

**World Politics Summer Institute**  
**Preliminary Course Syllabus**  
Summer 2025

*Instructor:* Rachel Berwald

*Location:* Zoom (link will be sent out closer to the beginning of class)

*Time:* Monday - Friday from 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. 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 foreign policy tools 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 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 rigorously and scientifically.

*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, etc.
- Apply these insights to past, current, and potential future international events
- 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. It's okay to feel overwhelmed. Come to lecture with questions, and never be afraid to ask for help.

**Readings and Course Website**

The following textbook is required:

Frieden, Jeffry 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 and international law and norms from Susan Hyde. You may save money by purchasing the fourth edition or renting a digital copy if necessary. We will not be using any of the online materials. I suggest not getting the first, second, or third editions, which are now extremely outdated.

### **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 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 the afternoons during the summer sessions. You must attend all briefings and follow the professional norms of 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. At the end of the session you will give your group members a grade for how well they contributed to the group, and they will do the same for you. Your final grade will be up to the discretion of the instructor. 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 after the program ends unless prearranged by the student and the instructor.

This program is offered on either a letter grade or a P/NP (pass/no pass) grading basis. Letter grades will be assigned in the following way:

<i>Score</i>	<i>Letter</i>
[98, 100]	A+
[93, 98)	A
[90, 93)	A-
[87, 90)	B+
[83, 87)	B
[80, 83)	B-
[77, 80)	C+
[73, 77)	C
[70, 73)	C-
[67, 70)	D+
[63, 67)	D
[60, 63)	D-
[0, 60)	F

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 D+ or lower) is equivalent to earning a score of below 70.

In most cases, grades will not be curved or adjusted in any way. Final grades will only be raised upward to ensure that at least 35% of the class gets an A or A-. No adjustments will be made if more than 35% of grades are an A or A-. This policy will never cause your grade to drop; it will either help or not matter.

### **Course Schedule**

*Monday - Thursday:* Every Monday to Thursday will be structured similarly. We'll start with a short check-in and then have a longer lecture block to discuss key themes and concepts in World Politics. To end our morning, we will have a college skills workshop to focus on different skills—including reading, writing, time management, communication, etc.—that will help you thrive in college (and can also help you succeed in this course). Some of these topics will be decided based on what you would like to learn. We will then break for lunch. After lunch, we will have another block for lecture or an expert briefing, followed by a dedicated time for group assignments. We will always end our days with a study hall period for you to work on readings and assignments for the course and ask questions. At the end of this block, we will come back together to review what we did that day and preview what we will do the next day.

*Friday:* Fridays will be structured differently than the rest of the week. In the mornings, we will learn about resources and student experiences at UCLA. This time may include a presentation from an admissions representative, a graduate student panel, learning about on-campus resources, hearing from faculty, and more. The second half of the day will focus on the intersection of media and World Politics—specifically, how politics are represented in news and entertainment. We will still end the day with time to work on group assignments and a study hall.

#### Week 1: Monday

9:00-11:15 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 remain fixed throughout the Summer Institute. We will go over the syllabus and establish course expectations.

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

11:15-12:00 Throughout the course, we will have various college skills workshops to help you learn and practice skills to help you thrive in college. This first one will focus on effective reading strategies.

12:00-1:00 Lunch break

1:00-2:00 Lecture: Interests and Bargaining  
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)

2:00-3:30 Group meeting – Introductions and Assignment 1

3:30-5:00 Reading/Office Hours: 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 address any issues or problems you want to discuss privately. You may not leave campus early. We will reconvene as a group at the end of the reading period to coordinate the next day's activities.

#### Week 1: Tuesday

9:00-11:15 Lecture: 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 peacefully? 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)

- 11:15-12:00 College skills workshop: Writing  
You will be expected to write a lot in college and this course. Many of these workshops will focus on developing your writing skills, focusing on topics ranging from organization and drafting to writing an argumentative statement.
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch break
- 1:00-2:00 Expert briefing: Why did Russia Invade Ukraine?
- 2:00-3:30 Group meeting – Assignment 1
- 3:30-5:00 Reading/Office Hours

#### Week 1: Wednesday

- 9:00-11:15 Lecture: 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 peace? Are democracies fundamentally different from non-democracies in how they deal with wars? (FLS, Chapter 4)
- 11:15-12:00 College skills workshop: Research  
This workshop will focus on how to find high-quality research sources and organize the sources we find.
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch break
- 1:00-2:00 Library resources presentation
- 2:00-3:30 Group meeting – Assignment 2
- 3:30-5:00 Reading/Office Hours

#### Week 1: Thursday

- 9:00-11:15 Lecture: 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)
- 11:15-12:00 College skills workshop: Writing

12:00-1:00	Lunch break
1:00-2:00	Expert briefing: U.S. Foreign Policy under Trump
2:00-3:30	Group meeting – Assignment 3
3:30-5:00	Reading/Office Hours

#### Week 1: Friday

9:00-12:00	Writing Center presentation TBD campus resource workshop
12:00-1:00	Lunch break
1:00-3:00	Watch <i>Dr. Strangelove</i> On Fridays, we will watch a film relevant to the course material and complete a short assignment.
2:00-3:30	Group meeting –Catch up on week’s assignments
3:30-5:00	Reading/Office Hours

#### Week 2: Monday

9:00-11:15	Lecture: Violence by nonstate actors In recent years, more wars have occurred within states instead of between them. What are the 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)
11:15-12:00	College skills workshop: Topic TBD
12:00-1:00	Lunch break
1:00-2:00	Expert briefing: Terrorism
2:00-3:30	Group meeting – Assignment 4
3:30-5:00	Reading/Office Hours

### Week 2: Tuesday

- 9:00-11:15      Lecture: 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 a small group of self-interested actors has imposed at the expense of people they deem cheap and expendable? (FLS, Chapter 7)
- 11:15-12:00    College skills workshop: Topic Writing
- 12:00-1:00      Lunch break
- 1:00-2:00       Expert briefing: Trade and immigration politics
- 2:00-3:30       Group meeting – Assignment 5
- 3:30-5:00       Reading/Office Hours

### Week 2: Wednesday

- 9:00-11:15      Lecture: International finance  
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)
- 11:15-12:00    College skills workshop: Topic TBD
- 12:00-1:00      Lunch break
- 1:00-2:00       Lecture, continuation
- 2:00-3:30       Group meeting – Assignment 5
- 3:30-5:00       Reading/Office Hours

### Week 2: Thursday

- 9:00-11:15      Lecture: 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)
- 11:15-12:00    College skills workshop: Writing

- 12:00-1:00      Lunch break
- 1:00-2:00      Lecture: 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)
- 2:00-3:30      Group meeting – Assignment 6
- 3:30-5:00      Reading/Office Hours

### Week 2: Friday

- 9:00-12:00      Admissions representative presentation  
Graduate student panel
- 12:00-1:00      Lunch break
- 1:00-3:00      Watch *Navalny* + short assignment
- 2:00-3:30      Group meeting – Catch up on week's assignments
- 3:30-5:00      Reading/Office Hours

### Week 3: Monday

- 9:00-11:15      Lecture: Global environment  
Almost everyone values the health of Earth's environment, and the urgency to act on this issue has only intensified. Why is working together on environmental issues so difficult, even when they risk existential consequences? What have international institutions accomplished in this arena? (FLS, Chapter 13)
- 11:15-12:00      College skills workshop: Effective presenting  
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.
- 12:00-1:00      Lunch break
- 1:00-3:30      Group meeting – Assignment 7 and final project preparation  
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 outlining your main feedback recommendations.

3:30-5:00      Reading/Office Hours

### Week 3: Tuesday

9:00-12:00      Group meeting: final report prep

12:00-1:00      Lunch break

1:00-5:00      Group meeting: final presentation prep  
During this block, all groups will have a 15-20 minute check-in with the instructor.

### Week 3: Wednesday

9:00-10:30      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.

10:30-12:00      Group meeting: Final report revisions

12:00-1:00      Lunch break

1:00-3:00      Group meeting: Presentation practice session  
Each group will give practice talks for peer groups and provide helpful, constructive feedback to allow for revision of both content and style.

3:00-5:00      Group meeting: Presentation revisions

### Week 3: Thursday

9:00-12:00      Final presentations  
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 a Q&A with the audience.

12:00-1:00      Lunch break

1:00-5:00      Final presentations

### Week 3: Friday

9:00-12:00	Group meeting: Final report revisions and edits If needed, this time will be used instead for final presentations.
12:00-1:00	Lunch break
1:00-5:00	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. 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. If your state was involved in multiple wars, choose one recent war with instructor guidance. If your state 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 2-3 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 how your state fought its war.

Describe your findings in a 2-3 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 irrelevant.

Describe your findings in a 2-3 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 these observed economic relationships would be different if the political relationship between the US and your state differed? Why?

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

*Assignment 7:* Prepare a one-page document outlining your main feedback recommendations.

### 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:

1. *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.)
2. *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. The exact time will depend on how many students are enrolled in the course. 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
- The recommendations specified in the final report

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