

POLITICAL SCIENCE 145
THE POLITICS OF GLOBAL PROBLEMS
Autumn 2004, TR 3:30-5:18 pm
2017 McPherson Laboratory

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the study of International Politics. Its purpose is to familiarize students with a number of global political issues and analyze the significance of the emerging trends that define the nature and structure of the international system. The end of the Cold War means that we can no longer view world politics through the prism of a bipolar system. Instead, national, regional and even sub-regional issues are increasingly important aspects of international relations in the new multipolar (some say unipolar) world. As is always the case with complex human affairs, there are no easy answers to many of the global dilemmas we will investigate. Often, reality is not simply black or white, but is colored by an infinite number of subtle shades of gray. Therefore, when confronted by differing opinions and points of view, it is necessary to develop the critical ability to comprehend, evaluate, and even offer solutions in the face of great cognitive uncertainty.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce students to a number of concepts, issues, and theories in international relations, so that students will be more discerning and knowledgeable about contemporary global problems.
2. Since the focus is on international relations, it is important for students to begin to develop a mental framework or image of the international system that loosely connects a diverse set of actors who interact around an ever-changing agenda of global issues.
3. To provide students with critical thinking skills that will enable them to analyze, evaluate, and write competently about complex contemporary problems in the world.
4. To help students to improve their communication skills, both written and oral, in order to enhance their effectiveness in expressing their views on global issues.
5. To encourage students to become more tolerant of ambiguity and diversity as it pertains to international politics and to increase their ability to deal with multiple, sometimes controversial, points of view.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

It is important that you do your readings before class and attend class regularly. Lectures and videos will provide material that is not included in the readings. Students who miss one-third or more of the class meetings will receive a failing grade even if they have a medical or other valid excuse. You are responsible for all the required readings and the material covered in class. Class will include as much discussion as possible. You will be graded on the basis of your performance on three midterm exams, as well as class attendance and participation:

First midterm exam – 30%
Second midterm exam – 30%
Third midterm exam – 30%
Class attendance and participation – 10%

Each exam will comprise an essay based on several questions drawn from the lectures, the required readings, and the videos shown in class. Please write as clearly and intelligibly as possible. A make-up examination will be given only with a valid medical excuse (including a doctor's note) and prior notice or in case of documented dire emergency. A failing grade on any of the three exams will result in a failing final grade for the entire class.

The first third of the class will be devoted to discussing the conceptual foundations and the competing theoretical explanations of world politics—Realism versus Liberalism and other alternatives to “Realist” power politics, followed by the first midterm (tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 12). The second section of the class will deal with the historical quest for international peace and security, focusing on the evolution of world order and the development of more traditional security-building techniques such as balance of power, diplomacy, collective security, arms control, international law, and international organization, followed by the second midterm (tentatively scheduled for Thursday, November 4). The last part of this class will cover the quest for international peace and security from a different theoretical angle, focusing on alternative peace-building tools such as international economic development, prosperity, social justice, human rights, and environmental security, followed by the last midterm (tentatively scheduled for Thursday, December 2).

All forms of academic dishonesty will be punished in accordance with the relevant university regulations. All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating will be tolerated. Any cases of dishonesty will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy. If you have any questions about this policy, please consult the instructor.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disabilities Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs.

REQUIRED READINGS

The following book is required for this class and is available for purchase at the SBX bookstore:

John T. Rourke. *International Politics on the World Stage*. McGraw Hill, 2005 (10th edition).

Additional required readings may be distributed in class. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus during the quarter. Any changes will be announced in class in advance.

CLASS SCHEDULE

I. Organizational Meeting (September 23)

II. Conceptual Foundations of Global Politics

1. Realism (September 28, 30)

Rourke, Chs. 1, 6

2. Liberalism (October 5)

Rourke, Chs. 5, 7

3. Other Competing Explanations (October 7)

Rourke, Ch. 3, 4

FIRST MIDTERM EXAM – Tuesday, October 12, in class

III. International Peace and Security – Part One

1. The Evolution of World Order (October 14, 19, 21)

Rourke, Chs. 2, 8, 9

2. The Quest for International Peace and Security (October 26, 28, November 2)

Rourke, Chs. 10, 11

SECOND MIDTERM EXAM – Thursday, November 4, in class

IV. International Peace and Security – Part Two

1. International Economic Development, Prosperity and Justice (November 9, 16, 18)

Rourke, Chs. 12-14

2. Protecting Human Rights and the Global Environment (November 23, 30)

Rourke, Chs. 15, 16

THIRD MIDTERM EXAM – Thursday, December 2, in class