

Syllabus | Spring 2022 | CRN# 59954
INTL 4770 | Special Topics in IR: Current International Political Events

Instructor:

Dr Jennifer J White

Class Time:

TuTh, 15:55 – 17:10

Office Hours (E-mail, Skype, Zoom):

Wednesdays, 15:45-17:45, or by arrangement

Class Location:

MLC 147

E-Mail:

jenx@uga.edu

Office Mailing Address:

202 Herty Drive, Room 216 ([building #0031](#))

Appointment Scheduling during Office Hours:

jenx.youcanbook.me

Course Description:

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

Prerequisite: INTL 3200 or INTL 3300 or permission of department

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*. (5th Edition) Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2018.

ISBN: 978-1-62466-654-4 (**Required**; listed as “AW” in the course schedule below.)

(Note: If you have a previous edition of the Weston text, that will suffice.)

Additional Readings:

You all will also generate our readings from the research that you do on your chosen current events. One of the first writing assignments you have will be a background/history and literature review of your current event; I shall survey the literature you find as part of your research and assign select readings from your work (so be sure to find good sources!). I shall post these readings on eLC to be read respectively for the day on which each group presents its current event.

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.*

NB: If you find any possible errors or areas of confusion in the syllabus, please let me know! 😊

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Notes about Safety:

- **PLEASE WEAR A MASK WHEN INDOORS!** I'll be wearing a mask for all class interactions, and it is the sensible, safe thing to do.
- **We need to put our collective and individual health and safety needs first.**
 - If you feel like you have a cold or have come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, **REPORT via DawgCheck:** <https://dawgcheck.uga.edu/>
The ensuring instructions will let you know what to do.
 - **Get vaccinated & boosted.** This is the best long-term way we have to protect ourselves and each other, and to keep this virus from mutating even further. I was fully vaccinated & boosted at the University Health Center (<https://healthcenter.uga.edu/>) -- they have an amazing operation to get you in, vaccinated, and out quickly and safely.
 - **UHC patient portal:** https://patientportal.uhs.uga.edu/login_dualauthentication.aspx
 - **Vaccine info:** <https://healthcenter.uga.edu/healthtopics/covid-vaccine/>.

My Expectations of You:

As an introduction to an entire subfield of political science, this course will be covering a great deal of ground, and we may not be able to cover adequately a theme or area of the world that is of particular interest to you. There will be, however, opportunity for you to delve more deeply into areas/countries of interest in the group project (described below).

It is *essential* that you prepare each week and keep up with the readings, assignments, and discussions. Each week's reading and lecture assignments should be completed before our discussion sessions, and each student must be ready to conduct a quality discussion during those meetings. In addition, 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 class meetings together, so each student must be engaged in the class.

Attendance: Given the flexibility that we may need this semester, I'll not record attendance for any part of your grade; I'd like you to come to class when you can, but there are also many ways to participate and engage in the class! Although we'll not have a remote session option this semester, I'll post the lecture slides on eLC after the day's class meeting. If you have concerns about attendance, please let me know.

What You Can Expect from Me:

I shall strive to offer you a fair, manageable workload that will address the essential concepts and knowledge you'll need to serve as the foundation for upper-level Comparative Politics courses. I shall also connect what we discuss with current events to help you gain a greater understanding of our course concepts and certain events happening in the world. ***Please note that our discussions of current events will be related to the topic(s) we are discussing in the course; if you're not making the connections, let's please chat about that!***

If you need to see me during my office hours, please book a time at jenx.youcanbook.me. Appointments can be scheduled in 15-minute increments; if you think you might need a longer visit than 15 minutes, please book more than one time slot. If you will be unable to meet with me after having scheduled a time, please delete the appointment at jenx.youcanbook.me, so others may be able to schedule at that time.

You should indeed feel free to ***communicate with me*** on any question or issue you are having in the course. This is ***your*** course: you should be active in what you're learning and with regard to what you wish to learn. If something isn't working or isn't clear, please speak up – I'll give you opportunity to give feedback along the way, but the sooner I know about an issue, the sooner I can attempt to correct it!

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Ground Rules:

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. 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 logical theoretical or empirical basis for your comments. This is a major part of becoming a good critical thinker, which is one of the goals of this course. I shall always give you the benefit of supporting my conclusions with evidence, data, and a logical causal explanation.***
 - a. This is a course in *politics*, so we shall indeed encounter political discussions that irritate, challenge, confound, excite, and/or impassion you. If you feel strongly about any discussion, first ask yourself *why* you have this reaction, then pick apart the elements of the issue(s) that are driving that response. This is part of the process of learning about politics (and about yourself!).
 - b. And please note: we shall not all agree with one another on most issues; this is another element of politics and political science to which you must adapt. I do not expect you to agree with me, but I do expect you to support your conclusions with logical, causal explanations that are based on sound information/data/evidence.
3. ***Be sure you know what the heck plagiarism is*** (see www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize). ***Work submitted for this course must be your own, original work for each individual assignment; 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. **To reiterate:** any incidents of plagiarism or intellectual fraud (see 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, no relation).
4. **Late work:** ***I shall accept no late work on non-group-project-related assignments.*** Keep this in mind moving forward, but also realize that these assignments individually do *not* contribute a sizable amount to your final grade. For assignments related to our group project, I shall consider late work on an individual basis. If you believe this work is going to be late, please communicate to me *before* the deadline that the assignment, if possible; I'll then decide whether to accept the late work. 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.

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5. **Back up your work!** Purchase an inexpensive USB drive or use an on-line storage site like Dropbox, and use this storage back-up frequently! If your laptop crashes right before an assignment is due, you want to be sure to have something to turn in. (And this back-up routine is an incredibly good habit to get into for your work in all of your classes!)
6. **Letters of recommendation:** I receive many of these requests each semester. To guarantee that I can complete each request and do so as well as possible, note the following:
 - a. I am limiting the number of new requests for such letters to ten (10) each semester (this does not apply for those of you for whom I have written a letter in the past).
 - b. In all cases, **I shall need to receive all requests by 31 January 2022 with at least a three-week advanced notice before the letter is due** (more time is always appreciated!). ☺
 - c. **With your request, please include the following info:**
 - i. The date by which you need the letter submitted.
 - ii. The opportunity for which you are applying (e.g., grad school, internship, job, etc).
 - iii. **Why** you are pursuing this opportunity.
 - iv. Any specific points that you would like me to reference in your letter or that you think is important for me to know in writing your letter.
 - v. **The address** of the organization/person to whom I should address your letter (necessary for the letterhead, even if the submission is electronic).
7. 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.** *If you note any errors (likely) anywhere in the syllabus, please let me know.*

Grading

Participation/Communication, including	➔	20%
Quizzes		
Journal Reflections		
Guest Speaker Questions (for three guest speakers)		
FlipGrids		
Presentation of Current Event Research/Analysis	➔	15%
Peer Evaluation of One Case Presentation/Discussion	➔	5%
<u>Current Event Analysis Project Papers (% Total):</u>		
1. Background/History & Scholarly/Expert Lit Review of Event	➔	20%
2. Executive Summary of Current Event (to be disseminated to class in advance of presentation of current event)	➔	15%
3. Reflection on/critique of one other Executive Summary (complementing the presentation peer eval)	➔	10%
4. Final Draft: Scenario Analysis of Current Event (with implications)	➔	15%
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Total:		100%

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Grading Scale:

>=90	A				
87-89	B+	77-79	C+	60-69	D
83-86	B	73-76	C	<60	F (or I, with appropriate communication)
80-82	B-	70-72	C-		

Grading will be based on the main research/analysis project; quizzes; and participation/communication (which is comprised of qualitative assessments as well as quantitative elements, such as journal reflections, discussion board posts, FlipGrid thoughts). Exact details of the assignments will be given in class well in advance of each assignment's due date.

Participation/Communication:

Communication is important. I seriously cannot stress this point enough. If something does not make sense to you, if I am going too fast in lecture, if you need help studying for quizzes or in completing assignments – **all of these issues will be solved to our much greater mutual satisfaction if you simply communicate them to me BEFORE the end of the semester!** This is YOUR class and YOUR learning; so, if something is not working for you (or is working really well), TELL ME! This will allow me to make adjustments to the class that will likely benefit all students. **Communicating, then, is part of your participation in the course, and hence, part of your grade.** Your participation/communication grade will comprise **quantitative and qualitative** aspects – **it's not just the number of assignments you complete, but the quality of your efforts as well!**

In addition, as mentioned in the ground rules, if you feel overwhelmed or are having any difficulties that affect your performance in the class, tell me about this, too: I may be able to connect you with resources that can help you manage things better. **Nothing – nothing – is more important than your well-being!**

Your Mental Well-Being

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

- *If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.*
 - *UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).*
 - *If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.*
 - *Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.*
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Class Schedule:

Classes will consist primarily of discussion of the readings, current events, and other topics related to the week's content. This schedule is just a plan (not a contract!); **changes may be necessary as we move through the semester.** If you note any errors or areas of confusion, please let me know!

Schedule of Assignments and Classes (**Readings marked with asterisks (**) can be found on eLC.**)

12 January: NO CLASS!

MODULE 1

13 January: Welcome, Introduction, & Getting Ready for the Semester

Main Readings:

- **Syllabus**
- Weston, Anthony: Introduction & Chapter 1 **
- Paul, Richard and Linda Elder. *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools (Thinker's Guide Library)*. 8th Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020. ("Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools") **
- Burke, Timothy. "Staying Afloat: Some Scattered Suggestions on Reading in College." (2017) <<http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/tburke1/reading.html>>. **

Assignment:

- **Quiz #1 (DUE 1/20)**
- **View Video: "How to Follow the News" (on eLC)**

17 January: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR DAY – NO CLASS!

MODULE 2

18 – 20 January: Foundations – International Relations & Comparative Theory/Approaches

20 January: NO CLASS!

Main Readings:

- Jentleson, Bruce W., and Ely Ratner. "Bridging the Beltway-Ivory Tower Gap." *International Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (March 2011): 6–11. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2486.2010.00992.x. **
- Frieden, Jeffry A, David A Lake, and Kenneth A Schultz. *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions*. W.W. Norton & Company, 4th Edition, 2018. (Introduction) **
- Frieden, Lake, and Schultz – Chapter 2 **

Assignments:

- **Journal Reflection (JR) #1 – Getting to Know You (DUE 1/24)**
- **FlipGrid Feedback #1: Introduce Yourself! (see instructions on eLC) (DUE 1/24)**

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MODULE 3

25 – 27 January: Setting the International Framework

Main Readings:

- Dickovick, J. Tyler, and Jonathan Eastwood. *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases*. Third ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. (Chapter 1) **
- Judt, Tony. *Ill Fares the Land*. New York: Penguin Press, 2010. **
 - Introduction & Chapter 1
 - Chapter 2

Assignments:

- **JR #2: Exploration of Current International Events of Interest** (DUE 2/1)

MODULE 4

1 – 3 February: Foreign Policy Framework

Main Readings:

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

Assignments:

- **Discussion Board Post #1: Questions for Guest Speaker** (DUE 2/7)

MODULE 5

8 – 10 February: Analysis – Case Study Current Event (Fuel Sources)

Guest Speaker: Elizabeth White, SPIA Research Librarian (tentative – 2/8)

Main Readings:

- Baglione, Lisa A. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: CQ Press, 2012. (excerpt – how to do a Literature Review) **
- Yergin, Daniel. *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*. (Selection to TBA) **

Assignments:

- **Quiz #2:** (DUE 2/14)
- **FlipGrid Thoughts #2: Which current event interests you the most and why?** (DUE 2/14)

MODULE 6

15 – 17 February: Fuel Sources & Transportation

Case Study: “Who Killed the Electric Car?”

Assignments:

- **Sign up for current event analysis presentation date** (DUE 2/17)
- **JR #3: Domestic and international factors affecting electric car production** (DUE 2/21)
- **Discussion Board Post #2: Questions for Guest Speaker** (DUE 2/23)

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MODULE 7

22 – 24 February: Guest Speaker (*tentative*)

Main Readings: TBA

Assignments:

- **Sign up for current event analysis presentation date (DUE 2/17)**
- **Guest Speaker Questions (when applicable; due day before guest speaker visit)**

MODULE 8

1 – 3 March: TBA

Main Readings: TBA

Assignments:

- **Current Event History/Background & Literature Review (DUE 3/3)**

7 – 11 March: Spring Break – NO CLASS!

MODULE 9

15 – 17 March: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker

In Class:

- Current Event Presentations
- Guest Speaker

Main Readings:

- TBA

Assignments:

- **Executive Summaries for Module 9 Presentations (DUE 3/14)**
- **Executive Summaries for Module 10 Presentations (DUE 3/21)**
- **Peer Reviews of Presentations (DUE 3/21)**
- **Guest Speaker Questions (when applicable; due day before guest speaker visit)**

Thursday, 17 March: DEADLINE TO WITHDRAW

MODULE 10

22 – 24 March: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker

In Class:

- Current Event Presentations
- Guest Speaker

Main Readings:

- TBA

Assignments:

- **Executive Summaries for Module 11 Presentations (DUE 3/28)**
- **Peer Reviews of Presentations (DUE 3/28)**
- **Guest Speaker Questions (when applicable; due day before guest speaker visit)**

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MODULE 11

29 – 31 March: Scenario Analyses as Tools in International Relations; Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker

In Class:

- Current Event Presentations
- Guest Speaker

Main Readings:

- Junio, Timothy J., and Thomas G. Mahnken. "Conceiving of Future War: The Promise of Scenario Analysis for International Relations." *International Studies Review* 15, no. 3 (September 2013): 374–95. doi:10.1111/misr.12061. **
- TBA

Assignments:

- **Executive Summaries for Module 12 Presentations (DUE 4/4)**
- **Peer Reviews of Presentations (DUE 4/4)**
- **Guest Speaker Questions (when applicable; due day before guest speaker visit)**

MODULE 12

5 – 7 April: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker

In Class:

- Current Event Presentations
- Guest Speaker

Main Readings:

- TBA

Assignments:

- **Executive Summaries for Module 13 Presentations (DUE 4/11)**
- **Peer Reviews of Presentations (DUE 4/11)**
- **Guest Speaker Questions (when applicable; due day before guest speaker visit)**

MODULE 13

12 – 14 April: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker

In Class:

- Current Event Presentations
- Guest Speaker

Main Readings:

- TBA

Assignments:

- **Executive Summaries for Module 14 Presentations (DUE 4/18)**
- **Peer Reviews of Presentations (DUE 4/18)**
- **Guest Speaker Questions (when applicable; due day before guest speaker visit)**

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MODULE 14

19 – 21 April: Current Event Analysis Presentations/Guest Speaker

In Class:

- Current Event Presentations

Main Readings:

- TBA

Assignments:

- **Executive Summaries for Module 15 Presentations (DUE 4/25)**
- **Peer Reviews of Presentations (DUE 4/26)**
- **Guest Speaker Questions (when applicable; due day before guest speaker visit)**

MODULE 15:

26 – 28 April: Current Event Analysis Presentations & Wrap-up

NOTE: LAST DAY OF CLASS IS THURSDAY, 4/28

In Class:

- Current Event Presentations

Main Readings:

- TBA

Assignments:

- **Peer Reviews of Presentations (DUE 5/2)**

**DUE: 10 May – Final Draft: Scenario Analysis of Current Event
(includes lit review & executive summary, plus future scenario analysis & conclusions)**