

PSCI 3143: Current Affairs in International Relations

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Office Hours: Tues. 2-3pm, Wed. 9:30-10:30am, & by appt. Class Hours: T/Th 12:30-1:45pm

Office: Ketchum 234

Class Room: RAMYN 1B23

Course Description

This course will help students to deepen their understanding of global events by applying international relations theories to current affairs. The class will mix traditional international relations concepts with news articles, documentaries, videos, and other forms of media. In addition to becoming more knowledgeable about current topics in world news, students will improve their writing and research abilities, learn how to apply theoretical concepts in practical ways, and hone their analytic and critical thinking skills when absorbing media content. In an age where we are bombarded by information, this class should help in sorting good sources from bad while effectively crafting one's own (counter)arguments. With a grounding in traditional international relations theories, this class will also help students understand why political actors act and interact in the ways that they do. The course will cover several recent events in the issue areas of civil conflict, mass migration, trade, terrorism, isolationism, populism, human rights violations, climate change, and autocratic power. This is an upper-level course where basic knowledge of international relations will be presumed. The suggested pre-requisite is PSCI 2223 (Intro to International Relations).

Required Materials

In lieu of purchasing a textbook, the course requires a student subscription to *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* is a reliable source that ensures constant access to the latest news, news opinions, and archival media.

A subscription of *The New York Times* can be purchased for \$1/week as a student. It can be purchased here: [NYT Subscription](#). The NYT subscription is required for all 16 weeks of the semester and you are free to cancel your subscription when the course ends.

All other required reading and viewing materials will be posted to the D2L site or available via a link on this syllabus.

Assessments & Grading

Grades will break down into the following:

- **30%** – Final NGO/IGO project (due Thurs. 12/13)
 - Includes a midterm update on your NGO/IGO creation, due 11/1 (worth 5 pts toward total percentage)
- **25%** – Pop Quizzes (5 at 5% each)
- **20%** – Midterm (Thurs. 10/25)
- **15%** – Attendance
- **10%** – Participation

Final NGO/IGO Project, 30%

Instructions and expectations for the NGO/IGO project will be posted on D2L, along with their rubrics. This final assignment accounts for a large portion of your grade and should reflect your finest work in this course.

Over the course of the semester, we will be discussing dilemmas in the international system. How can we make foreign aid more effective? How should wealthier countries deal with refugee crises? More broadly, how do we get countries to cooperate at all in a world of anarchy? Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are designed to help countries address these types of problems in the international system.

Your job in this final project will be to create your own NGO/IGO. Your organization can be a completely new one, or it can be an improvement on an existing one. Your job is to be explicit about the international dilemma it is addressing, and how it will address it. If you are improving on an existing one, you must also be thorough in discussing how the current organization is lacking in addressing this international problem.

The paper should be at least 7 pages but not more than 10. Font should be 12 point, Times New Roman, and margins at 1 inch. The paper should have both in-text citations and a full bibliography. For more details on your final project, consult the guide on D2L.

A midterm report on your project will be due via D2L on 11/1 by 5:00pm. This report will include what NGO you plan on creating, and if it is a new one, or an improvement on an existing one. For the final paper, *both electronic and hard copies of this paper will be promptly turned in by the time class starts at 12:30pm on Thursday, 12/13*. Papers submitted after this deadline will be deducted by 10% for every day they are late. Papers submitted later than 3 days (later than 12/16) will receive a failing grade.

Pop Quizzes, 25%

Over the course of the semester I will give a total of 7 random quizzes on days of my choice. Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped, giving you a total of 5 quizzes that will count towards your final score in the course. Missed quizzes due to absentees will be counted as zeros in my gradebook. I do not give make up quizzes – any quizzes missed due to excused or unexcused absences will be the ones dropped in the final grade count.

Quizzes will be open note and students may use either their typewritten or handwritten notes to take them. Each quiz will be a mixture of multiple choice and short answer at my discretion and will address material from previous lectures.

Please note that if you are tardy to class and the quiz has already started, you are still allowed to take the quiz, but will not be given extra time to complete it.

Midterm, 20%

A midterm exam will be given on Thursday, 10/25. This exam will cover all material through 10/23, and will include a mixture of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The exam will be in-class, and closed note.

Attendance, 15%

To do well in this course, attendance is imperative. **Reading assignments complement the lecture material – in order to gain all of the information required to succeed in this class, you must show up and be ready to take notes.**

You have three freebie absences for the semester. You are entitled to use these freebie absences as you wish. After these three freebies, each absence will result in a 10% reduction to your attendance grade. This effectively means that each absence will result in a drop in your attendance letter grade.

Religious holidays, sickness, university events, and family emergencies *do* count as absences in your final attendance score. You are advised to use your free absences for these purposes. There is thus no need to present me with doctors' notes or other documentations of your absence. If one of the above excused absences conflicts with a deadline or exam date, please contact me in order to work out a solution to the problem. If illness or a family emergency means you will also be missing a substantial portion of the class, please reach out to notify me of this issue.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class via a sign-in sheet. If you are late, simply sign the attendance sheet as soon as you get a chance (tardiness will not be counted as an absence). Signing anyone other than yourself in on the attendance sheet will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. If caught doing this, you will receive a zero for your attendance grade for the semester, and your case may be submitted to the Honors Code Council.

Participation, 10%

Participation will be evaluated based on your contributions to group discussions and showing respect and professionalism toward your fellow classmates and the instructor. Portions of the class will require group activities and conversations about the material. In these discussions I will take active note of who is contributing to the discussion and who is not. As such, you will be responsible for being prepared for class, completing the readings prior to their assigned days, and engaging with your peers.

Participation points will not be given if disrespect toward me or your classmates is habitual. In discussions, I expect everyone to show thoughtfulness to the points that others may raise. Some of the issues we will discuss may garner a variety of opinions – expressing your disagreement is encouraged, but always do so appropriately. Likewise, if I see you using electronics for reasons other than engaging with class material, sleeping, or displaying otherwise disruptive behavior, participation points will not be awarded.

Remember: acting with intentional courtesy in the class setting, or in out-of-class interactions, is important to your own professional development.

Course Policies

Class Communication, Submitting Assignments, & Grade Complaints

Readings for this class are predominantly paperless. I will communicate with you via announcements on D2L, and via email. You will be held responsible for paying attention to and keeping track of both forms of communication. Please use your Colorado email address in these communications.

Please email me with concerns or questions about the material and assignments. I greatly care about your success in this course and believe that putting in the hard work is important to achieving that. Communication is important to that end, so if you need further help, clarification of the material, or believe that I should be notified of an issue, do not hesitate to get in touch. I will generally respond to emails within 24 hours on Monday through Friday. Responses may be slower over the weekend. If you have a very specific and urgent question about an assignment that is due soon, you should give at least 72 hours in case there is a need for an extended email conversation on the matter.

If you believe you have received an unfair grade on an assignment, you must submit a written grade complaint to me within one week of receiving the contended grade. I encourage you to meet with me beforehand before doing so, to ensure that you fully understand the grade that you received.

E-mail Etiquette

A portion of your participation grade is professionalism. Learning how to send and receive emails to your professors and TAs is an important part of your professional development. Some

guidelines for earning these participation points are the following:

- Always have an informative subject line in your email, preferably with your section number
- Always provide a salutation, and address your instructor appropriately
- Do not email me if:
 - You missed lecture and want to know what you missed – please consult a classmate
 - You are going to miss class for an unexcused absence – it does not make a difference, and the absence will not be excused
- For more tips, please see the following: [Five Things to Remember When Emailing a Professor](#)

Electronic Devices & Technology

For those that prefer taking notes electronically, laptops and tablets will be allowed during lecture and all classroom activities. Please refrain from using computers for anything but activities related to the class. Phones are prohibited as they are rarely useful for anything in the course. If I observe electronic devices being used for anything other than classroom purposes, participation points will be deducted for the day. This includes using your computer/tablet for anything other than schoolwork, and using one's phone during our allotted class time.

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office](#) website.

To avoid plagiarism, please consult this [site](#), which details what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it.

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor. This should be done at the beginning of the semester in a timely fashion.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please submit written notification of any religious holidays that will conflict with class within the first 3 weeks of the semester. See the [campus policy](#) regarding religious observances for full details.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Course Schedule

The reading and assignment schedule is tentative and subject to change. As we move through the course, I may choose at my discretion to assign new readings or replace some with others. Reading and viewing assignments listed for the day are due *on that day*, not for the next class meeting. You are expected to come to each class well-prepared to talk about the assignments and engage in lecture. Assigned readings are intended to complement the lecture material for the day. For all exams, everything covered in lecture or in homework assignments is fair game.

Week 01, 8/28-8/30: Introduction to Social Science

- Tuesday, 8/28: Syllabus, Intros, How to Do Social Science
 - **Science Isn't Broken**, *FiveThirtyEight*
 - **Reading a Regression Table: A Guide for Students**
- Thursday, 8/30: No class

Week 02, 9/4-9/6: Grand Theories in International Relations

- Tuesday, 9/4: Realism & Liberalism
 - Waltz, Kenneth. 1988. "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. **Read pgs. 615-628.**
 - Moravcsik, Andrew. 1997. "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics." *International Organization*. **Read from page 516 at "Core Assumptions of Liberal IR Theory" to page 521 at "Liberal Theory as Systemic Theory."**
- Thursday, 9/6: Liberalism cont. & Constructivism
 - Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization*. **Read pgs. 887-909.**
 - **One World, Rival Theories**, *Foreign Policy*

Week 03, 9/11-9/13: Strategic Choice & International Organizations

- Tuesday, 9/11: Strategic Choice
 - Lake, David. 2011. "Why 'isms' Are Evil: Theory, Epistemology, and Academic Sects as Impediments to Understanding and Progress." *International Studies Quarterly*. **Skim pgs. 887-909.**
 - Lake, David, and Robert Powell. 1999. *Strategic Choice and International Relations*. **Read pgs. ???.**
- Thursday, 9/13: International Organizations
 - Abbott, Kenneth, and Duncan Snidal. 1998. "Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. **Read pgs. 3-32.**
 - "About the organization" webpages: **IMF**, **NATO**, **Amnesty International**

Week 04, 9/18-9/20: International Cooperation

- Tuesday, 9/18: How to Foster International Cooperation
 - Keohane, Robert. 1982. “The Demand for International Regimes.” *International Organization*. **Read pgs. 325-355.**
 - Dreher, Axel, Sturm, Jan-Egbert, and James Vreeland. “Global horse trading: IMF loans for votes in the United Nations Security Council.” *European Economic Review*. **Read pgs. 742-757.**
 - **Thinking the UNthinkable**, *The Economist*
- Thursday, 9/20: Who Cooperates?
 - Downs, George, Rocke, David, and Peter Barsoom. 1996. “Is the good news about compliance good news about cooperation?” *International Organization*. **Read pgs. 379-406.**
 - Gray, Julia. 2013. “Domestic Capacity and the Implementation Gap in Regional Trade Agreements.” *Comparative Political Studies*. **Read pgs. 55-84.**
 - **WTO Disputes by Member**, *World Trade Organization*

Week 05, 9/25-9/27: Major Actors: The US in the International System

- Tuesday, 9/25: Hegemonic Stability Theory: Is the US Still a Hegemon?
 - **These surprising countries could emerge as the heroes of NATO – and the liberal world order**, *The Monkey Cage*
 - **The Brilliant Incoherence of Trump’s Foreign Policy**, *The Atlantic*
- Thursday, 9/27: America’s Diplomats

Week 06, 10/2-10/4: Major Actors: Russia & China

- Tuesday, 10/2: Russia in the International System
 - Diamond, Larry. 2002. “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes.” *Journal of Democracy*. **Read pgs. 21-35.**
 - **Russia used to see itself as part of Europe. Here’s why that changed.**, *The Monkey Cage*
- Thursday, 10/4: The Rise of China
 - **The Changing of the Global Economic Guard**, *The Atlantic*
 - **Can the West’s democracy survive China’s rise to dominance?**, *The Economist*

Week 07, 10/9-10/11: Major Actors: The Developing World

- Tuesday, 10/9: Paths to Development
 - Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2015. *Why Nations Fail*. **Read chp. 2-3: pgs. 45-95.**

- Banerjee, Abhijit, and Esther Duflo. 2011. *Poor Economics*. **Read pgs. ???.**

- Thursday, 10/11: Foreign Aid & Development Assistance

- **How Does the U.S. Spend its Foreign Aid?**, *Council on Foreign Relations*
- **Trump wants to cut immigration and foreign aid. Here's how they're connected.**, *The Monkey Cage*
- **The Lies We Tell About Foreign Aid**, *NPR*
- **Foreign Aid Makes America Safer**, *Foreign Policy*

Week 08, 10/16-10/18: Migration & the Refugee Crisis

- Tuesday, 10/16: The Political Economy of Migration & Ethnocentrism

- Hainmueller, Jens, and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2014. "Public Attitudes Toward Immigration." *The Annual Review of Political Science*. **Read pgs. 225-249.**

- Thursday, 10/18: The Refugee Crisis

- **Watch: Exodus: The Journey Continues**, *Frontline*
- **Jordan shut out out 60,000 Syrian refugees – and then saw a backlash. This is why.**, *The Monkey Cage*

Week 09, 10/23-10/25: The Eurozone Crisis, Midterm Exam

- Tuesday, 10/23: The Political Origins and Consequences of the Eurozone Crisis (guest lecture)
- Thursday, 10/25: Midterm Exam

Week 10, 10/30-11/1: Trade

- Tuesday, 10/30: The Political Economy of Trade

- **Comparative Advantage, Gains from Trade**
- **A Healthy Reexamination of Free Trade's Benefits and Shocks**, *The Economist*
- **The World Trading System is Under Attack**, *The Economist*

- Thursday, 11/1: Trade Agreements & the WTO

- **Final project midterm reports due by 5:00pm on D2L.**
- **What's Next for the WTO?**, *Council on Foreign Relations*
- **How to rescue the WTO**, *The Economist*
- **NAFTA's Economic Impact**, *Council on Foreign Relations*

Week 11, 11/6-11/8: Populism & Brexit

- Tuesday, 11/6: Isolationism & The Rise of Populism

- **What is a Populist?**, *The Atlantic*

- **Will global populism continue to erode democracies?**, *The Monkey Cage*
- **How the GOP Embraced the World—And Then Turned Away**, *Politico*
- **The Pros and Cons of Populism**, *The New Yorker*

- Thursday, 11/8: Brexit

- **A background guide to “Brexit” from the European Union**, *The Economist*
- **What Brexit Reveals about Rising Populism**, *Council on Foreign Relations*
- Colantone, Italo, and Piero Stanig. 2018. “Global Competition and Brexit.” *American Political Science Review*. **Read pgs. 201-218.**

Week 12, 11/13-11/15 : Rogue State: North Korea

- Tuesday, 11/13: Personalist Dictatorships & the International System

- **The Rise of Personalist Rule**, *Brookings Institute*
- **How to Deal with North Korea**, *The Atlantic*
- Tomz, Michael, and Jessica Weeks. 2013. “Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace.” *American Political Science Review*. **Read pgs. 849-865.**

- Thursday, 11/15: The Propaganda Game

- **Seoul Success**, *The Washington Post*

Week 13, 11/20-11/22: No class, Fall & Thanksgiving Break

- Tuesday, 11/20: No class
- Thursday, 11/22: No class

Week 14, 11/27-11/29: Civil War & Terrorism

- Tuesday, 11/27: Causes of Civil Wars, and How They End

- Fearon, James, and David Laitin. 2003. “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” *American Political Science Review*. **Read pgs. 75-90.**
- **How Civil Wars End**, *Political Violence at a Glance*

- Thursday, 11/29: What is Terrorism?

- Kydd, Andrew, and Barbara Walter. 2006. “The Strategies of Terrorism.” *International Security*. **Read pgs. 49-80.**
- **A Simple Rule for Defining Terrorism**, *Political Violence at a Glance*
- **ISIS is a Part-Time Terrorist Group**, *Slate*

Week 15, 12/4-12/6: Human Rights

- Tuesday, 12/4: Human Rights Treaties & NGOs

- Kelley, Judith, and Beth Simmons. 2014. “Politics by Number: Indicators as Social Pressure in International Relations.” *American Journal of Political Science* **Read pgs. 55-70.**
- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, *United Nations*
- **Human Rights Watch World Report 2018**, *Human Rights Watch*. **Read pgs. VIII-13, skim individual countries of interest to you.**

- Thursday, 12/6: Have Human Rights Improved Worldwide?

- **A Trump moratorium on international treaties could roll back human rights – here at home**, *The Monkey Cage*
- **Have Human Rights Treaties Failed?**, *The New York Times*
- **It’s Getting Better All the Time**, *Foreign Policy*

Week 16, 12/11-12/13: Climate Change & the Environment

- Tuesday, 12/11: Cooperation on Climate Change & the Environment

- Mitchell, Ronald. 1994. “Regime Design Matters: Intentional Oil Pollution and Treaty Compliance.” *International Organization*. **Read pgs. 425-458.**
- **Curbing Climate Change: Why It’s So Hard to Act in Time**, *The Conversation*
- **The Arctic is melting. Here’s why cooperation and diplomacy get so complicated.**, *The Monkey Cage*

- Thursday, 12/13: The Paris Climate Accord

- **Final Project is due by the time class starts at 12:30pm**
- Ringquist, Evan J, and Tatiana Kostadinova. 2005. “Assessing the Effectiveness of International Environmental Agreements: The Cast of the 1985 Helsinki Protocol.” *American Journal of Political Science*. **Read pgs. 86-102.**
- **Trump’s Paris Agreement Withdrawal in Context**, *Foreign Affairs*
- **Why Abandoning Paris is a Disaster for America**, *Foreign Policy*