

World Politics Summer Institute
Preliminary Course Syllabus
Summer 2025

Instructor: TBD

ONLINE: TBD

Location and Time:

ONLINE: Monday -- Friday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

It does not take too much work to notice that the world is... messy, to say the least. Can we explain why the world is the way it is?

This course will introduce students to the study of world politics and the present-day international system. We will do so by exploring and answering a series of questions. For example, why is the world (currently) organized into a system of formally independent states? What explains why war or peace exists between or within these states? What factors influence openness to free trade versus protectionism, policies on human rights, severity of environmental pollution, or levels of economic development? How do treaties, international organizations, informal norms, and other tools of foreign policy affect these issues? Are they even effective? To what extent do matters of race and gender permeate global politics, both in how the international system is currently structured and how politics operate in our everyday lives? Can existing institutions, many of which are decades old, deal with new and growing problems that lie ahead, including this current pandemic? Importantly, we will also learn about and apply the tools necessary to answer these questions in a rigorous and scientific way.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- explain the origins and key actors of the international system;
- understand the incentives that these actors have when adopting specific policies, whether they involve war, trade, human rights, environment, and the like;
- apply these insights to past, current, and potential future international events; and
- write coherent, organized, and thoughtful arguments based on evidence and logic.

There are no prerequisites for this course. Some materials we cover may feel challenging and technical. Please do not become overwhelmed. We will address these materials during lectures.

Readings and Course Website

The following textbook is required:

Frieden, Jeffrey A., David A. Lake, and Kenneth A. Schultz. 2022. *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (Listed as “FLS” on the remainder of the syllabus.)

The UCLA Bookstore sells the fifth edition, which was published very recently. This revised textbook features new material on trade from Stephanie Rickard, as well as international law and norms from Susan Hyde. If necessary, you may save money by purchasing the fourth edition or renting a digital copy. We will not be using any of the online materials. I strongly suggest not getting the first, second, or third editions, which are now extremely outdated. I also strongly suggest purchasing a physical copy of the book rather than an electronic text because numerous scientific studies show that the human brain is better able to retain information learned from paper texts than from digital materials.

Course Requirements and Assessment

You are expected to attend and participate in all course components.

Lecture attendance and participation (20%): Every morning of the summer institute will feature lectures by the course instructor. You must attend all lectures and be prepared to participate in any associated discussions and activities. *You are permitted two absences without penalty to account for expected personal needs, including illness and family emergencies.*

Expert briefing attendance and participation (10%): Expert briefings will be scheduled periodically throughout afternoons during the summer sessions. You must attend all briefings and follow the professional norms behavior that are discussed at the beginning of the summer institute. *You are permitted two absences without penalty to account for expected personal needs, including illness and family emergencies.*

Group work participation (30%): Throughout the summer institute, you will be assigned to work on a group project with your peers. All students will be carefully monitored to ensure that they make a significant contribution to group effort. Failure to adequately contribute to your group will result in a major penalty to your overall grade.

Group assignments (10%): You will write a series of short assignments that apply tools and concepts from lecture to your specific state. These must be completed on time. No late work will be accepted.

Group final report (15%): Each group will write a final report over the course of the summer institute.

Group final presentation (15%): Each group will make a final presentation of its findings during the final two classes of the summer institute.

All required work must be completed by the end of the program. No part of the coursework may be continued beyond the close of the program unless prearranged by the student and the instructor.

This program is offered on either a letter grade or a P/NP grading basis. Letter grades will be assigned in the following way:

- A+ = 96.67 - 100
- A = 93.34 - 96.66
- A- = 90 - 93.330
- B+ = 86.67 - 89.99
- ...

P/NP grades will be assigned in the following way:

- P Passed (achievement at grade C level or better) is equivalent to earning a score of 70 or higher.
- NP Not Passed (achievement at grade C- or lower) is equivalent to earning a score of below 70.

Course Schedule

Week 1, Monday

9-12 pm: We will introduce ourselves and do a series of exercises to get to know each other. I will announce group assignments, which will be chosen randomly in advance. Each group will have 4—6 students and will remain fixed throughout the Summer Institute. We will go over the syllabus and establish course expectations. Then we will have a ...

Mini-lecture: A brief introduction to the study of international relations and a history of the global order. (FLS, Introduction and Chapter 1)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Class Instruction: Brief Historical Overview + Concept Map Activity

3-5 pm: Reading/Office Hours [Note: This is structured time for you to work individually to complete readings for the course. We will discuss in the morning session how to best use these structured sessions to build good study habits (i.e. what to read and when). I will be available to answer questions about course content or to address any issues or problems that you would like to discuss privately. You may not leave campus early. We will reconvene as a group at the end of the reading period to coordinate on the next day's activities.]

Week 1, Tuesday

9-12 pm: Lecture 1: Interests and Bargaining¹

Each state (or actor) has its own set of things that it wants from international politics. What exactly do states (actors) want? How do they interact with other actors to (try to) achieve these goals? (FLS, Chapter 2)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Group Meeting—Assignment 1

Based on the morning unit, complete assignment 1 with your group. (See attached.)

3-5 pm: Reading/Office Hours

Week 1, Wednesday

9-12 pm: Lecture 2: Causes of War

War is incredibly deadly, enormously costly, and seemingly irrational. Why does it happen? Why can states not figure out a way to resolve these issues in a peaceful manner? Is there a rational way to explain why states engage in such extreme acts of aggression? When, why, and how do states decide whether to keep fighting or to terminate hostilities? (FLS, Chapter 3)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Expert Briefing— “Why Did Russia Invade Ukraine?”

3-5 pm: Group Meeting—Assignment 2

Based on the morning unit, complete assignment 2 with your group.

Week 1, Thursday

9-12 pm: Lecture 3: Domestic Politics and War

The reasons for war we have covered so far do not account for political factors within each state. How do domestic interests and politics influence the likelihood of war or

¹ Breaks will be incorporated into all three-hour lecture blocks, as well as individual and group activities.

peace? Are democracies fundamentally different from non-democracies in how they deal with wars? (FLS, Chapter 4)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Expert Briefing— “Foreign Policy in the 2024 US Presidential Campaign”

3-5 pm: Reading/Office Hours

Week 1, Friday

9-12 pm: Lecture 4: International Institutions and War

There is no such thing as a world government or police to stop conflict, but plenty of institutions still attempt to prevent and manage it. What are these institutions, and how do they help address wars? What explains their successes and failures? (FLS, Chapter 5)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Library Resource Tour

3-5 pm: Reading/Office Hours

Week 2, Monday

9-12 pm: Lecture 5: Violence by Nonstate Actors: Civil Wars and Terrorism

In recent years, more wars have taken place within states instead of between them. What are similarities and differences between interstate and civil wars? How well do explanations for interstate conflicts apply to intrastate ones? How do international factors shape these wars, and how much do international actors far away from the violence exploit civil conflicts (and the people involved in them) to promote their own interests? Increasing violence by non-state actors has not only come from civil wars, but also terrorism. What motivates terrorists to kill and behave in the ways that they do? What can be done to address these acts of violence? (FLS, Chapter 6)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Expert Briefing— “How Terrorist Organizations Work”

3-5 pm: Group Meeting— Assignment 4

Based on the morning unit, complete assignment 4 with your group.

Week 2, Tuesday

9-12 pm: Lecture 6: International Trade

States trade goods and services with each other all the time. Why is trade so appealing? If it is so appealing, why do states often restrict it? What role do international institutions play in facilitating or impeding trade? To what extent is the concept of free-market capitalism, which drives our current system of trade, not a “natural” idea but instead a system that has been imposed by a small group of self-interested actors at the expense of people they deem cheap and expendable? (FLS, Chapter 7)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Expert Briefing— “How Trade Affects US Immigration Politics”

3-5 pm: Reading/Office Hours

Week 2, Wednesday

9-12 pm: Lecture 7: International Financial Relations

Just as goods and services cross borders, so does money. How and why do actors make investments abroad? In what ways do these capital investments complicate international politics? (FLS, Chapter 8)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Expert Briefing: Undergraduate Admissions Representative

3-5 pm: Group Meeting—Assignment 5

Based on the morning unit, complete assignment 5 with your group.

Week 2, Thursday

9-12 pm: Lecture 8: International Law and Norms

As we have already seen, no world government exists to enforce any rules, but the international community still manages to imperfectly shape states' behaviors. How are these rules created, and why are they ever followed? (FLS, Chapter 11)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Expert Briefing— "International Law in US Courts"

3-5 pm: Reading/Office Hours

Week 2, Friday

9-12 pm: Lecture 9: Human Rights

The notion of human rights has deep historical (and Western) roots, and adherence to it varies widely around the world. What are the intellectual and legal origins of human rights? Are human rights truly universal, or are they reflections of cultural differences and attempts to impose one's beliefs on others? When and why do states promote or observe international human rights laws as we currently understand them? (FLS, Chapter 12)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Reading/Office Hours

3-5 pm: Group Meeting—Assignment 6

Based on the morning unit, complete assignment 6 with your group.

Week 3, Monday

9-12 pm: Lecture 10: The Global Environment

Almost everyone values the health of Earth's environment, and urgency to act on this issue has only intensified. Why is it so difficult to work together on environmental issues, even when they risk existential consequences? What have international institutions accomplished in this arena? (FLS, Chapter 13)

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Group Meeting—Final Report Prep and Assignment 7

Decide as a group what the focused policy recommendations of your final report will be for US policymakers. These recommendations should be grounded in both course content and the independent research conducted by your group in Assignments 1—6. Assignment 7: Prepare a one-page document that outlines your main recommendations for feedback.

3-5 pm: Skills Workshop—How to make an effective presentation

We will discuss basic principles for now (not) to make an effective presentation. I will provide guidelines and resources for preparing your final group presentations.

Week 3, Tuesday

9-12 pm: Group Meeting—Final Report Prep

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-5 pm: Group Meeting—Presentation Prep

Week 3, Wednesday

9-10:30 am: Group Meeting—Final Report Peer Review

Each group will exchange draft reports with their peers and provide helpful, constructive feedback to allow for revision of both content and style.

10:30-12 pm: Group Meeting—Final Report Revisions

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-3 pm: Group Meeting—Presentation Practice Sessions

Each group will give practice talks for peer groups and provide helpful, constructive feedback to allow for revision of both content and style.

3-5 pm: Group Meeting—Presentation Revisions

Week 3, Thursday

9-12 pm: Final Presentations

Half of the groups will make their final presentations about their major findings and policy recommendations. Audience members will include family, friends, and members of the UCLA political science department (faculty, staff, and students). Each group will engage in Q&A from the audience.

12-1 pm: Lunch break

1-5 pm: Group Meeting—Final Report Revisions/Edits

Week 3, Friday

9-12 pm: Final Presentations

The remaining half of the groups will make their final presentations. As before, audience members will include family, friends, and members of the UCLA political science department (faculty, staff, and students). Each group will engage in Q&A from the audience.

12-1 pm: Break

1-3 pm: Reflections on the Summer Institute

Group Project

Throughout the Summer Institute, you will work in a small group of 4—6 students. Most days you will be asked to complete short written assignments that will progressively allow you to write a final report and prepare a 25—30 minute presentation that will serve as the culminating event of the Summer Institute.

Overview

The study of world politics is not an abstract, theoretical topic. It deeply informs the day-to-day decisions of policymakers and diplomats worldwide. As you learn various theoretical and empirical tools and historical cases, and receive expert briefings, you will simultaneously be applying your knowledge to contemporary US foreign policy.

During your first day in the Summer Institute, each group will be randomly assigned to a state with a complex economic and security relationship with the US. Possible states include:

- Afghanistan
- Chad
- Iran
- Mali
- Saudi Arabia
- Sudan

Short Written Assignments

Assignment 1

Use the tools and concepts from FLS chapter 2 to identify the relevant interests, interactions, and institutions that structure the relationship between the US and your assigned state.

Describe your findings in a 2—3 page paper. Include visual aids and sources as appropriate.

Assignment 2

Every assigned state was or is involved in a recent war.² Use the tools and concepts from FLS chapter 3 to identify possible explanations for why your state fought the war. Identify which of the possible explanations you find most compelling and why.

² If your state was involved in multiple wars, choose one recent war with instructor guidance. If your state or is involved in a civil war, you can still apply the lessons and tools from FLS, chapter 3 at the substate level.

Describe your findings in a 4—5 page paper. Include visual aids and sources as appropriate.

Assignment 3

Use the tools and concepts from FLS chapters 4 and 5 to examine how domestic politics and international institutions affected the way in which your state fought its war.

Describe your findings in a 4—5 page paper. Include visual aids and sources as appropriate.

Assignment 4

Use the tools and concepts from FLS chapter 6 to examine how violence by nonstate actors affects your state. You may focus on either civil wars or terrorism. (You do not need to discuss both topics if both are not relevant.)

Describe your findings in a 3—5 page paper. Include visual aids and sources as appropriate.

Assignment 5

Describe the relationship between the US and your assigned state with respect to trade and finance. You should access data and reports from major international organizations, including the World Trade Organization and the World Bank. [I will provide information on how to access basic statistics from these sources.]. Do you believe that these observed economic relationships would be different if the political relationship between the US and your state were different? Why?

Describe your findings in a 5--7 page paper. Include visual aids and sources as appropriate.

Assignment 6

Analyze your state's human rights record. What human rights treaties has it signed? What institutions does it participate in? How do major NGOs describe its performance?

Describe your findings in a 3—5 page paper. Include visual aids and sources as appropriate.

Final Report

Your focus in week 3 will be building on your short written assignments to draft a 10—15 page final written report. Your report will consist of two sections:

- I. Obstacles: You will identify 2—3 obstacles that hinder the relationship between the US and your state. These obstacles should be clear and precisely stated. (For example, “lack of trust” is an unclear obstacle, while “US businesses lose lucrative contracts because Congress limits investment in the region” is a clear obstacle.)
- II. Recommendations: You will propose a feasible plan for overcoming each obstacle. Your plan must consider both (a) the interests of domestic and international stakeholders, and (b) the processes of domestic and international institutions that make policy.

For the purposes of your final report, you may assume that your reader is already familiar with the basic information about your state that you have laid out in Assignments 1—6.

Final Presentation

As the culminating experience of the Summer Institute, each group will make a final presentation that lasts 25—30 minutes each.³ Each presentation should include:

- background information that is necessary to understand the basic relationship between the US and your state;
- the obstacles identified in the final report; and
- the recommendations specified in the final report.

Presentations will be evaluated based on both their content, as well as the craft and style of the public speaking and the visual transmission of information.

³ The duration of presentations may be adjusted based on the number of students enrolled in the Summer Institute.