam Summer School)	VU Campus

Excursion to The Hague

On Tuesday 14 July we will visit the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) in The Hague. Each participant to the visit **will be required to present valid proof of identification** (passport or identity card) to enter the ICC and KSC premises (so don't forget it!). You will be asked to send your passport- or ID number to us before the summer school – it is important that the number of your passport/ID-document is the same as the document you bring to the ICC and KSC.

At the ICC, all visitors must comply with the rules of decorum. You can find them here: <http://bit.ly/2fffjCo>. **Please note that in the past students have been refused access to courts because they were wearing shorts or skirts that were considered to be too short by court staff.** Please be informed that filming or taking of photographs is strictly prohibited inside the premises of the International Criminal Court. For further practical information please click [here](#). For the KSC, similar rules may apply.

Directions:

Two teachers will accompany you to the ICC and the KSC. They will meet you at **The Hague Central Station at 9:15 AM** in front of the Starbucks. Make sure that you get off at The Hague Central Station (and not another The Hague station such as Hollands Spoor). You could take the direct train to The Hague Central Station from Amsterdam Zuid (then it's the final stop).

Program:

- 10:15 Arrival at the main entrance of the ICC (Oude Waalsdorperweg 10, The Hague); registration and security check
- 10:20 Welcome
- 10:20 Explore the ICC Visitors Centre at your own pace
- 11:00 Presentation on the Court and its current developments followed by Question and Answer
- 11:30 Attending a hearing (alternatively – if no or closed session – we will provide a courtroom explanation)
- 12:00 Free time for lunch
- 14:00 Security check Kosovo Specialist Chambers (Raamweg 47, The Hague)
- 14:30 Presentation and tour Kosovo Specialist Chambers
- 16:00 End

It's a 17 minute (1,3 km) walk from the ICC to the KSC; between the two visits you will have a 2-hour gap to have lunch. Near the ICC and KSC, a few lunch options are available:

- *IJgenweis Clingendael (<https://www.ijgenweisclingendael.nl/>). Beautiful café in the Clingendael park, 20min walking from the ICC, 30min walking to the KSC.*
- *Royal Corner (<http://www.royalcorner.nl/>). A simple, but good sandwich café nearby the ICC, and on the way to the KSC. 10min walking from the ICC, 10min walking to the KSC.*
- *De Bakery (<http://debakery.nl/menu/>). Here you can buy coffee and sandwiches (also to-go) and is only 10min walking from the ICC, 23min walking to the KSC.*
- *Albert Heijn supermarket which you can find just across from De Bakery.*

Assignments and grading

Participation and preparation

Participants of the ICJ summer school take part in the lectures, 1 class for the final assignment and the excursion. **Attendance is compulsory.** To successfully complete the summer school and obtain the diploma, you have to attend – in any case – the final class on Friday in the 2nd week and you can miss no more than 1 lecture or the compulsory excursion. The lectures start at the exact times indicated in the schedule above; if you are late, you will have to complete additional assignments.

In addition, there are other activities which are **non-compulsory**, namely the dinner on the first day and the movie screening. You might want to participate in these activities, however, as the costs are covered by the ICJ summer school.

The overarching Amsterdam Summer School furthermore organises a general social programme, for which you sometimes must subscribe separately (this is something outside of the ICJ summer school). Costs for these activities are *not* always covered.

Lectures will have an interactive character and students are always able to ask any questions they may have, or rather, are expected to ask any questions they have. The Dutch higher education is rather informal, and all lectures are very approachable. As discussion is an integral part of all classes, students are required to be well prepared. This means that you will have to read all the required literature and are expected to participate actively in class. Only when all students are well prepared and actively participate, will the classes reach the challenging level and fruitful exchange of ideas that is necessary to maximise the learning experience.

Students are also required to prepare the excursions to The Hague, e.g., by studying the institutions that will be visited (see more below). Having knowledge of these institutions will enrich the experience of their visit and allows students to more actively interact with the staff members of the different institutions who they will meet with.

Bring your laptop to class if you can, to take notes or make 'in class' interim assignments.

Examination

In addition to attending the classes and activities that are compulsory (see above), students will have to complete 2 assignments, which will be graded.

Assignment 1

During the first week, you will learn from different perspectives a lot about the way the International Criminal Court (ICC) functions and the challenges it faces. In this first assignment, which needs to be handed in before the start of the second week (that is, no later than **23:59 hrs on Sunday 12 July**). You must base your assignment exclusively on the notes and literature from the lectures, with reference to the guest speakers' names, to write a short essay, answering the following question:

What are, in your opinion, the five biggest challenges the ICC currently faces?

Size: a minimum of 1.000 and a maximum of 1.500 words (references excluded)

Deadline: **Sunday 12 July, 23:59 hrs**

Use only your notes and the material from the lectures in the first week. You can use any referencing system you prefer (such as APA), if you use it consistently.

Assignment 2

Based on what you have learned in the previous two weeks, you carry out an explorative study in order to prepare a presentation in a group of four to five students. Groups will be assigned, as well as a conflict in which international crimes occurred, and announced during the first lecture. An important factor for the grading is that everyone has to have an equal part in the presentation.

With your group, of the conflict assigned to you, describe:

- *What was the reason for the conflict?*
- *What international crimes have been committed?*
- *What mode of transitional justice has been used and for what reasons?*
- *Why was or wasn't this mode a success?*
- *What are the 'lessons learnt'?*

Each group of students must prepare a 15-minute PowerPoint or Prezi presentation (do not forget to bring this presentation to class on a USB-stick). The group as a whole receives a grade. This means that you have a responsibility towards one another, so make sure that all your group members are contributing, but also that you aren't the one who is responsible for letting your other group members fail the assignment. Divide the work wisely; some people like presenting, others like doing

the background research, or designing a visually attractive and clear presentation. More information about this final examination, including possibilities for resits, will be provided during the first class.

Assessment and grading of the assignments

Both assignments will be graded on the following criteria:

1. Structure/Line of argument: Logical structure within and across individual sections; consistent and connected whole
2. Analysis and argumentation: Problem well-identified; critical evaluation; arguments persuasive
3. Sources/Literature: Adequate use of relevant literature; own further research for new sources
4. Form: No excessive spelling/grammar mistakes; appropriate style of writing/well-designed sheets
5. References: Adequate referencing and consistent application of a referencing system of choice

The following grades can be awarded for academic performances, in accordance with the Examination Regulations of the Faculty of Law:

- whole numbers ranging from 1.0 to 10;
- the intermediate half numbers, such as 6.5, except for 5.5

No grade of less than 1.0 is awarded.

Assignment 1 will count 60% of your final grade and Assignment 2 will represent 40% of the final grade. If the final, weighted grade is lower than 6.0, you must resit one of the components. If you resubmit an improved version of an earlier assignment, the grade for that resit is maximised at 6.0.

Preparation for lectures

To be announced.

