

PSC 240-02: The International System

Dr. Linda P. Brady
Professor of Political Science
E-Mail: lpbrady@uncg.edu
Cell or Text: 336-404-6574
(Phone calls before 9 pm, please)

Office: 305 Curry
Class Meets: T, Th 11:00-12:15 pm
Office Hours: T, Th 2-4 pm
Classroom: 241 Curry

Course Description

This course introduces students to problems and issues in international affairs, with emphasis on preparing you to obtain accurate information, analyze current events systematically, and develop your own personal perspectives on these complex problems. We will explore theories and approaches in the field of international relations and foreign-policy decision-making. Our focus is on major problems and issues confronting governments, non-governmental organizations, and citizens in the 21st century. The course relies heavily on the use of case studies and discussion.

The course material is organized into four parts. Part I provides an introduction to the course, explores the relationship between theory and practice, surveys international relations in the 20th and early 21st centuries, and introduces alternative theories and approaches to understanding the behavior of international actors. Part II provides an introduction to the study of international conflict, including the use of military force, strategy, arms control, and international terrorism. Part III focuses on the role of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, international law, trade and global finance, international integration, and international development. Part IV examines current issues related to the environment and climate change, population, international health, migration, and refugees. We will conclude the course with a discussion of the practice of international relations, including the wide range of careers available to students interested in this field.

Course Objectives

PSC 240 is a general education course with global (GL) and social and behavioral science (GSB) markers. It also provides an introduction to the field of international relations for students majoring in political science.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- Identify the major actors in international relations and define their interests.
- Understand how these actors interact around major issues and problems in the international system.
- Compare and contrast the major theories of international relations and assess their utility in explaining international outcomes.

- Understand how to obtain accurate and balanced information about current events, analyze issues, and develop your own informed perspectives on these complex problems.

Required Text

Jon C. W. Pevehouse and Joshua S. Goldstein, International Relations, 11th Edition. Boston, MA: Pearson Publishers, 2017. (Referred to as “Text” in the Course Schedule below.)

In addition to this primary text you should consult Canvas for supplementary materials and readings.

Because of the nature and focus of this course you are encouraged to read a major national newspaper (e.g., The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post), either hard copy or on-line, and view national/international news broadcasts by reputable sources such as BBC America or the PBS News Hour. Another useful periodical is The Economist.

Course Requirements

Your final grade will be based on the following requirements:

Attendance (Roll will be taken and documented per university policy): 10%

Class Participation (Quality and quantity of contributions): 10%

Paper 1: Due September 13: 15%

Focus: Assessing Presidential Candidates Positions on a Foreign Policy Issue

The purpose of this assignment is to compare and contrast the positions of the major party candidates (Democratic and Republican) for President, on a specific foreign policy issue. Issues could include, but are not limited to: the conduct of war (including the role of nuclear weapons), immigration and protection of the border, trade, nuclear proliferation, the war in Syria, refugees, the Middle East peace process, the role of alliances, climate change, international terrorism, human rights, global health, U.S. support for international organizations such as the United Nations, and our relationship with Russia, China, Israel, Saudi Arabia or Iran.

Test 1: September 22: 15%

Paper 2: Due October 13: 15%

Focus: The Relevance of History

The purpose of this assignment is to address the following question: Why is history relevant to understanding current world affairs, even though it deals with the past? Discuss and provide an example from a current foreign policy issue (e.g., see issues suggested for Paper 1).

Test 2: November 8: 15%

Final Exam (Scheduled during exam period, TBA): 20%

Class Guidelines and Conduct

Attendance and participation in class discussion contribute to the learning environment for all students. You are permitted 3 unexcused absences; additional absences will result in 10 points deducted from calculation of your final grade. Please be on time to avoid disruption of the class.

We will discuss a number of controversial issues in this course. One of our goals is to practice informed, engaged, civil discussion. Respectful disagreement is encouraged, but students should not engage in personal attacks or demean the views of others.

You are encouraged to read assigned materials in advance of the class date for which those materials are assigned. We will not necessarily cover in class every point made in the readings. I will occasionally use slides to outline our discussion; those slides will be posted and you may find it useful to print them, bring them to class, and use them to assist in your note taking.

We will spend approximately 10 minutes of each class discussing the question posed on the syllabus for that day. Please consider the question and organize your thoughts in advance of class to enable vigorous discussion.

Questions are encouraged. If you have a question, others likely have the same question. The only foolish question is the one not asked.

Please ensure that cell phones and other electronic devices are turned off at the beginning of class.

I understand that students may have class and other conflicts with my posted office hours. I am happy to meet with students at other times, by appointment. I encourage visits and am available to discuss issues outside of the course, including careers in the field of international relations. The better I get to know you the more helpful I can be with advice and future letters of recommendation.

Course Schedule

Part I: Historical Overview and Theories and Approaches

Class #1: Introduction to the Course
August 23, 2016

Question: What brings me to this course and what do I hope to learn?

Readings: Text, pp. 1-12.

Other Resources: “Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice in Negotiations.”
HANDOUT.

Class #2: Core Principles, Actors, and Levels of Analysis
August 25, 2016

Question: How has the emergence of new actors impacted the role of nation-states in international politics?

Readings: Text, pp. 12-19; pp. 35-36.

Class #3: The Evolving International System
August 30, 2016

Question: Was the United States more or less secure during the Cold War than we are now?

Readings: Text, pp. 19-34.

Other Resources: John J. Mearsheimer, “Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War,” The Atlantic Monthly. Vol. 266, No. 2, August 1990, pp. 35-50.

Class #4: Realist Theories: Power and Strategy
September 1, 2016

Question: How important is the power of ideas (e.g., democracy) in estimating the power of nation-states?

Readings: Text, pp. 37-51; 61-68.

Other Resources: “Prisoners’ Dilemma Game” and “The Game of Chicken.”
HANDOUTS

Class #5: Realist Theories: The Great Power System
September 6, 2016

Question: “The Strong do what they can, and the Weak do what they must.” How does this statement help explain the behavior of nation-states?

Readings: Text, pp. 51-54.

Other Resources: “The Melian Dialogue.” HANDOUT

Class #6: Realist Theories: Alliances
September 8, 2016

Question: Does membership in an alliance make a nation more secure or enhance the risk that it may be drawn into a war?

Readings: Text, pp. 54-60.

Class #7: The Presidential Candidates and Foreign Policy
September 13, 2016

Question: Compare and contrast the views of the major presidential candidates on a range of foreign policy issues.

Readings: Francis Fukuyama, "American Political Decay or Renewal? The Meaning of the 2016 Election," Foreign Affairs. Vol. 95, No. 4, July/August 2016, pp. 58-68.

Other Resources: Draw from information presented in individual papers on this topic, due in class today.

Class #8: Liberal and Social Theories of International Relations
September 15, 2016

Question: Will the spread of democracy lead to international peace?

Readings: Text, pp. 71-103.

Class #9: Foreign Policy Analysis: Allison's Models and Crisis Decision-Making
September 20, 2016

Question: Uncertainty about the costs and benefits of actions can complicate foreign policy decision-making. What steps can decision-makers take to reduce uncertainty?

Readings: Text, pp. 106-114.

Other Resources: Graham Allison, "Summary Outline of Models and Concepts," Essence of Decision. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., Inc., p. 256.

Class #10: Test 1
September 22, 2016

This test will be short answer and essay in format. Questions will be based on material covered from August 23 through September 15.

Class #11: Foreign Policy Analysis: Domestic Influences
September 27, 2016

Question: How do public opinion and interest groups influence U.S. Middle East policy?

Readings: Text, pp. 114-127.

Other Resources: Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," International Organization. Vol. 42, No. 3, Summer 1988, pp. 427-460.

Part II: International Conflict

Class #12: International Conflict: Types and Causes of War
September 29, 2016

Question: Are the United States and Russia entering a new "Cold War"?

Readings: Text, pp. 128-149; 161-162.

Class #13: International Conflict: The War in Syria
October 4, 2016

Question: How should the United States adapt our strategy and policies to help bring an end to the war in Syria?

Readings: Text, pp. 150-160.

Class #14: International Terrorism
October 6, 2016

Question: How should the United States balance the need for security and the importance of personal freedoms?

Readings: Text, pp. 173-177.

Other Resources: Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," Foreign Affairs. Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

Class #15: The Use of Military Force: Conventional Weapons
October 11, 2016

Question: Will technology (e.g., drones, cyber-warfare) replace "boots on the ground" in future conflicts?

Readings: Text, pp. 164-173; pp. 188-194.

Class #16: The Use of Military Force: Nuclear Weapons

October 13, 2016

Question: Is there a role for nuclear weapons in the 21st century?

Readings: Text, pp. 177-183.

Class #17: Arms Control: Overview

October 20, 2016

Question: Has the end of the Cold War made arms control agreements obsolete?

Readings: Text, pp. 186-188; pp. 195-196.

Other Resources: Heather Williams, "Russia Still Needs Arms Control," Arms Control Today. January/February 2016, pp. 16-23.

Class #18: Nuclear Proliferation and the Iranian Case

October 25, 2016

Question: Should the United States continue to normalize relations with Iran?

Readings: Text, pp. 183-186; Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Iran), July 14, 2015. U.S. Department of State website.

Part III: International Organizations, Trade, Finance, and Development

Class #19: International Organization and Law

October 27, 2016

Question: Should the United States engage with governments that abuse the rights of their citizens?

Readings: Text, pp. 197-239.

Class #20: International Trade, Business and Finance

November 1, 2016

Question: If you were advising a multinational corporation exploring investment abroad, would you recommend they invest in Cuba? In Iran?

Readings: Text, pp. 240-271; pp. 272-301.

Class #21: International Integration

November 3, 2016

Question: What is the likely impact of conflict between Britain and continental Europe on the future of the European Union?

Readings: Text, pp. 302-329.

Class #22: Test 2
November 8, 2016 (Election Day: VOTE!)

This test will be short answer and essay in format. It will be based on material covered between September 20 and October 25.

Class #23: International Development
November 10, 2016

Question: How successful is China in balancing the demands of economic development and democratization?

Readings: Text, pp. 362-370; 375-390; 393-426.

Class #24: Environment and Natural Resources
November 15, 2016

Question: Should the United States attempt to become more self-sufficient in energy sources to reduce dependence on the Middle East? What are the options?

Readings: Text, pp. 330-349; 360-361.

Class #25: Population and Health
November 17, 2016

Question: What more can governments and international organizations do to ease the demographic transition in the developing world and prevent disease?

Readings: Text, pp. 349-359.

Class #26: Migration and Refugees
November 22, 2016

Question: How should the United States and Europe address the challenges of migration and immigration?

Readings: Text, pp. 370-374; 391-392.

Part IV: Conclusion

Class #27: The Practice of International Relations
November 29, 2016

Question: What careers in the field of international relations might be attractive to me?

Readings: Text, pp. 431-434.

Class #28: Review for the Final Exam
December 1, 2016

Question: What have I learned in this course and what questions do I have about the material covered?

Readings: Text, pp. 427-429.