PLSC 271
INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
WINTER 2009
SYLLABUS

Instructor: Professor Bidisha Biswas
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Email: bidisha.biswas@wwu.edu
Class time and location: Mondays and Wednesdays
4pm-5:50pm
CF 105
Office hours and location: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30pm-3:30pm, AH 411
or by appointment

PLSC 271 is designed to introduce you to the main theories of international relations (IR). The concepts we learn and discuss in class will help you examine important issues in contemporary world politics. In addition to learning theoretical approaches, we will spend a significant amount of time discussing their relevance to contemporary events. Students are expected to engage with major ongoing debates in international relations and be aware of current affairs.

Course Materials


You are required to pay a supplemental lab fee of $12 for participation in the ICONS simulation. This is payable, directly to ICONS, by credit card. More details will be given in class.

Additional readings are available either online or through library reserves. Please contact a librarian to understand how to access online databases and electronic course reserves.

Grading
Your final grade in this course will be based on:
20% Scheduled quizzes (four, drop lowest)
25% Mid-term
30% Final exam
15% ICONS simulation
10% Class participation

Scheduled quizzes: You will take four quizzes. The quizzes will comprise multiple-choice and short identification questions. They will be of 25 minutes each and will be administered at the beginning of class.
You can drop the lowest grade of the four quizzes. Make-up quizzes will NOT be administered. If you have to miss a quiz for events such as a documented medical emergency, please contact me in person or by e-mail within two days of the quiz. Failure to do will result in a 0 for the missed quiz.
Mid-term exam: The mid-term exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, definitions and a short essay question. **No make-up exam will be administered.**

If you have to miss the midterm for events such as a documented medical emergency, please contact me in person or by e-mail within **one day of the exam.** Failure to do so will result in a 0 for the missed exam.

The final exam: The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, definitions and a short essay question. It will be cumulative. **No make-up exam will be administered.**

If you have to miss the final for events such as a documented medical emergency, please contact me in person or by e-mail within **one day of the exam.** Failure to do so will result in a 0 for the missed exam.

All quizzes and exams will be administered at the beginning of class. Late-comers will not be given **extra time under any circumstances.** All quizzes and exams will be based on lectures, readings and in-class discussions.

It is your responsibility to obtain lecture notes for any class that you miss. **All assigned readings are mandatory.**

Class participation:

A. **Discussion group meetings**

   The “1-hr. arranged” component of this course consists of a weekly discussion group meeting outside of class. Groups can meet at times of their choosing. They may also meet with me during my office hours or by prior appointment. The meeting time can also be used for the ICONS simulation groups meetings.

   **Groups are expect to submit and present in class highlights of the week’s international events every Wednesday that the class meets. The submissions should be on typed paper, no more than 1 page in length, in bullet point format. I might, at my discretion, call upon groups to present their findings for the week. Each group is permitted one missed submission. Additional misses will lower your participation grade.**

   I will assign students to groups. These groups will work together on discussions and the ICONS simulation. You may exchange your team with another student but **you must do so by February 2. On or before March 14, each group member must submit a grade for their group members.** This should be emailed to me and will be kept confidential. Failure to submit a grade for your group members by the deadline will adversely affect your participation grade.

B. **In-class discussion**

   You are required to have completed readings prior to coming to class so that you can use class time to pursue questions and reflection on the reading. On designated days, as listed on the syllabus, the class will be split into smaller discussion groups. In these groups, you will actively discuss assigned questions to analyze the readings. All discussion groups will take notes to be submitted at the end of class. You can miss up to two discussion meetings. Additional misses will result in a drop in your participation grade.
The in-class discussion groups should follow these guidelines:

**First**, select a note-taker for the group. The note-taker will list participants in the group, topics that were discussed, conflicts and agreements on the topics.

**Second**, develop responses to the given question(s).

**Third**, note points of disagreements, and agreements.

**Fifth**, reconvene class to present responses with discussion and analysis.

**You must submit your notes at the end of the class.**

**ICONS simulation**
Details on the simulation are given at the end of the syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 19</td>
<td>Instructor will assign group choices</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 18</td>
<td>Initial ICONS meeting. Develop and respond to proposals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 4</td>
<td><strong>Final online simulation, supervised by instructor. Please arrange to have computer and Internet access for your group between 4pm and 6pm on Wednesday, March 4.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>Individual reaction papers due</td>
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**Discussion**
In-class discussion will be encouraged throughout the class. You are required to do your reading assignments before each class session. You are also expected to be aware of current world events. Possible news sources include (but are not limited to) [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com). Note that failure to keep with current events will make it significantly more difficult for you to meet the requirements of the course.

Students are expected to respect the opinions of other students and to engage in discussion and debates in a sensitive and respectful manner.

**Netiquette**
E-mail correspondence with the instructor and teaching assistants should follow basic etiquette, as you would use in business communication, such as applying for a job. Make sure you include a subject in the subject line. Please write your emails using appropriate grammar, spelling and tone. I will not reply to correspondence that neglects to follow these guidelines.

**Additional points**
Students are responsible for following the academic honesty guidelines provided in the WWU Academic Dishonesty Policy and Procedure. The penalty for academic dishonesty can and will include a failure in the course.

Students with disabilities should inform the instructor of their needs at the beginning of the semester.

The syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified in advance of any changes.

**Course schedule**
**Session 1, January 7**
- **General introduction.** What do “theories of International Relations” mean? How do we understand International Relations? What is the significance of the field of study?
• Discuss syllabus

Session 2, January 12
Understanding IR, Levels of Analysis and Actors in International Politics
Perspectives in IR Theory: Realism, Anarchy & Sovereignty
• Goldstein, Chapter 1
• Goldstein, Chapter 2, pages 35-49

Session 3, January 14
Perspectives in IR Theory: Liberalism, Constructivism, Feminism
• Goldstein, Chapter 3, pages 66-96
• Discussion topic: Book, Page 55

No class on January 19: University Closed
Instructor will assign ICONS teams

Session 4, January 21
Evaluating Bush’s Legacy from a Theoretical Perspective
• Discussion Question: Was George Bush a Realist?

Session 5, January 26
Conflict and Security
• Quiz 1
• Goldstein, Chapter 4, pp.112-142, 158-162
• Discussion Question: Book, Page 124

Session 6, January 28
Debates about Conflict and Security
ICONS debriefing
• Discussion Question: To be Announced
Session 7, February 2
Quiz 2
Trade and Money
• Quiz 2
• Goldstein, Chapter 5, pp.168-195, 202-211.
• Discussion Question: Page 215, Questions 2&3
• Deadline to change discussion team assignments. Changes must be emailed to instructor.

Session 8 & 9, February 4 & 9
International Organizations & International Law
Review Session
• Goldstein, Chapter 6, pp. 216-238
• Goldstein, Chapter 6, pp. 249-264
• Steinberg, Richard and Jonathan M. Zasloff. 2006. “Power and International Law.” *American Journal of International Law* 100(1): 64-87. [recommended article only]
• Discussion question: What are the implications of the US’s use of torture in the ‘Global War on Terror’?
• Mid-term Review Session on February 4
• Current events summary sheet due on February 4

Session 10, February 11
Mid-term Exam

Session 11, February 18
• No class meeting. ICONS teams meet to discuss and negotiate proposals.

Session 12, February 23
North-South Relations
• Goldstein, Chapter 7
• Discussion Question: To be announced

Session 13, February 25
Human Rights, Focus on Genocide
• Discussion Question: What is the world’s responsibility in preventing or punishing acts of genocide? Evaluate the pros and cons of military, diplomatic and any other forms of action that your group thinks is relevant.
• Current events summary sheet
Session 14, March 2
Global Concerns: The Environment

- Quiz 3
- Goldstein, Chapter 8, pp.325-334, 340-346, 350-354
- Discussion Question: Book, page 358

Session 15, March 4
No class meeting, ICONS simulation

Session 16, March 9
Issues in International Political Economy: The Perils of Globalization

- Quiz 4

Session 17, March 11
ICONS reaction paper due
Review Session
Wrap-up

- Current events summary sheet

Final Exam, March 19
Final Exam will take place in CF 105 on Thursday, March 19 at 3:30 - 5:30 pm

Details on the ICONS simulation
Globalization and Nigerian Oil

Introduction
This simulation is intended to illuminate the dynamics of conflicts that can and do emerge in today’s interdependent world, in which governments, private corporations, and both global and local organizations are increasingly reliant on one another. By exploring the experiences of Nigeria, you will have the opportunity to explore the nuances of relationships among these types of actors while experiencing and practicing conflict resolution methods (particularly negotiation). To provide the greatest degree of freedom for participants, this simulation is set six months in the future so that current events will not guide the negotiations.

Oil-rich, yet mired in deep poverty and debt, Nigeria presents a good example of the paradoxes that accompany globalization. Billions of dollars exchange hands around the oil trade yet for most people these petrodollars exist only as an abstraction. The lifestyle of Nigerian oil officials has much more in common with their elite international business associates than with their fellow citizens. This gap creates resentment on both sides of the domestic situation, as the poorer citizens feel that they have legitimate claims on the wealth being generated in the oil sector, and the business elite feel that they (and their shareholders) have the right to pursue their own profits. International financial actors have little concern for domestic affairs in Nigeria as long as the security of their
investments and returns are assured. International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are focused on the human and environmental costs of the industry, and attempt to influence the outcome to reflect their largely Western perspectives (which are not always necessarily compatible with the goals of the people they claim to be fighting for). In short, the situation in Nigeria is indicative of the ongoing struggle to redefine the globalized world.

As a participant in the simulation, you will take on the role of one of the parties involved in the political economy of the Niger River Delta region of Nigeria, and participate in negotiations about the future shape of the petroleum industry. Each party has entrenched and specific interests regarding this issue that are at considerable odds with each other, so broad agreements will likely be difficult to reach. In addition to differences of opinion, the actors have longstanding mistrust and suspicion about the motivations of the others, making alliance building difficult at best. Agreements will require not only negotiation of the specific terms, but also the repair of relationships and confidence-building measures between actors. While reaching a substantial agreement will be quite difficult given these conditions, even incremental progress in complex disputes of this nature could be seen as a positive development.

**I will assign you to represent one of the following teams:**

- Nigerian Military
- Nigerian Government
- Shell Oil
- The Ogoni (ethnic group)
- Coalition of Women’s Groups
- IMF
- Greenpeace
- Human Rights Watch

**It is your job to develop and promote proposals that safeguard the interests of your group.** More details will be given in class.