POLS 319: International Political Economy
Spring Semester, 2014
[A] Monday, Wednesday, & Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

This course satisfies a requirement in the Political Science or International Relations major or minor.

Instructor: Dr. Joel H. Westra
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Hours: Monday & Wednesday
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to the study of international political economy. It examines both theoretical issues and policy debates. Topics include the role of international economic institutions in addressing problems of interstate cooperation, state and societal approaches to international trade and international monetary relations, the role of multinational corporations and other investors, and opportunities and challenges of global finance and development.

The course consists of three parts. Part I introduces basic analytical concepts and frameworks necessary for understanding international political economy today. Part II considers the politics and economics of international trade and introduces students to related policy debates. Part III considers the politics and economics of international monetary relations and introduces students to related policy debates. Part IV considers the politics and economics of international finance and development and introduces students to related policy debates.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course readings, writing assignments, and examinations are intended to achieve three objectives. Firstly, they are intended to introduce students to basic concepts of international political economy. Secondly, they are intended to provide students with a basic understanding of important issues and debates shaping international economic policy. Thirdly, they are intended to assist students in developing analytical skills such that they can provide thoughtful and coherent arguments in oral and written form. The first and second objectives are necessary for careers or continued study in international relations, while the third is essential to a liberal arts education. All three help to equip students as agents of change.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students must complete all assigned readings (approx. 65 pages per week) before each class period and be active and engaged participants throughout the semester. The instructor will circulate a seating chart for students to fill out, which will be used throughout the semester to record attendance and to facilitate classroom interaction.

There will be two short policy papers of eight to twelve double-spaced pages in length, which will be due on the dates listed below (students to choose from two of three policy areas). In addition to the policy papers, there will be a midterm examination and a comprehensive final examination.

COURSE GRADES

Course grades will be based on the course objectives listed above, as determined by students’ class participation and engagement, writing assignments, and examinations.

Participation and Engagement

Participation and engagement will be weighted as 20% of the final course grade. This is a real course at a real college, and as such you will be expected to read all of the assigned readings before class, with your participation and engagement attesting to how carefully you have read them. You will not necessarily be expected to agree with the
readings, your fellow students, or the instructor, but you will be expected to be engaged participants, so as to learn from the lecture and discussion each day. In doing so, you will become part of an ongoing conversation.

Your participation and engagement grade will be based on your contribution to that conversation. More than simply engaging in classroom “chatter”, making a meaningful contribution to the conversation will require that you arrive in class (and/or come to office hours) prepared to give an account of what you understand from the course readings and discussion and what you do not understand. There is no excuse for having nothing to say; learning requires preparation. If necessary, the instructor will call upon students who do not participate in class or demonstrate engagement with the course material in other ways (such as through email, office hours, etc.)

Ideally, students would be so motivated by the intensity of the readings and the perspicacity of the instructor that attendance would not need to be required. But because these are not ideal times, attendance will be included in assessing class participation and engagement. Every student will be allowed three unexcused absences (i.e. one full week), after which a penalty of 5% per day will be deducted from the final course grade. Please see the instructor as soon as possible if you know in advance of an absence due to an extracurricular activity or other excusable reason (at the instructor’s discretion; documentation may be required). Other than illness, most absences will not be excused, so plan accordingly.

Students are permitted to use portable electronic devices in class, provided such devices are used for course purposes and that their use does not undermine the participation and engagement of the user or other students.

Writing Assignments

The two policy papers each will be weighted as 20% of the final course grade. The instructor will distribute the writing assignments in advance, as well as an analytic writing handout intended to help students avoid basic mistakes.


Papers will be due on the dates listed below. Students must submit both printed and electronic versions of all papers. Printed and electronic versions must match exactly. Papers must be submitted in a serif font (such as Times New Roman) of size 11 or 12 with 1” margins on all sides. The filename of the electronic version must include the name of the student submitting it. The instructor may assess a 0.25 grade point penalty (each instance) for failure to follow these instructions.

Grades will be based on analytical rigor, writing skill, and empirical evidence. Grades will be determined as follows.

- A Excellent; Clear, thorough, and well-supported
- A- Very good, with few shortcomings; or Clear, but incomplete
- B+ Generally clear, but some gaps; or Good, though somewhat unclear
- B Gaps in logic and evidence; or Disordered; or Undeveloped
- B- Multiple gaps and unclear parts; or Containing contradictions
- C+ Unclear throughout; or Wrong question
- C Vague and unsupported
- C- Very unclear and confusing; or No argument
- D+ Unclear and misunderstood; or Incorrect/missing citations throughout
- D Very poor
- D- Extremely poor
- F Insufficient effort; or Dishonesty

The instructor will not accept late papers in the absence of a medical or other substantive excuse. Students seeking to submit a late paper must contact the instructor before the deadline and may be required to provide documentation and/or accept a grade reduction. Papers submitted electronically before the deadline will not be counted as late, provided that a printed version is submitted to the instructor’s office within 24 hours. The instructor will only grade papers submitted both electronically and in hard copy. DIXI.
If you need help with finding appropriate library resources, please schedule an appointment with Linda McFadden, Reference Librarian (email: lmm8@calvin.edu, phone: x6–8455) or stop by the Research Assistance Desk at the Hekman Library, which is staffed by a research librarian from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. weekdays.

Examinations

The mid-term and final examinations will be weighted as 15% and 25% of the final course grade, respectively. Both examinations will consist primarily of short answer questions and will be given on the dates noted below. The mid-term examination is intended to provide feedback on how well students understand basic course concepts, while the final examination is intended to assess students' mastery of course concepts and their application to international politics. Students may opt to take an oral final examination, which will cover a narrower range of topics in greater depth than the written examination will.

The instructor will not administer makeup exams in the absence of a medical or other substantive excuse. Students seeking to excuse a missed exam should contact the instructor as soon as possible and may be required to provide appropriate documentation and/or accept a grade reduction. No early exams will be given, except as required for extracurricular activities. The instructor will distribute handouts throughout the semester, which together with the syllabus will help students to prepare for the examinations.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The student–faculty relationship is based on trust and mutual respect, which can be seriously undermined by the suspicion or reality of academic dishonesty. If you are in doubt about whether some form of assistance or use of materials constitutes academic dishonesty, please see the instructor. In general, the instructor expects that students will adhere to the following guidelines.

1. Students will not take words from any source without putting quotation marks around such words and giving credit to the source. This includes sentences and phrases, as well as significant single words, such as those that express opinion or judgment.

2. Students will not take findings, concepts, or ideas from any source without giving credit to the source. In paraphrasing, students will not use words so close to those contained in the source that, if a student's work were placed next to the source, it would be obvious that the student could not have written what s/he did except by borrowing directly from the source with only superficial changes.

3. Students will organize their thoughts and ideas according to a plan of their own creation and will not simply appropriate the plan of organization contained within another source. To the extent that a student’s plan of organization is based upon another source, s/he will give credit to that source.

4. Students will neither ask nor allow someone else to write, revise, or otherwise modify their work in any way, nor reuse papers submitted in other courses or written by other students.

Any violation of these guidelines and/or other rules contained within the Student Conduct Guide will result in an F for the assignment and/or other appropriate disciplinary action, at the instructor’s discretion.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The college will make reasonable accommodation for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking accommodation should notify both the instructor and Coordinator of Services to Students with Disabilities (Hiemenga Hall 455) within the first two weeks of the semester and make appropriate arrangements.
REQUIRED TEXTS

The following are required texts for this course and are available for purchase at the bookstore.


In addition, you may wish to purchase the following text, also available at the bookstore. This text contains some of the readings for Part I of the course, although these reading are also available online.


Other supplemental journal articles and book sections are available online as noted in the syllabus. Access to certain websites is available only via a Calvin College internet connection. The instructor will distribute supplemental news articles throughout the semester as well as instructions for finding online journal articles.

COURSE READINGS

[Please note the page numbers listed below, as only selected pages of certain articles or book sections are assigned.]

February 3 – Introduction and Course Overview


Part I: Analytical Frameworks

February 5, 7 – Neo-Classical Economics, Its Limits and Its Critics


February 10, 12 – Anarchy, Uncertainty, and Incomplete Information


February 14 – States as Non-Unitary Actors


February 17 – Externalities, Public Goods, and Social Cost


February 19, 21 – Hegemony and International Institutions

February 24 – Distribution and the Problem of Relative Gains

February 26 – Power, Interdependence, and Bargaining

February 28, March 3 – National Systems of Political Economy

March 5 – MID-TERM EXAMINATION

Part II: International Trade

March 7 – The Economics of International Trade

March 10 – The Economics of International Trade (cont’d)

March 12, 14 – Power, Preferences, and the Structure of International Trade

March 17 – The GATT/WTO Trading System
[TOPICS FOR POLICY PAPER #1 (OPTIONAL) ARE DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS PERIOD.]
March 19 – Political Cleavages, Sectoral Conflict, and Trade Preferences


March 21 – Political Cleavages, Sectoral Conflict, and Trade Preferences (cont’d)


March 24, 26, 28 – SPRING BREAK

March 31, April 2 – Industrialization, Import Substitution, and Protectionism


April 4 – Dominance, State Power, and Strategic Trade Theory


April 7 – Competitiveness, Relative Gains, and Strategic Rivalry


April 9 – Regionalism and Other Challenges to the GATT/WTO System


Part III: International Monetary Relations

April 11, 14 – The Economics of International Monetary Relations


[Policy Paper #1 (optional) due at the beginning of the class period on April 14.]
April 16 – The Rise, Decline, and Fall of the Bretton Woods System

[Topics for Policy Paper #2 (optional) are due by the beginning of the class period.]

April 18, 21 – Easter Break

April 23 – Post-Bretton Woods Monetary Arrangements and the Changing Role of the IMF

April 25 – Monetary Policy and Exchange Rate Stability

April 28 – Monetary Policy, Exchange Rate Stability, and Domestic Politics

April 30 – Academic Advising

Part IV: Global Finance, Investment, and Development

May 2 – The Debt Crisis, IMF Conditionality, and Structural Adjustment

May 5 – Financial Crises, the Changing Role of the IMF, and the Rise of the G-20

[Topics for Policy Paper #3 (optional) are due by the beginning of the class period.]

May 7 – Capital Controls and Other Tools of Financial Management

[Policy Paper #2 (optional) due at the beginning of the class period.]
May 9 – FDI and Multinational Corporations


May 12 – Environmental Degradation, Inequality, and the “Race to the Bottom”


May 14, 15 – Regulating Multinational Corporations


May 19 – FINAL EXAMINATION [1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.]

[Policy Paper #3 (optional) due at the beginning of the examination period]

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