

**Syllabus | Fall 2018**  
**INTL 4770: Special Topics in International Relations**  
**“Applied Theory and Critical Analysis of Current International Political Events”**

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**Instructor:**  
Dr Jennifer Joelle White

**Class Time:**  
TuTh, 14:00-15:15

**Office hours:**  
Wednesdays, 15:30-17:00 or by appointment

**Class Location:**  
MLC, Room 147

**Office:**  
Candler 219

**E-Mail:**  
[jenx@uga.edu](mailto:jenx@uga.edu)

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**Course Description:**

“Theoretical, analytical, and empirical approaches to international relations.”

Prerequisite: INTL 3200 or INTL 3300 or permission of department

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**Raison d’Être of the Course:**

In an era of proliferating sources of information and of opinions – and of instant communication of information (fact or not) – the deep analysis of current events has become ever more challenging as news cycles shorten and the presence of fewer media outlets serves to narrow the information that is available for consumption. In addition, as students in International Affairs, there is often a tangential or cursory discussion of current events that are related to a course’s subject matter, but often there is little time to delve more deeply and critically into these events. Students nevertheless may very well find themselves in careers where the careful analysis of events and an understanding of their contexts, histories, and implications are vital.

In this course, therefore, we shall endeavor to develop a solid theoretical foundation for critically analyzing a number of current political events happening in the world, researching the historical factors that have shaped the events, the actors involved, and the social, economic, and political variables that affect the events and are affected by them. In addition, we shall consider future implications and potential outcomes of these events as time moves on. We shall seek to answer questions such as: “Why has this happened, and why now?” “Which actors have greatest influence over these events?” “What can we learn from the history leading up to these events that can help us to understand the outcomes observed, and the possible future outcomes?” “Are there other, similar cases on which these events can shed some light?”

Students will be asked to choose a current international political event to research, analyze, monitor, and present to the class through the course of the semester. These range of these events can be broad: for example, self-determination, genocide, the functioning of international institutions, the rise of social movements and/or political parties, intrastate and interstate conflict, and terrorism and radicalization. Each student will be responsible for understanding the theoretical underpinnings of the event chosen and what has been assessed in the scholarly literature about the event. Each student, in short, will become an analytical expert on her/his chosen current event, and will then be responsible for communicating that knowledge to the rest of the class so that we all may better understand what is happening in the world today and we can look for ways that international events are connected or influence one another.

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**Course Objectives**

In this course, we shall work to:

- develop a clearer understanding of the **causes of certain current international political events**, the **variables** that determine the outcomes, and an understanding of the possible **future course** of these events
- use the **theoretical approaches of international relations and comparative politics** to analyze and understand current political events, drawing on relevant scholarly literature
- investigate current political events through analysis **over time** and **comparatively** between/among different cases where appropriate
- explore the **political institutional, cultural, and economic** aspects of current political events so we can better understand how these factors affect outcomes
- engage in **critical assessments** of the differences and similarities we find, evaluating the impact of the variables we consider on the outcomes observed
- develop sharper **critical thinking skills** that will enable you to better understand and assess the value of news articles, research papers, and proposed policies
- use theoretical tools from the course to **explain, predict, or prescribe policy reform** and political behavior as a researcher or practitioner in the field of politics
- be able to **comprehend and communicate theoretical concepts and findings** with more effective written and verbal communication skills

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**Texts:**

We shall have readings from a variety of sources, to be made available via eLC (you are welcome to purchase these texts – as listed below in the class schedule – but an electronic version will be provided). There is, however, one required text (available at the University Book Store):

**Weston, Anthony.** *A Rulebook for Arguments*. (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2009.

**ISBN:** 978-0-87220-954-1 (**Required**; listed as “**AW**” in the course schedule below.)

I may add further readings that I think might be pertinent to our discussions, and as part of your assignments, you will also be tasked with choosing readings to acquaint others in the class with your chosen current event. An announcement of any further required texts will therefore be made as the semester progresses.

**Please NOTE:** *The readings that will be posted on the course Web site are for use by students in this course ONLY! Please do not share these **copyrighted** materials with others, else I shall receive a nasty “cease and desist order” from the publishers. Not fun.*

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**Ground Rules**

Each day’s assignments and readings must be completed **before** class, and each student must be ready to conduct a quality discussion on the day’s material. Also, lectures will not be mere repetition of the reading material, and students will be expected to come to class ready to expand on the readings and assignments. In effect, we shall be building the lectures together, so each student must be engaged in the discussions (and, of course, this counts towards your participation grade!).

**Please note the following:**

1. First and foremost: **communicate**. If anything occurs that might affect your ability to participate or do the work for the class, please let me know. I have had many students who have felt overwhelmed yet waited too long to speak to me (or did not communicate at all) about the situation: if I know that you are facing challenges, I can work with you or help you find assistance so that you can successfully manage the course.
2. The use of laptops, cell phones, iPods, or any other electronic device **will not be tolerated during class without advance permission. Period. No exception.** We shall be doing this old-school, ladies and gentlemen. ***If you cannot be disconnected for 75 minutes twice a week, do not take this class.*** Also note that, as adults, I will not reprimand you for using your e-device: I shall simply give you a zero for participation on the day(s) that you choose to ignore this first ground rule. Alternatively, I may have you stand in front of the class and perform your best John Oliver impersonation (glasses and dark wig will be provided in this instance) – you might not want to be that person.. **Note:** For anyone who **dares** to use an electronic device when we have a guest speaker, I shall give you a **zero** for your **semester** participation grade. You really don’t want to lose participation credit if you don’t have to – it may very well make the difference in your final grade.
3. ***You may accrue up to three unexcused absences without penalty.*** If you are absent for more than three class meetings without a valid (per University policy) written excuse, your participation grade will be lowered by one letter grade per unexcused absence. As participation is a part of your grade, you cannot participate if you do not attend class.
4. ***If you are absent on a day when an assignment is due, you must provide an acceptable excuse per University policy in order to make up the assignment.*** In addition, if you know you will be absent (e.g., for religious observance, an extra-curricular event, or illness), I would appreciate an e-mail notification ahead of time, if possible.
5. ***Be sure you know what the heck plagiarism is*** (see [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize)). ***Work submitted for this course must be your own work; all necessary citations must be properly provided when you cite anyone or anything else:*** All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible for knowing these standards **before** performing any academic work, and we shall discuss points of academic ethics and plagiarism in class. For more information, see: [honesty.uga.edu/ahpd/culture\\_honesty.htm](http://honesty.uga.edu/ahpd/culture_honesty.htm). **To reiterate:** any incidents of plagiarism or intellectual fraud (see [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fraud](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fraud)) will be treated as the **most serious offense**, and you **really** don’t want to go to a University hearing over this – it’s scary AF. If you need help in determining what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid committing this most egregious intellectual sin, please consult me or our kickin’-est SPIA Librarian, Elizabeth White ([elwhite1@uga.edu](mailto:elwhite1@uga.edu), no relation).
6. **Late work:** I shall accept late work on an individual basis: that is, I may accept it, **I may not**. Do not depend on my acceptance of late work. For me to consider *any* submission of late work, you must communicate to me *before* the deadline that the assignment will be late. If you have not informed me before the deadline, I shall not accept any late submission.

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7. Our discussions may touch upon ideas or topics on which we may not all agree – in fact, this will probably be the case. Each student is expected to be courteous and respectful of the viewpoints and ideas of all others in the class, although disagreements are certainly acceptable. ***In discussions, you should make an effort to provide either a theoretical or empirical basis for your comments (i.e., facts – and there is no such thing as an “alternative fact”). This is a major part of becoming a good critical thinker, which is one of the goals of this course.***
8. This syllabus is a general plan; **it may be necessary for me to amend any part of the syllabus as we proceed through the course.** (Let’s face it: it will likely happen.) Announcements will generally be made in class and on the course Web site, so you should be sure to attend each class, and to **check the course Web site on ELC often.**
9. **When asked to do so, please submit all work via eLC.** I have 150+ students, and it can be extremely difficult to find assignments e-mailed to me. If there is a problem with eLC (as there often is), e-mail me about the problem and send me your assignment, ***but continue trying to submit your work via eLC until successful in doing so.*** Note also that you should receive a submission receipt for all work submitted via eLC: if you do not receive this, do not assume your work has been submitted. Again, this is your responsibility, so be vigilant.
10. **Be sure to keep track of your grades and absences through the semester** (set up an Excel sheet if you’d like – that can help). Owing to time constraints, I likely will not be able to give you details on these matters until the end of the semester when I begin to calculate grades. Be pro-active: track for yo’self.
11. **Letters of recommendation:** I receive many requests for letters of recommendation from students. To guarantee that I can complete each request and do so as well as possible, I am limiting the number of *new* requests for such letters to ten (10) each semester. If I have written a letter for you in the past, your request will not be included in the limit of those ten. In any case, I shall require ***at least*** a two-week notice period before the letter is due (more time would be appreciated!). I take these very seriously, and would like to write you as strong a letter as I can – this takes time! 😊

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### **Class Agenda**

**For each class**, students are expected to have **completed the readings listed for that day** in the course schedule. This will be a course that features discussion prominently, so being prepared by having read before class time will be essential. We have a relatively small class, so this should be conducive to more in-depth discussions of the events we discuss.

Students are also expected to **be familiar with current events** beyond that which they choose to analyze themselves, and we shall have discussions of these events and how they bear on our studies to that point each week. As this is a course in which you are expected to sharpen your critical thinking skills, you should try to **check out at least two (2) news sources** at least a couple of times a week (no – your Facebook/Snapchat feed does ***not*** count) and thoughtfully assess each source and its presentation of the information. This may be most easily accomplished on-line, by going to the “world news” section of a reputable news source. Here are some to try:

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- The New York Times ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))
  - NPR ([www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org), also carried on WUGA on-line and at 91.7FM)
  - The BBC ([news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk))
  - The Washington Post ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com))
  - The Wall Street Journal ([www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com))
  - The Globe and Mail ([www.theglobeandmail.com](http://www.theglobeandmail.com))
  - The Guardian ([www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk))
  - The Irish Times ([www.irishtimes.ie](http://www.irishtimes.ie))
  - Le Monde ([www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr) – in French)
  - Der Spiegel ([www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de)– in German)
  - The Christian Science Monitor ([www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com))
  - Teen Vogue ([www.teenvogue.com/news-politics](http://www.teenvogue.com/news-politics) - the News/Politics section)
  - Check out **Google News** (<http://news.google.com/nwshp?hl=en&tab=wn>), and choose “World” to see the world’s news in the country of your choice many here are in English (e.g., Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa) as well as other languages.
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### **Reading Assignments**

This course includes a significant reading load (approximately 100 pages per week). To get through this material as efficiently as possible, you may find it more effective to approach the reading in this manner: Read the introduction and then conclusion to identify the author’s main argument(s). Then scan section headings and the first and last paragraphs of each section to see how the author develops and supports the main argument. Finally, pursue detailed reading for sections that clarify the argument or provide supporting evidence. Give yourself time to *think* about the reading, challenging its arguments or coming up with additional evidence that you believe supports the presented arguments.

We shall discuss these readings thoroughly, and to prepare for the class discussions, you should always consider the following: What is the author’s main point or argument? What evidence does s/he offer to support this view? Is the argument and evidence compelling? Can I think of arguments/evidence that support/undermine this? Why is this piece on the syllabus? How does it relate to previous readings? How can I use this piece in an essay?

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**Grading**

Participation	→	15%
Mid-Term	→	25%
Journal Reflections (around 4)	→	10%
Presentation of Current Event Research/Analysis	→	10%
Peer Evaluation of Case Presentation/Discussion	→	5%
Peer Evaluation/Critique of Executive Summary of Current Event	→	5%
<b><u>Current Event Analysis Project Papers (% Total):</u></b>		
1. Background/History & Scholarly/Expert Lit Review of Event (Outline format)	→	10%
2. One-Page Executive Summary of Current Event (to be disseminated to class in advance of presentation of event)	→	10%
3. Final Draft: Scenario Analysis of Current Event (with implications)	→	10%
<hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/>		
<b>Total:</b>		<b>100%</b>

**Grading Scale:**

Grading for the course will be deemed as follows:

>=94	A	84-86	B	80-83	B-	74-76	C	60-69	D
90-93	A-	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	70-73	C-	<60	F

Grading will be based on a group presentation and a peer review of that presentation; individual research papers; journal reflections (to be assigned during class and completed on the eLC course Web site); class participation; and a **mandatory** office meeting with me to take place in the course of the semester. Exact details of the assignments will be given in class well in advance of each assignment’s due date.

**Group Presentation:**

1. Students will work with two (possibly three) other classmates on the analysis of a specific current event throughout the semester. This work will culminate in an executive summary of the research performed on the current event and a presentation of that research to the class. This class presentation will be peer-graded by one other group (a rubric to assess the group presenting will be provided); the average of the peer grades from the review group will be the grade given for the presentation/discussion.
2. Each group will also write a one-page executive summary brief to be submitted *before* the day of presentation of the current event. This executive summary will also be peer-reviewed by one other group.
3. Note that you get 5% of your final grade just for submitting your earnest peer-review evaluation of one other presentation and 5% for submitting your earnest peer-review of the presentation group’s executive summary.

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**Individual Projects:**

1. Each student will write a brief reflection on various topics related to the course in a journal on the eLC course Web site. The prompts for these journal entries will be given in class ahead of time. There will be approximately four (4) such essay reflections required. These reflections will be for you to explore topics or consider the work that we have done to that point in the semester; I shall not grade these strictly on content, but rather in your effort in reflecting on the particular topic.
2. Each student will be responsible for writing an individual **research analysis** papers focused on a chosen current international political event. These research and analysis papers will be completed in stages throughout the semester.

Details concerning these assignments will be discussed in class well in advance of the respective due dates. **Additional assignments** may also be given during class, either to be completed in class or turned in during a future class session.

**Due Dates:**

Once we head into the class presentations of the current event research, due dates will fall in accordance when each group presents:

- The executive summary of the current even will be due *two calendar days before* the presentation (via eLC).
- The peer evaluation of the presentation (done by one group, not presenting that day) will be due at the end of the class in which the presentation to be evaluated took place (hard copy – a rubric will be handed out in class).
- The peer evaluation of the executive summer will be due *two calendar days after* the presentation date (via an eLC dropbox).

**Participation:**

As one of the objectives of the course is to develop better critical thinking skills and to be able to communicate concepts and ideas more effectively, participation counts significantly toward your final grade. Silently attending lectures and completing all assignments on time earns you a C- or 70% (so keep this in mind with regard to how late you get in the night before we have class). A higher grade is contingent on **active participation**. I define participation broadly, for example: raising questions or expressing confusion about the material; interacting with me outside of the classroom; posting interesting articles on the eLC course Web site that relate to our course material. If you are concerned about participation, contact me and we can discuss strategies to raise your grade, but **do not wait until the last day of class to do this**, as it will be too late by then!

I will of course try to meet students on an appointment basis for those who cannot visit me during my office hours and hold “happy hour” office hours throughout the semester, but I **cannot guarantee** my availability outside of my office hours. So, plan that office visit accordingly!

Finally, on the days that we have guest speakers, you will be required **to compose two questions related to the speaker’s area of expertise before the class in which the speaker visits**. Please draw on these questions and pose them to the speaker; this will be a requisite part of your participation grade.

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**Contested Grades:**

If you have a concern about the grade you received for a test or assignment, you must submit a **type-written** explanation of the problem along with the test or assignment in question **within one week** of receiving the graded assignment. I shall re-evaluate your work and assign a “new” grade, taking into account your written explanation (which, in essence then, becomes part of the re-grade). Note, however, that this process may result in the same grade, a higher grade, or indeed a **lower grade for that assignment**. You are allowed this one appeal for each graded assignment; the re-grade will then stand. If the issue is merely a matter of an error in calculation on my part, you need not submit a type-written request for this correction, but you need to notify me of this error within one week of receiving the graded assignment back from me. *Capisce?* Please ask if you have questions about this policy.

**Late Work**

As a reminder of the ground rules: Outside of an accepted University excuse, under **unusual** circumstances, and on a **case-by-case** individual basis, I **may** accept late work *if you have communicated to me before the due date that the work is to be late*. For **all** submitted work, it is **your responsibility** to ensure that I receive your work – not mine. If eLC is not working for you or you’re having connection issues, find another way to get me your assignment on time. If, for any reason, you are unsure if your work has been received by me, it is up to you to follow up. I do reserve the right to refuse late work.

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**Class Schedule**

The course syllabus presents a general plan for the course, but not all readings have yet been determined. Depending upon political events that may yet unfold, I shall determine readings for the days for which “TBA” (“to be announced”) is noted and I may also add readings that may be of particular relevance. These added readings will be related to that day’s topic, as listed below, and will be made available on the eLC course Web site. Some readings in texts other than our main textbooks are already listed below, and are marked with a “\*\*” – these, too, will be available on the eLC course Web site. Bear in mind, however, that deviations from this schedule may well be necessary, and I shall announce these to the class and post on eLC. ***If you note any errors (likely) below or in this syllabus, please let me know.***

**Schedule of Assignments and Classes:**

***Readings marked with asterisks (\*\*) can be found on eLC. Changes to this schedule may be necessary.***

**14 August: Introductions**

**16 August: Thinking Critically & Constructing Argument & Discussion of Events**

**Readings:**

- Paul, Richard, and Linda Elder. “Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools.” (Dillon Beach, CA: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2006). \*\*
- Sana, Faria, Tina Weston, and Nicholas J. Cepeda. "Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers." *Computers & Education* 62, (March 1, 2013): 24-31.
- AW – Introduction - Chapter 6 (inclusive)

**21 – 23 August: Foundations: International Relations & Comparative Theory**

**DUE:** Journal Reflection #1 (1/18)

**Readings:**

- Frieden, Lake, and Schultz – Introduction \*\* (8/21)
- Frieden, Lake, and Schultz – Chapter 2 \*\* (8/23)

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**28 - 30 August: Setting the International Framework**

**DUE:** Current Event Sign-Up (1/25)

**Readings:**

- Dickovick, James Tyler, and Jonathan. Eastwood. *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases*. Second ed. 2016. \*\*
  - Chapter 1 (8/28)
- Judt, Tony. *Ill Fares the Land*. New York: Penguin Press, 2010. \*\*
  - Introduction & Chapter 1 (8/28)
  - Chapter 2 (8/30)

**4 – 6 September: Foreign Policy Framework**

**DUE: Sign-Up for Current Event/Presentation Schedule (9/6)**

**Readings:**

- Haass, Richard. *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*. 2017. (Selection to TBA) \*\*

**11 – 13 September: Analysis – Case Study Current Event (Fuel Sources)**

**Readings:**

- Yergin, Daniel. *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*. (Selection to TBA) \*\*

**18 – 20 September:**

**In Class:**

- Film: “Who Killed the Electric Car?”

**25 – 27 September:**

**DUE: Current Event History/Background and Literature Review (9/25)**

**In Class:**

- *Guest Speaker: Dr David Gattie, College of Engineering, UGA*
- Discussion: Film, Dr Gattie, Current Events

**2 – 4 October:**

**In Class:**

- **Mid-Term (10/2)**

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

**17 October: WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE**

**9 – 11 October: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker**

**In Class:**

- Current Event Presentations (up to 3)

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

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**16 – 18 October: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker**

**In Class:**

- Current Events Presentations (up to 3)

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

**23 – 25 October: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker**

**In Class:**

- Current Events Presentations (up to 3)

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

**26 October: NO CLASS! FALL BREAK!**

**30 October – 1 November Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker**

**In Class:**

- Current Events Presentations (up to 3)

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

**6 – 8 November: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker**

**In Class:**

- Current Events Presentations (up to 3)

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

**13 - 15 November: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker**

**In Class:**

- Current Events Presentations (up to 3)

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

**19 – 23 November: NO CLASS! THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**27 November: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker**

**In Class:**

- Current Events Presentations (up to 3)

**Readings:**

- TBA \*\*

**29 November: Conclusions – Where from Here?**

**LAST DAY OF CLASS!**

**In Class:**

- Wrap-Up and Review

**6 December: Final Event Scenario Analysis Paper Due**