

# G8online

## 1. Introduction to the Course

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Hello, I am Professor John Kirton, Director of the G8 Research Group, at the University of Toronto, in Canada.

I am pleased introduce you to G8 Online 2002, a university-level, Internet-based course that explores the key issues the Group of Eight (G8) major market democracies will address at their Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, on June 26–27, 2002. At Kananaskis, Canada will host two days of intensive and potentially historic discussions with its G8 partners — the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Russia and the European Union. Here their leaders will confront three central challenges of our rapidly globalizing world: reducing poverty in Africa, sustaining global growth and combating terrorism. Working with invited leaders from developing countries and international institutions, G8 leaders at Kananaskis will attempt to set new directions, and take far-reaching decisions, to reach these ambitious goals.

Will they succeed? In G8 Online 2002, we explore what the G8 has done, what it now seeks to do, what it is likely will do, and what it can and should do to strengthen development, prosperity and security in the global community. To do so, we look in turn at the current challenges bred by **globalization**, at the contributions of the United Nations and the G8 in governing globalization, at the approach Canada takes to **global governance** and the G8, and at how Canada and its G8 partners plan to deal with their development, prosperity and security challenges at their annual Summit this year.

Our 26 sessions of G8 Online begin with the many opportunities and problems created by globalization, and at the successes and failures of the established UN system in dealing with them. We next examine the G8 and how

it has developed, performed and related to other global actors in the years since it was created in 1975 as the G7 (without Russia, which joined as the eighth member in 1998). We then take a close look at how Canada's values and approach to global governance are shaping the G8 Summit at Kananaskis this year.

The second half of our course focuses on the three key issues faced by the G8 at Kananaskis and by the world as a whole. The first is reducing poverty in Africa, by forging the **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)** with the continent's leaders to bring hope to the one region that globalization's benefits have thus far largely left out. The second is sustaining global growth, by ensuring that the fragile economic recovery now underway in most G8 economies extends to Japan and to crisis-afflicted economies such as Argentina, builds in permanent productivity increases and brings enhanced social well-being and ecological protection for all. The third is combating terrorism — having the full global community co-operate in all ways necessary to bring terrorists such as the al Qaeda and Taliban leadership to justice, so that an attack like the one on North America on September 11th, 2001, can never happen again. At the end of our course, we will judge how well the G8 has done in meeting these challenges, both at Kananaskis in June and more broadly in the 28 years it has been at work.

In our course we will reflect on the past 500 years of human history, and the ongoing effort to create prosperity and security for everyone in the world. This story starts in 1648 with the **Treaty of Westphalia**. Here the rulers of the day, after the devastation of the religious wars of the Middle Ages, concluded that they could best protect their subjects by creating sovereign, territorial states that they alone would control. In

the centuries that followed, they realized they had to construct ways for these independent, sovereign states to avoid conflict and co-operate with one another. In the eighteenth century, the leaders created a “**balance of power**” so that no single state would be so powerful that it could dominate the rest. After this system failed in the Napoleonic wars, there came the “Concert of Europe,” in which the leaders of all the most powerful countries of the nineteenth century gathered to govern the world collectively. After a century of success, it ultimately failed, too, in World War One from 1914 to 1918. In the twentieth century, international co-operation was extended to all countries large and small and embedded in international organizations with formal legal charters and separate secretariats. Thus the **League of Nations** was created in 1919 and then, after World War Two, the United Nations was established in 1945. Amid a new outburst of global crises in the 1970’s, the informal G8 was created as the G7 in 1975. It marked somewhat of a return to the nineteenth-century **concert** system. But this new concert now came with only democratic powers and democratic purposes at its core.

Which approach during these 500 years has best produced the peace and prosperity the world wants? Observers of international relations have long offered very different answers to this central question. Some, known as **realists**, claim that powerful sovereign states cannot count on international organizations for their security or prosperity. Rather, states by themselves must build their national power or relative capability — to balance that of others — in order to survive and thrive in a world where no one else will ultimately defend them. Others, now known as **liberal-institutionalists**, respond that as successive waves of globalization have led to ever closer connections among countries, more formal international rules and organizations are required to help states reach their goals. In the middle stands a third group, known as **constructivists**. They

claim that the individual leaders of powerful countries can construct new concepts of their countries’ interests and even national identities, and thus more easily co-operate to achieve security and prosperity in a rapidly globalizing age. The G8 is the only international institution where the leaders of all the world’s major democratic powers regularly get together. Perhaps then it is the forum where the new conceptions and co-operation required to address today’s challenges of globalization are most likely to arise.

To understand how the global community seeks to cope with these challenges of globalization, we thus focus on the G8. Its power and potential as an effective centre of global governance is widely recognized. It is acknowledged by the leaders of the world’s major powers who always find time in their busy schedule to come to the annual Summit, by the thousands of officials and journalists who usually come with them, by the leaders of outside countries and international organizations who seek to — and sometimes do — attend, and by the civil society activists, now numbering in the hundreds of thousands, who come to lobby and protest. Serious analysts of the G8 confirm this picture of the G8’s centrality, both when they point to the G8’s important impact on global and domestic governance and when they criticize the G8 for not doing what it could and, in their view, should do.

Yet important as the G8 is, it largely remains a largely invisible centre of global governance. It appears in public only once a year at its annual leaders’ Summit, and intermittently when its rapidly multiplying ministerial-level meetings take place. Almost never is the work, and at times even the existence, of its dozens of official-level bodies and working groups known to those outside. Equally obscure is the intensive year-round process for preparing the annual Summit and ensuring that its decisions are reliably put into effect. In all, the G8 system now operates on a daily basis, and involves

most ministers and departments within members' governments. But it still has no secretariat to give it a permanent physical presence, to store its documents, to mount a public information program or to speak on its behalf. As a result, its mission, operations and accomplishments are easily unrecognized, unheralded, mistrusted and misunderstood. G8 Online seeks to help lift this veil of invisibility, by taking a close look at what the G8 actually is and how it really works.

G8 Online takes this close look from a variety of perspectives. These embrace the views of the G8's defenders and critics alike. The issues dealt with by the G8 are challenging and complex. Their solutions are often uncertain and controversial. The way the G8 deals with them, and its success in doing so, are similarly subject to differing points of views. These views shift as the evidence and the problems themselves change. Even in the many cases where the evidence is available and points in one direction, there will be those who do not like the results and will want them changed. Here our course can help the G8's critics as well as its defenders understand better how to change the way the G8 works, and thus how global governance can be improved.

In each of the 26 sessions in our course, we start with a lecture of about 15 minutes, delivered by a leading expert in the field. For easy access, and to meet the needs of all participants, each lecture will be available in text, audio, and low and high broadband video. Each lecture will come with accompanying video and text materials that provide further background and a broader variety of perspectives on the subject. We have included lists of "References" and "Further Readings" at the end of each lecture and our course syllabus will offer additional readings, many available in full text from the G8 Information Centre at [www.g8.utoronto.ca](http://www.g8.utoronto.ca), under the heading of "Publications and Papers."

Those who want a basic "textbook" can start by reading *The G8's Role in the New Millennium*,

edited by Michael Hodges, John Kirton and Joseph Daniels (Ashgate, 1999). We will offer you many additional ways to actively participate — through email questions to our instructors and teaching assistants, through responses to polls, and through interactive sessions with your fellow students and teaching assistants. You should also note that the entire course is available in full in both English and French, so you may participate in the language of your choice.

Our G8 Online course has been designed so that you can make use of it in several ways. You can engage in it as an interested citizen, or as a serious student. You can follow it in order from start to finish, or just connect with those particular sessions as your interest and available time directs. You can use it as a resource for courses you may be taking for credit in related subjects, or on a stand-alone basis as a completely personal online experience. However you use it, we are eager to hear about your experience and how we can improve G8 Online to meet your particular needs.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our sponsors and participating guest lecturers, who have come together to make G8 Online 2002 possible. We are grateful to the many universities and research institutes, in Canada and elsewhere, whose courses and projects have formed the foundation for this course. These include the University of Toronto and Queen's University in Ontario, McGill University, the Université de Québec à Montréal and the Université de Montréal in Quebec, the University of Calgary in Alberta, Fordham University and the International Peace Academy in New York, and the London School of Economics and Political Science in Britain. We are grateful to our guest lecturers — Dr. David Malone, Dr. Ella Kokotsis, Sir Nicholas Bayne and Kristiana Powell, and professors Peter Hajnal and George von Furstenberg lecturing in English, and professors Désirée McGraw, Philippe Le Prestre, Albert Legault,

André Donneur and Pierre Faucher, and Kimon Valaskakis among others, lecturing in French.

We owe a special word of thanks to the many organizations whose financial and in-kind contributions have been essential — the Government of Canada's G8 Summit Policy Office, Trinity College and the University of Toronto, eCollege, VisionTV, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through its "EnviReform" project and Maeander Enterprises. Of course, the views in these lectures are those of the respective scholars who present them. They do not necessarily reflect the thinking of any of the sponsors of G8 Online.

Above all, we are grateful to you, our students and audience, for your interest and participation. I look forward to connecting with you again at our next session, on "The New Globalization and Its Challenges."

#### References

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Hajnal, Peter (1999), *The G7/G8 System: Evolution,*

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Bayne, Nicholas (2000), *Hanging in There: The G7 and G8 Summit in Maturity and Renewal* (Ashgate: Aldershot).

#### Further Readings

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Kirton, John J. (1997), "Economic Co-operation: Summitry, Institutions and Structural Change." Paper prepared for a conference on "Structural Change and Co-operation in the Global Economy," the Centre for International Business Education and the Center for Global Change and Governance, Rutgers University, May 19–20, 1997 <[www.g7.utoronto.ca/g7/scholar/kirton199702/index.html](http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/g7/scholar/kirton199702/index.html)> (May 2002). See also John Dunning and Gavin Boyd, eds. (1999), *Structural Change and Cooperation in the Global Economy* (London: Edward Elgar).

## Discussion Questions

1. What are the central differences between realists, liberal-institutionalists and constructivists in their understanding of how states behave and how international relations works?
2. What concepts, not included in the concepts of realism, liberal-institutionalism and constructivism, are needed to understand state behaviour and international relations in today's era of globalization?

## Quiz

1. The Treaty of Westphalia was concluded in:
  - a. 1492
  - b. 1648
  - c. 1919
  - d. 1945
2. The first major international institution with a formal charter and separate organization was:
  - a. Balance of Power
  - b. Concert of Europe
  - c. League of Nations
  - d. United Nations
3. The G8's 2002 Summit is taking place on June 26–27 in
  - a. Westphalia, Germany
  - b. Toronto, Canada
  - c. Kananaskis, Canada
  - d. New York City, U.S.
4. Which country is not a full member of the G8:
  - a. Russia
  - b. Canada
  - c. Italy
  - d. Spain
5. Which of the following themes is not a designated part of the priority agenda for the Kananaskis Summit in June 2002:
  - a. poverty reduction in Africa
  - b. sustaining global growth
  - c. controlling climate change
  - d. combating terrorism
6. The importance of national power or relative capability is emphasized by scholars of international relations known as:
  - a. realists
  - b. liberal-institutionalists
  - c. constructivists
  - d. idealists