

Contemporary International Politics: Global Flashpoints 101
IR 307
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INTRODUCTION

This course is intended to provide students with a summary overview of contemporary global flashpoints featured in the news every day. While headlines and news bulletins may capture the latest events, even informed observers are often left without sufficient background information to fully understand and analyse factors which may have led to the day's crises or what potential future courses of action could be. IR 307 seeks to remedy this shortcoming for advancing students of political science and international relations using an overview approach leaving more detailed examination of particular issues and crises for further study. What brought to world to the nuclear crisis in Iran, for example? What has the international community done to resolve the current crisis with Teheran? What are desirable and possible outcomes? This course will investigate those and similar questions about today's contemporary global flashpoints. My goal is to take some of the "surprise" out of morning headlines and enable students to understand what's happening before it does.

The "Global Flashpoints" featured in this course will cover familiar critical geographic regions: Russia, Iraq, Iran, the Middle East, North Korea, Central and South Asia. Through lectures and visual presentations, students will learn about important geographical and geostrategic factors contributing to the menu of political crises to be examined. The class will address key historical events and political factors behind the headlines, detailed information about the current situation, and assessments of potential political outcomes.

Although a significant portion of class time will be devoted to highlighting vital types of information outlined above, the course will emphasize "student-based learning" through a series of debates, panels, and team presentations focused on each of the flashpoints contained in the course. Each flashpoint segment will conclude with a student exercise directed toward a specific question or theme. Every student will be required to participate in at least one of the exercises but may volunteer for more should the spirit move you. In doing so, each student will be required to submit a written document appropriate to the exercise in addition to oral presentations or debates as required. Guidance will be provided in advance regarding their nature, quality, and quantity. Class time may be allocated as possible in advance of each exercise for preparation and

coordination of presentations.

For planning purposes, there will be no mid-term examination in the course; the final exam will be a lengthy, take home variety for which open sources will be permitted. (Please see the section on "Performance Evaluation" for further details about grading and course workload.)

GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To familiarize students with key background and current information about major contemporary international security "crises", including geographic and geostrategic factors, historical political and economic developments, and potential policy alternatives.
2. To encourage students to "follow the news" of today's principal global security events.
3. To encourage students to view contemporary international events through a variety of lenses including differing nation-based and internationalist perspectives regarding goals and options.
4. To encourage students to assess those goals and options in a balanced way, measuring potential costs, benefits, and risks for each alternative approach.
5. To apply a "student-based learning approach" promoting active exchange of views among the students in order to provide a comprehensive and balanced view of global security events.
6. To train and improve oral and written presentation skills using simulations of events typical of the policy making environment.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

John T. Rourke, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in World Politics*, McGraw Hill, 13th edition, 2008.

Global Issues: Selections from *CQ Researcher*, 2008 Edition.
Congressional Quarterly.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Please read the attached "Guidelines" which summarize my grading criteria. By articulating my grading standards, I hope to minimize any the ambiguity inherent in the grading process to our mutual advantage. Students should be able to know exactly what is required to achieve their desired grade

level. I hope the guidelines will help you in making that determination and setting your own standards for your performance.

Overall grading segments will be weighted according to the following formula:

Map quizzes and homework assignments: 33 %

Participation in class exercises; oral and written presentation materials
33%

Final examination 34%

CLASS SCHEDULE. Please complete reading assignments DURING their respective "flashpoint" segment and prior to each segment exercise. Reading assignments include those from the course textbooks, but will rely heavily upon online information at websites identified for each segment. I encourage students to explore relevant resources on the websites listed for each segment and to otherwise reads those items specified below.

Week of August 26-28. Course introduction and overview. Distribution of syllabus. Getting situated and acquainted.

Weeks of September 2-4 and 9-11. "Russia: Past as Prologue or Tomorrow's Global Partner?" Russia's strategic perspectives on East and West. Russia's economic boom, energy resources, and international political relations. Russian political transformation: democracy or autocracy? Long term Russian political concerns. Exercise Topic: Senate Hearing: "Future U.S. policy approach to Russia: Hard or Soft?"

Readings: Rourke 54-69 and CQ 331-358. Google: Council on Foreign Relations, "Russia's Wrong Direction: What the U.S. Can and Should do?" Other websites: www.armscontrol.org, click on country resources Russia 2006-2007. www.nti.org, click on Russia; www.state.gov, "Library of Congress Country Study" for Russia; www.ransac.org

Weeks of September 16-18 and 23-25. "Iraq: How did we get into this mess?" Colonial and cultural historical factors. Political transformation since independence. Saddam Hussein. The Iran-Iraq War. Kuwait, oil, and the Gulf War. 9/11 and internal U.S. policymaking. Transforming Iraq after Saddam. Exercise Topic: "Election 2008: How would you advise your candidate?" Readings: Rourke 102-113; Websites: Institute for Policy Studies www.ips-dc.org/Iraq, American Enterprise Institute: Michael Rubin, "U.S. Policy Options in Iraq" www.aei.org; www.armscontrol.org, click on country resources, Iraq; www.nti.org, click on Iraq; www.state.gov, "Library of Congress Country Study for Iraq"

Weeks of September 30-October 2 and October 7-9. "Iran: Gridlock or Change?" From Shah to the Mullahs: the revolution. Political transformation of Iran. Democracy: Reformers vs. Hardliners. Oil and Iran's economy. Nuclear energy, the fuel cycle, and nuclear weapons. Iran, Israel, and terrorism. Vision: regional hegemon? Exercise: "UN Security Council Meeting: Resolution 2007: Suspending Iran's Nuclear Program." Readings: Rourke 254-273 and CQ 49-73. Websites: www.armscontrol.org, click on country resources Iran 2006-2007. www.nti.org click on Iran; www.state.gov, "Library of Congress Country Study for Iran"; www.ransac.org

Weeks of October 14-16 and 21-23. "Israel and Palestine: Will a Peaceful Settlement Ever Be Possible?" Pre and Post WWII origins of dispute. Arab Israeli wars and their results. Internal political dynamics of Israel and Palestinian governments and populations. Balance of military power in the region. Israel's nuclear weapons. Exercise: Policy Briefings: Alternative Approaches for the New Administration in 2008". Readings: Rourke 84-101. websites: www.armscontrol.org, click on country resources, Israel. www.usinfo.state.gov, "Middle East: a Vision for the Future, Key Documents, Related Issues"; www.thejerusalemfund.org, and www.crisisgroup.org; www.state.gov, Library of Congress Country Study for Israel

Weeks of October 28-30 and November 4-6. "North Korea: Nuclear Problem "Solved"?" Korean peninsula: Cold War continued. Balance of military power in the region. North Korean international friends and enemies: who has leverage? Economics and energy in Korea. Political developments in South Korea. North Korea's nuclear weapons program: what's happened? How? What do we really know? Prospects for political change in North and South Korea. Exercise: National Security Council Meeting: Optional responses to North Korean crisis event. Readings: Rourke 274-288. Websites: www.armscontrol.org, click on North Korea; www.nti.org, North Korea; www.crisisgroup.org, North Korea; www.state.gov, Library of Congress country study for North Korea; www.ransac.org

November 11-13 and 18-20. India-Pakistan-Afghanistan. Roots of the India Pakistan dispute. Kashmir. India's nuclear weapons program. The U.S.-India Nuclear Deal. Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. The China-Pakistan Nuclear Deal. The saga of A.Q. Khan. U.S. Pakistani relations. Pakistan's delicate internal political situation. Afghanistan's tumultuous past. Taliban. Osama bin Laden. Political transformation in Afghanistan. Opium and the economy. NATO: winning or losing the war? Exercise: State Department Position Papers: Near and Far Term Goals for U.S. Relations with India and Pakistan. Key Supporting Initiatives. Readings: CQ 303-326 and 363-384. Websites: www.armscontrol.org, India read documents related to "U.S. India Nuclear Deal", click on Pakistan, India, Afghanistan; www.nti.org, click on Pakistan and India; www.crisisgroup.org, click

on Pakistan and Afghanistan; www.state.gov, Library of Congress country studies for India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan; www.ransac.org

Weeks of November 25 and December 2-4 Terrorism, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Nonproliferation Policies and Programs. Defining terrorism. Developments of terrorist activities. Counter-terrorism strategies. The Threat: Terrorists with Weapons of Mass Destruction: How Likely? Capabilities and limitations of WMD. Elements of the international nonproliferation regime and U.S. programs to combat proliferation. Exercise: FY 2008 Supplemental Appropriation. How Should We Spend the Money?
Readings Rourke 226-253 and CQ 105-134; websites: www.nti.org, www.armscontrol.org; www.nuclearterror.org (See FAQs); www.ransac.org; www.dhs.gov.