GOVT 102
Introduction to International Politics
Spring 2011
Section 01: Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:45am
Section 02: Tues/Thurs 11:00am-12:15pm
Kirby 107

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Office hours:
Tues/Thurs 1:00-2:30pm
and by appointment

Course description:
This course provides an introduction to the systematic study of international politics. It introduces students to the major theoretical approaches to the analysis of international relations and applies them to various historical and contemporary issues. The first section of the course surveys key concepts and theories. The second section explores the causes and consequences of international conflict and war. The third section turns to important issues in global economic relations, such as the politics of free trade, financial liberalization, development and inequality. The final section addresses the question of change in the current international system by critically examining newly emerging topics, including terrorism, environmental cooperation, and the role of transnational actors.

Course objectives:
Through the completion of this course, students are expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes:

- identify and distinguish between the different types of explanations of international politics;
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of theoretical arguments through the logical examination of evidence;
- think critically about world events and develop clearly articulated arguments; and
- apply theoretical knowledge to various policy issues in international relations.

Course requirements:
The major requirements of the course include three exams (distributed throughout the semester) and class participation. The specific grading criteria are as follows:

- Mid-term exam #1 (25%)
- Mid-term exam #2 (25%)
- Final exam (25%)
- Discussion handout assignment (15%)
- Class attendance and participation (10%)
Students are expected to attend all sessions, to have carefully read and considered the required readings, and to actively participate in class discussions. Students are also strongly encouraged to raise questions or concerns about difficult concepts from the lecture material and assigned readings both during classroom discussions and during office hours. If a student is unable to attend class, s/he must notify the instructor in advance or bring appropriate written documentation (e.g. Dean’s excuse). More than two unexplained absences may result in a lower final grade.

There are at least three opportunities for classroom participation. First, each student must act as a discussant for one discussion session at least once during the semester. A signup sheet will be distributed during the first week of class. The job of the discussant is to prepare and circulate in advance a one page handout which briefly summarizes the assigned group of readings and raises two or three questions that engage and/or critique the authors’ arguments. Second, students are expected to participate in class discussions of the lecture material as well as the readings. Third, all students are strongly encouraged to read The New York Times and/or other reputable newspapers. We will discuss some of the current events in world politics based on student interest.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that s/he is available to take the final exam on the date and time assigned for the course. Students with special needs due to disability should make requests for accommodation in the first week of classes so that arrangements can be made.

Students are responsible for the content and integrity of all academic work. Please consult the Student Handbook for College policies on academic honesty (http://studentlife.lafayette.edu/files/2010/02/StudentHandbook_0910_FINAL.pdf).

Course readings:
The following books are required for purchase and will be made available at the campus bookstore. They will also be placed on reserve at the library. Other course readings and additional material will be made available through Moodle.


Course Schedule

Part I. Concepts and Theories

Week 1: Introduction (January 25 & 27)
□ Nau, Perspectives on International Relations, pp. 1-10; 28-64.

* Recommended:

Week 2: Realism (February 1 & 3)

Week 3: Liberalism (February 8 & 10)

Week 4: Constructivism & Domestic Politics (February 15 & 17)

Part II. International Conflict and War

Week 5: World War I (February 22 & 24)
□ Nau, Perspectives on International Relations, pp. 109-134.

Week 6: World War II (March 1)
□ Nau, Perspectives on International Relations, pp. 136-165.

Mid-term #1: March 3, 2011 (in-class)
Week 7: The Cold War (March 8 & 10)
- Nau, Perspectives on International Relations, pp. 167-182.

*** Spring Break ***

Week 8: End of the Cold War (March 22 & 24)

Part III. International Political Economy

Week 9: States, Markets, and the International Trading System (March 29 & 31)

Week 10: Economic Development and Global Inequality (April 5 & 7)

Part IV. Change and Continuity in World Politics

Week 11: Ethnic Conflict and Civil Wars (April 12)

Mid-term #2: April 14, 2011 (in-class)
Week 12: Nuclear Proliferation (April 19 & 21)

Week 13: Human Rights and Intervention (April 26 & 28)

Week 14: 9/11 and Terrorism (May 3 & 5)

Final Exam: TBA