General Education 866: World Affairs

Instructor
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Lecture: MW, 10:00 – 10:50, Gladfelter L21

Office hours: Monday, 11 a.m. – Noon, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Description: This course offers an interdisciplinary introduction to major themes in international studies. It explores the history and evolution of major international trends from different disciplinary perspectives, including Political Science, Economics, Law, History, the Humanities and the Natural Sciences. Particular attention is given to trends in the nature of war, political and economic development, international law, human rights, disease and health, and governance of the global commons.

The course is organized in three parts. Part I briefly introduces major trends in world affairs, including the nature of war, trade, disease, international law, and the environment, and explores explanations of these trends from several disciplinary perspectives, ranging from the natural sciences (week 1) to the social sciences (week 2) and the humanities (week 3).

Part II builds on the conceptual work in the previous sections to explore the causes and consequences of inter-state war (week 4); interdisciplinary perspectives examining the ethics of war and the interaction of war and gender (week 5), emerging forms of global violence in the 21st century, including terrorism and civil wars (week 6); the emergence of human rights and new norms on humanitarian intervention (week 7); the origins of democracy and the prospects for democratization (week 9); the origins and effects of differences in wealth and poverty (week 10); variations in health around the world and the global combat against diseases (week 11); developments in the protection of the global commons (week 12), and the effects of globalization in national societies (week 13).

Part III concludes the course with a review of primary challenges for the future of world affairs and conclusions (week 14).

This course satisfies the World Society requirement in the General Education Program.
The Schedule of Classes is as follows

Week 1: What is International Studies? The Natural Sciences (Jan 23, 28)
Week 2: The Social Sciences and International Studies (Jan 30, Feb 4, 6)
Week 3: The Humanities and International Studies (Feb 11, 13)
Week 4: The Causes of War (Feb 18, 20)
Week 5: The Ethics of War; War and Gender (Feb 25, 27)
Week 6: The Age of Terror? Or the Age of Peace? (March 4, 6)
Week 7: Human Rights and Humanitarian Intervention (March 18, 20)
Week 8: Mid-Term Examination (March 27)
Week 9: Democratization and Democracy Promotion (April 1, 3)
Week 10: Wealth, Poverty, and Development (April 8, 10)
Week 11: Global Health and Disease (April 15, 17)
Week 12: The Global Commons and Climate Change (April 22, 24)
Week 13: Globalization (April 29, May 1)
Week 14: Challenges for the Future (May 6)

Course requirements: The requirements for this course are:

(1) attendance at, and informed participation in, discussions in weekly section meetings (10% of the grade);
(2) a series of 12 weekly quizzes on the readings, to be administered at the beginning of Friday section meetings during weeks 1-7 and 9-13 (30% of the grade);
(3) a mid-term examination, to be administered on Wednesday, March 27th (20%);
(4) a series of library assignments to be handed out during the semester (20%);
(5) a final exam, to be administered during exam period (date and time TBA) (20%).

Required readings: Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the course, we will draw on a variety of sources. We have ordered one textbook, available for purchase at the University Bookstore and on four-hour reserve at Paley Library:


Payne’s text is, however, only a starting point for our analysis, and we will draw readings from a number of sources – including scholarly books and articles, historical primary sources, and newspaper and magazine articles – drawn from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. All students should read all of the required readings each week, and all of these readings (except the Payne text) will be made available through electronic reserve. Note that some of the assignments specify only specific pages to be read, or else indicate places where you can skim. (Note: skimming is a learned skill, which we will discuss in class, which involves reading selectively to get the basic argument of a reading without necessarily reading all the detail. It does not mean blowing off the reading entirely!)

By contrast with the required readings, the recommended readings are there only for students who wish to learn a bit more about topics that are not well covered in the required readings, particularly in areas where you plan to write a research paper. Feel
free to look up the recommended readings if you like, but it is not necessary to read any of the recommended readings to do well in the course!

In addition to these readings, students are strongly encouraged to read a daily newspaper such as The New York Times (http://www.nytimes.com), the Financial Times (http://www.ft.com) or the Washington Post (http://www.washingtonpost.com) with detailed, reliable foreign affairs coverage.

**Disability policy:** Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 or 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**Academic Conduct:** Temple University has adopted standards on academic conduct, and all students in PS 966 are expected to comply fully with those standards, including with reference to the important issue of plagiarism. All students should, in all assignments, fully and unambiguously cite sources from which they are drawing important ideas and/or sizable quotations (for example, more than eight consecutive words or more than 50% of a given sentence or paragraph). Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious act of academic misconduct and will result in a failing grade for the course and notification of the infraction to the Dean of Students. Similarly, cheating during exams, copying written assignments from other students, or providing answers to others during exams are considered acts of academic misconduct. If you are unfamiliar with policies about plagiarism or other types of academic misconduct, you may wish to consult the online guide to “Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Acknowledging Sources,” available at the Temple Writing Center (http://www.temple.edu/writingctr/student_resources/student_resources.htm) or if you still have remaining doubts or specific questions, raise them directly with me.

**Temple University policy on the freedom to teach and learn:** Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.
Part I. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on World Affairs

Week 1: What is International Studies? The Natural Sciences (Jan 23, 28)

1. Introduction: What is International Studies?
2. The Natural Sciences, the Scientific Method, and International Studies

What do we mean by world affairs? In this introductory week, we introduce our object of study, noting the differences in emphasis when we talk about subjects like “international relations,” “global studies,” and “international studies,” which we define as the interdisciplinary analysis of world affairs. We discuss the division of academic life into disciplines (which are clustered roughly into the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities), and the advantages and disadvantages of thinking in an interdisciplinary fashion about world affairs. We also proceed to discuss the first of our three clusters of disciplines, the natural sciences, with special attention to the nature of the scientific method, the difference between positive and normative theory, and the role of the natural sciences in international studies and in public policy.

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Week 2: The Social Sciences and International Studies (Jan 30, Feb 4, 6)
1. The Social Sciences, Political Science and International Relations
2. Other Social-Scientific Approaches and Social Science Methods

This week, we move from the natural sciences to the social sciences, all of which attempt, in different ways, to apply the scientific method to the study of human behavior and of society. Different social-science disciplines have approached world affairs in different ways, highlighting certain questions (war and peace, wealth and poverty, etc.), and making different assumptions about the key actors (states, transnational actors, international organizations, firms, individuals) and the nature of those actors. We focus in particular on the fields of political science (whose subfield of international relations has generated many leading theories of world affairs) and economics, as well as related fields such as anthropology, psychology, geography, and sociology. We conclude the week with a brief discussion of social-science epistemology (how we learn about and understand the world, and whether “positivist” social science is appropriate to the study of humanity) and methodology (should we study social affairs using qualitative or quantitative methods, or both?).

Required Readings


Study Questions: Please write a one- to two-page essay (double-spaced, 12 point fonts) on one of the following questions. Be sure to answer all parts of the question, provide an introduction or thesis statement at the beginning, and refer to relevant readings (not just to lecture) in your answer.

1. While the field of “international relations” is often identified as a subfield of
political science, every social-science discipline has had something to say about world affairs, including the disciplines of political science, economics and anthropology reviewed in this week’s readings – as well as others like psychology, geography, and sociology not covered in the readings. Based on your reading, how do political science, economics and anthropology differ in their approaches to world affairs? What basic questions does each discipline tend to ask, and what are the central concepts that inform each discipline when it comes to international studies?

**Recommended Readings**


Week 3: The Humanities and International Studies (Feb 11, 13)

1. The Humanities, History and Law
2. Political Philosophy, Ethics, and International Ethics

By contrast with the social sciences, disciplines in the humanities are less likely to embrace the methods of science in the study of human behavior, and less likely to make a sharp distinction between positive analysis (focusing only on what *is*) and normative analysis (focusing on what *ought* to be). As with the social sciences, however, the humanities are diverse, taking in disciplines ranging from art and literary criticism to history and law. Our discussion of the humanities in international studies is therefore selective, focusing on the particular contributions of history and law to the study of world affairs. In addition, we address again the issue of positive vs. normative theory, asking what we mean by ethics, how we should think about ethical questions, and whether ethical thinking applies at all to world affairs.

Required Readings


Study Questions. Please answer one of the following questions.

1. How are the humanities in general different from the natural and social sciences? How, for example, would a student of history or international law (pick just one for your essay) study world affairs differently than, say, a social scientist? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of a social science vs. a humanities approach to world affairs?
2. What do we mean by ethics, by meta-ethics, and by normative ethics? Is ethics relevant to the study of world affairs? If not, why not? If so, which seems more appropriate – deontological or consequentialist ethics, and why?

3. While the battle between deontological and consequentialist ethics often dominates the study of ethics within societies, the study of international ethics is characterized by other debates, including those among so-called “cosmopolitans,” “realists,” and “pluralists.” In an essay, summarize briefly the fundamental arguments of these three groups, and discuss which of these you find most appropriate to world affairs, and why.

**Recommended Readings**


Part II. Issues in World Affairs

Week 4: The Causes of War (Feb 18, 20)

War has long been identified as one of the most analytically and normatively important questions in world affairs, and one that distinguishes international politics from domestic politics. Not surprisingly, scholars from a huge variety of disciplines – including political science, history, anthropology, psychology, and economics, among many others – have offered explanations about the causes of specific wars (such as World War I) and for wars in general. This week, we focus on international relations approaches in political science, surveying general theories of international relations and exploring theories and evidence about the causes of war at five different levels of analysis.

Required Readings


Nye, Understanding International Conflicts, Chapter 3, pp. 59-83.

Study Questions. Please answer one of the following three questions.

1. What are the dominant theories of international relations in political science, according to the readings for this week? Which of these theories seems to offer the greatest insights into world affairs, in your view, and what specific insights do you derive from your preferred theory?

2. What are the five levels of analysis put forward by Cashman and Robinson, and what potential causes of war do they identify at each level? Which of these proposed causes of war seems most promising to you, and why?

3. In Understanding International Conflicts, Joseph Nye does not try to test all of the competing theories on a statistical dataset of all wars, but rather tries to assess the different explanations for a single war, in this case World War I. How does Nye try to assess which cause or causes were most important in that particular case? Which causes seem to have been most important, and why?

Recommended Readings


Week 5: The Ethics of War; War and Gender (Feb 25, 27)

While much of the current literature on the causes of war is located within the fields of political science and international relations, virtually every discipline in the social sciences and humanities has weighed in on the question of war, and indeed war is an area where interdisciplinary scholarship has attempted to draw on the insights of multiple disciplines to explain and understand warfare. A full survey of these approaches is beyond our scope this week, which instead focuses on two questions. First, after a brief discussion of different disciplinary perspectives on war, we examine the question of the relationship between war and gender, reading and analyzing selections from Joshua Goldstein’s book on the subject as an example of such interdisciplinary work. Second, we move from positive to normative analysis, reviewing the literature on “just war theory,” and asking about the just causes of war and the ways in which wars might be fought justly.

Required Readings

Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Chapters 2-5, and 12 (pp. 21-85 and 197-206); focus on the key arguments, skim the historical cases.

Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chapters 1 and 7 (pp. 1-58, 403-414).

Study Questions. Answer just one of the following questions:

1. In his book, *War and Gender* attempts to draw on the findings of many scholars in many disciplines to figure out the answer to a key “puzzle.” In a short essay, (a) identify Goldstein’s key puzzle, (b) discuss how he goes about testing his various hypotheses, and (c) summarize briefly Goldstein’s core findings and his “take-home” message.

2. It has been said that “War is hell,” inherently based on killing of other human beings, and yet there is a widely held “just war tradition” that war can be fought justly, and for just reasons. In a brief essay, explain the concepts of “jus ad bellum,” and “jus in bello” as they appear in Michael Walzer’s *Just and Unjust Wars*, outlining the basic rules of each. Are these rules a good basis for judging the morality of war? Why or why not?

Recommended Readings


Week 6: The Age of Terror? Or the Age of Peace? (March 4, 6)

In the previous two weeks, we focused on the causes, consequences and ethics of interstate wars, and indeed the United States has fought two such wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan, over the past decade. Yet there is considerable evidence that this form of organized violence has dramatically declined in recent decades. Will this world of interstate war be replaced by a more peaceful one, or simply by a world characterized by novel, but equally fearsome, security threats and forms of violence? This question is the subject of this week’s reading. In this week’s readings, we first focus on explaining the origins of terrorism and exploring the challenges of counter-terrorism efforts by the US and others. A second set of readings takes a much different approach, asking whether the world has moved and is moving into a much less violent future.

Required Readings


Study Questions. Please answer one of the following questions.

1. What is terrorism? What is “new” about the type of terrorism that has been practiced since September 11th, and how do your readings explain the origins of such terrorism? Given what we know about the causes of terrorism, what policies seem best designed to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks?

2. The September 11th, 2001, attacks on the United States, and the Bush Administration’s subsequent “war on terror” raised an enormous variety of legal as well as political and moral questions, including the power of the Presidency vis-à-vis the other branches of government as well as specific questions about the designation of detainees, the use and institutional set-up of military commissions to judge alleged terrorists, the use of extraordinary rendition and/or torture of terrorist suspects, and the conduct of warrantless wiretapping of American and
foreign citizens. How did the administration of George W. Bush, in office during and after those attacks, respond to these challenges? Were US responses legally and morally justified? Finally how, and how much, has Barack Obama changed the US approach to terrorism during his term in office?

3. The decade since September 11th, 2001 is often depicted as an age of terror, haunted by the threat of further attacks and of other security threats such as the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Yet a number of scholars such as Bruce Russett, Joshua Goldstein (in the recommended readings) and Steven Pinker argue that the world is becoming substantially less warlike and violent over time. What evidence do these authors offer for their startling claims, and how (if at all) does each explain the apparent drop-off in global violence?

**Recommended Readings**


Week 7: Human Rights and Humanitarian Intervention (March 18, 20)

Straddling the boundary between war and peace, and between positive social science and normative ethics, are the interrelated questions of human rights and humanitarian intervention. Scholars, activists and international lawyers have long claimed that all human beings possess universal human rights, no matter where in the world they live. However, there have been vigorous debates over whether all human beings really do have human rights (and if so, which ones?), over how to deal with the apparent conflict between the principles of human rights and state sovereignty, and over whether it is realistic to expect states to follow and enforce international human rights policies. More recently, scholars and practitioners of world affairs have debated whether there is a legal right and/or a moral duty of humanitarian intervention in the internal affairs of other states, with the aim of securing human rights and preventing humanitarian catastrophe in places such as Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, Libya, and Syria.

Required Readings


Study Question. Please answer one the following questions:

1. The United States is built in large part on a belief in the fundamental rights of all human beings, yet it turns out that making human rights central to US foreign policy has proven extremely difficult for all US presidents. Why? What obstacles – philosophical, political, legal, or other – make a consistent human rights policy so difficult for the US and for other states?
2. Humanitarian intervention would seem to be an intrinsically good thing, aimed at helping people in need. What are the moral and/or practical arguments against undertaking humanitarian interventions? Why has it proven so difficult in practice for states to intervene for humanitarian reasons in places like Rwanda and Darfur? And what, in light of these arguments and experiences, should the United States do about the humanitarian disaster in Syria?

**Recommended Readings**


Week 8: Mid-Term Examination (March 25)

Week 9: Democratization and Democracy Promotion (April 1, 3)

States employ different political regime types, including democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian systems. This week, we look at the role of democracy, democratization, and democracy promotion of world affairs. We begin by asking what democracy is, how democracy arose, and what affect democracy has on the incidence of war – the so-called democratic peace thesis. We then turn to the topic of democratization, examining the so-called third and fourth “waves” of democratic transitions in various parts of the world, as well as the claims that the apparent progress of democracy in recent decades has either produced “illiberal” versions of democracy, or is in the process of being rolled back in many places. Finally, given the apparent difficulties of democratic transitions, a final section studies how democracy is being “exported” by states and international organizations, and the normative dimensions of this process.

Required Readings


Additional, up-to-date reading on the outcomes of the Arab Spring to be added.


Study Questions. Please answer one of the following questions:

1. What do we mean by democracy? Is democracy making gains in today’s world, as many scholars of the “third and fourth waves” have suggested? Or is democracy in retreat throughout the world?

2. What is the relationship between democracy and peace? Why do some scholars believe in the notion of a democratic peace, and what evidence do they put
forward? Why do some other scholars suggest that there is no relationship, or even a negative relationship, between democratization and peace? What do you think, and why?

3. What are the analytical and normative arguments for democracy promotion policies by countries like the United States? What are the arguments against democracy promotion? Which do you find more convincing? Should the United States attempt to export democracy throughout the world? Why or why not?

Recommended Reading


Week 10: Wealth, Poverty, and Development (April 8, 10)

At the intersection of political science/international relations, international economics, and political philosophy lies the question of wealth and poverty both within states as well as between rich and poor states. As we shall see, economists such as Jeffrey Sachs and William Easterly, among many others, have undertaken analyses of both the causes of poverty in places such as Africa (by far the poorest of the world’s regions) and the most effective policies to combat poverty and promote economic growth in the developing world. There remains, however, fundamental disagreement on both of these questions, with a major debate about whether and how countries like the United States and international organizations like the World Bank should seek to combat poverty throughout the world. These debates, in turn, rest at least in part on a normative debate, namely that we in the industrialized world have some sort of normative duty toward foreigners – a question explored in the exchange between Singer and Kuper in this week’s readings.

Required Readings


Study Questions. Please answer one of the following questions:

1. Why, according to Jeffrey Sachs, have the countries of Africa lagged so far behind much of the rest of the world economically, and what can the advanced industrialized world do to alleviate poverty and promote growth in Africa? Why do Sachs’ critics believe that his analyses and proposals are flawed, and what do
they suggest should be done? Which view do you find more convincing, and why?

2. In a famous 1971 essay, the utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer controversially argued that each of us has a significant moral obligation to relieve human suffering throughout the world, and Singer takes up that argument, and responds to his many critics, in this week’s reading. What is Singer’s core argument? Do you find it convincing? Why or why not? (Either way, please give reasons for your position – don’t simply say that Singer’s arguments are absurd or stupid.) What do Kuper and Singer argue about? How convincing, at the end of the day, do you find Singer’s arguments?

Recommended Readings


William Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin Press), Chapter 1, pp. 3-30.


Week 11: Global Health and Disease (April 15, 17)

Much like the previous topic of wealth and poverty, the topic of health and disease has provoked much scholarship, and debate, among scholars in a range of disciplines including the health sciences, economics, political science, and others. This week, we examine the debate over global health, analyzing the primary sources of disease and other challenges to health throughout the world; assessing the economic costs and benefits of different policies to fight disease; and examining the policies established by states and by international regimes such as the World Health Organization to fight disease and promote public health throughout the world.

Required Readings


Study Question

1. All of this week’s readings, in different ways, review the problems of posed by communicable diseases, as well as the more general problems of promoting global health, and discuss the most promising and cost-effective ways of addressing these challenges. Based on your reading of these sources, what (if anything) do you think that wealthy countries like the United States should do to promote global health?

Recommended Readings

Week 12: The Global Commons and Climate Change (April 22, 24)

The global commons (such as the global atmosphere, and the world’s oceans and fisheries) have been threatened for generations, but appear to face even larger challenges today as the world depletes resources in ways that prevent long-term sustainability. This week introduces the concept of a global commons and asks whether the world’s states can cooperate to protect global commons. We devote special attention to the issue of climate change, which has been an intense subject of study for natural scientists (is climate change real, what is causing it, and what will its likely effects be?); for economists (what is the likely economic impact of climate change, and what are the economic costs and benefits of trying to resist it?); for political scientists (can states cooperate under anarchy to prevent climate change?); and for political philosophers (what should be done to stop climate change, and who should bear the costs of doing so?).

Required Readings


Study Questions. Please answer one of the following questions.

1. What precisely is a global commons (define and give examples)? Why are commons so difficult to protect, according to economists and political scientists (see “the tragedy of the commons”), and what can be done to protect them? Can we point to any success stories so far in the effort to protect the commons, and do these suggest hope for the issue of climate change?

2. It can be argued that the amount of disagreement among scientists about climate change is decreasing (see the IPPC 4th assessment report), but many Americans do not believe that climate change is either real or else that human activities are causing it, and as a result they are skeptical of large government programs to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. How certain, or uncertain, is the science of climate change, and why is there such a difference in attitudes between most scientists on the one hand, and many members of the public on the other hand.

3. Most economists accept the scientific view that climate change is real and likely to accelerate in the 21st century, yet economists still appear fundamentally at odds about whether the benefits of aggressively reducing greenhouse-gas emissions outweigh the costs. Why do the economists in this week’s readings disagree on these questions? Which arguments do you find most convincing, and why?

4. What are the normative issues raised by climate change, according to Singer and others in this week’s readings? What specifically should we in the United States be prepared to do to fend off climate change, and why?

Recommended Readings


Week 13: Globalization (April 29, May 1)

Much of the scholarship, as well as popular discourse about world affairs in the past decade has focused on the issue of globalization, defined loosely as the increasing movement of goods, services, money, people, media images and ideas across borders. Originally conceived primarily as an economic phenomenon, globalization also has political, social and cultural implications, which are explored in this week’s readings. More specifically, we ask: (1) What are the origins of globalization and how has it evolved over time? (2) What are the economic, cultural and political consequences of globalization? And (3) should the US and the international community promote or temper the progress of globalization?

Required Readings


Study Question

1. In the readings for this week, Jagdish Bhagwati argues in defense of globalization, arguing that it (or at least some parts of it) are both economically and socially desirable. What does he mean by this claim, and how does he justify it? By contrast, Joseph Stiglitz is critical of globalization as it has unfolded in the past several decades, and argues that “another world” is possible. What does Stiglitz think is wrong with globalization today, and what kind of policies would lead to his proposed “better world?” Which author makes the better arguments, in your view, and why?

Recommended Readings


Thomas Friedman, The World is Flat (New York: Picador, 2007).


Part III: Concluding, and Looking Ahead

Week 14: Challenges for the Future (May 6)

This course has selected only a few major issues for consideration, and it has considered them in isolation. In practice, however, scholars, citizens and the world’s policy-makers don’t face individual problems in isolation, but a myriad of security, economic, environmental and other challenges. This week, we step back, look at the big picture, and analyze two efforts – one by the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and the other by a team of economists – to set priorities and plan for the challenges of a new century.

Required Readings


Study Questions (answer just one)

1. What are the most important challenges to world governance identified in Kofi Annan’s report, *In Larger Freedom*, and how does Annan propose to address them? How do these aims compare with those of the expert panel of economists in *How to Spend $50 Billion to Make the World a Better Place*? Which set of proposals do you agree with, and why?

2. In the final reading, Jeffrey Sachs returns, this time with an “economics for a crowded planet.” What challenges does Sachs identify for the world in the coming decades, and what solutions does he propose? Are his proposals practical and desirable? Why, or why not?

Recommended Readings