Overview

Why can’t countries always arrive at peaceful agreements that avoid war? Given that wars do happen, why are there not more of them? How much power do presidents really have? Is ‘international law’ meaningful in the absence of an international government to enforce it? Is democratization inevitable? Why is an international solution to climate change so difficult? Is international trade good or bad for American workers? Why did the world descend into a global recession in 2008? Why isn’t there a single global currency? Do nuclear weapons make us safer?

This course offers an introduction to international politics via an overview of the major topics in the field and a survey of the tools and methods needed to study the topics scientifically. We will begin with big questions about inter-state war and work our way through other forms of conflict in the first half of the course. In the second half, we will open with issues of international political economy – trade, currency, development– and move to international law, human rights and global environmental concerns. Finally, we will conclude the course by applying all we’ve covered to a careful study of nuclear weapons and of terrorism. We will be working through the textbook World Politics (listed below) and a few supplemental book chapters and journal articles when we need greater detail.

A key objective of the course is to expose the difference between being well-informed about current international events and being able to analyze international politics. While the former is admirable, the latter is the goal of the course. Analyzing international politics well requires a set of skills that can be challenging at first. This course is designed to help you develop these skills and presumes no background in international politics– we will start with the basics. That being said, some of the material is subtle and challenging, and some of the readings are quite technical. The lectures will distill the material as much as possible, and sections will offer an additional chance to address challenging material. Students who make the most of these resources and approach the course with a willingness to rise to the challenge will do very well.
Requirements

Section Participation: 12%
Sections will meet once a week and are offered to help clarify lecture material and occasionally introduce new material. Students are expected to attend and participate in section, and are responsible for material covered in both lecture and section.

Short Assignments: 18%
The course covers a lot of information. Short assignments are intended to clarify key concepts, offer practice in applying course material before exams, and facilitate discussion in section. There will be one problem set, one ID assignment, three short analyses of films and one current event memo. Details and deadlines will be distributed in lecture and/or section.

Midterm: 30%
An in-class midterm will be given on Wednesday, March 8th. There will be a review session held during class time the Monday immediately prior, March 6th.

Final: 40%
A final exam will be held on Monday, May 15th at 10am. The time and place can be confirmed on the Registrar’s website. There will be a review session held during class time on the last official meeting of class, Monday, May 8th.

Additional course information will be distributed in lecture, in section, over the email list, or on the course website.

Course Materials
There are two required books for the course. The bulk of the course readings will be from the book (referenced as FLS below):


The book is available in the NYU bookstore, or on amazon.com. We will also be reading most of:


The book is available in hardcopy or as a Kindle ebook on amazon.com.

Additional readings will be available on the course website, accessible with your NYU ID. There will also be short assignments which will require viewing the following three films out of class:

- Seven Days in May. Dir. John Frankenheimer. 1964.
• *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.* Dirs. David Naylor and Stanley Kubrick. 1964.

The films are available for purchase on Amazon.com, for rent on either amazon.com or vudu.com, or can be rented in hard copy (not streamed, as of Dec 2016) from netflix.com. Plan ahead to ensure you will have access to a copy in time for the short assignments.

**Late Policy**

An assignment is ‘late’ if it is submitted past the due date and time or if it is submitted in an improper format. Each assignment is worth 3% of the final grade. Late assignments are worth a maximum of 2% of the final grade the first day they are late, a maximum of 1% the second day they are late, and 0% if more than two days late. Exceptions for personal emergencies will be assessed by the teaching staff on a case-by-case basis.
Schedule of Readings (subject to additions and substitutions)

Week 1: Introduction

1/23/17: Course introduction and logistics
- FLS Introduction

1/25/17: Studying international politics scientifically
- FLS Chapter 1
- FLS Chapter 2

Week 2: Game Theory and a Preview of War

1/30/17: Quick intro to game theory
- FLS Chapter 2 Appendix (p. 74-79)
- Chapters 5-7 (p. 119-199) of:

2/1/17: NO LECTURE

Week 3: War

2/6/17: Game theory cont. and preview of rationalist war
- No new readings

2/8/17: Why are there wars?
- FLS Chapter 3

Week 4: Domestic Politics and War

2/13/17: Domestic Politics and War
- FLS Chapter 4
2/15/17: Democratic Peace

- Chapters 1 and 2 (p. 1-48) in:
  

Week 5: International Institutions

2/20/17: NO LECTURE

2/22/17: Alliances and International Institutions

- FLS Chapter 5

Week 6: Conflict Within States

2/27/17: Civil war

- FLS Chapter 6 first half, p. 214-242

3/1/17: Conflict and cooperation in weak states

- Chapter 2, “The Pacification Process” (p. 31-58) in:
  

Week 7: Midterm Week

3/6/17: Review session

3/8/17: In-Class Midterm
Week 8: Spring Break
3/13/17: NO LECTURE
3/15/17: NO LECTURE

Week 9: International Political Economy
3/20/17: NO LECTURE
3/22/17: Trade
  • FLS Chapter 7

Week 10: International Political Economy
3/27/17: International financial relations
  • FLS Chapter 8
3/29/17: International monetary relations
  • FLS Chapter 9

Week 11: International Norms
4/3/17: International Norms
  • FLS Chapter 11
4/5/17: NO LECTURE

Week 12: Human rights and the environment
4/10/17: Human rights
  • FLS Chapter 12
4/12/17: Global environmental issues
  • FLS Chapter 13
Week 13: Development

4/17/17: Development: the long term

- FLS Chapter 10

4/19/17: Development: the short term

- Chapter 1 (p. 1-29) in:

- Chapters 1 and 2 (p. 1-40) in:

Week 14: Nuclear Weapons

4/24/17: Nuclear weapons

- Chapters 1-6 (p. 1-107) in:

4/26/17: Nuclear weapons cont.

- Chapters 1, 2, and 6 (p. 3-81, 175-214) in:
Week 15: Terrorism, Wrap-up

5/1/17: Terrorism

- FLS Chapter 6 second half, p. 242-263
- “Nuclear Proliferation and Terrorism” (p. 43-61) and “Pakistan” (p. 65-75) in Bob Graham and James M Talent. *World at risk: the report of the commission on the prevention of WMD proliferation and terrorism*. Vintage, 2008.

5/3/17: Bringing it all together

Week 16:

5/8/17: Review session

Final Exam

5/15/17: Final Exam, 10:00a (EARLIER THAN CLASS), location TBD by the Registrar.