



PO 180: Current Issues in World Politics

Saint Michael's College First Class Course Syllabus

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Course Description

This course provides students with an introduction to controversies and debates in world politics, focusing on “global problems”-- challenges emerging around the world, which individual countries are unable to address effectively on their own. Global problems challenge the existing structure of the international system, which is still anchored by the centuries-old concept of state sovereignty. We will explore a number of vexing global problems, including nationalism and secession, weak or failed states, human security including human trafficking, nuclear proliferation, terrorism and transnational crime, globalization and global climate change. This course does not presuppose any prior study of international relations or political science, and does not intend to provide you with an exhaustive account of global political issues. Rather, I will carve out an approach that betrays my own interests and concerns, introducing you to frameworks and concepts that may help us appreciate the challenges posed by global issues.

Course Format and Objectives

Through a hybrid classroom/online format, this course will familiarize students with a level of regular intellectual engagement expected of an introductory course, while encouraging the development of faculty-student exchange and mentoring expected at Saint Michael's College. During the on-campus “residency” day on Sunday, February 23rd, we will have an opportunity to review introductory concepts and course assignments, and discuss best practices for on-line course engagement and success. Otherwise, during the on-line portion of the course, weekly assignments will include engaging in online threaded discussions, watching and writing film reviews, reading international news and writing press reports, and completing chapter quizzes.

The desired learning outcomes for this course include:

1. Appreciate the transnational complexity of world politics in a globalized era;
2. Become conversant in current international events;
3. Acquire an understanding of some of the major tools of international political analysis;
4. Become aware of major theories and research on global problems;
5. Improve critical reading, writing and discussion skills.

Course Readings

The following e-text will be provided by Saint Michael's College:

Richard Payne, *Global Issues: Politics, Economics and Culture, 5th Edition*, Pearson, 2017.

Additional required reading will be located on the Canvas course management system.

Course Assignments and Grading Policy

In addition to chapter quizzes, assignments include: discussion question postings and threaded discussions on reading assignments, news article/press reports and short video reflections. All assignments submitted late will lose ½ a letter grade for every day submitted past the due date.

Discuss Questions and Threaded Discussions – 20%
Video Reflections – 25%

News Article/Press Reports – 20%
Chapter Quizzes – 35%

The grading scale for the course is as follows:

A = 93-100	A- = 90-92	B+ = 88-89	B = 83-87	B- = 80-82	C+ = 78-79
C = 73-77	C- = 70-72	D+ = 68-69	D = 63-67	D- = 60-62	F = 0-59

Threaded Discussions/Questions

The discussion grade will be linked to weekly participation in online threaded discussions based on our readings and short videos. I will be looking for a substantial response to both my initial question as well as reactions to your classmates' responses. What should evolve is a debate where all of you compare and contrast your responses, and I expect you to pace yourselves each week and not lump responses in at the end of every week. You should have at least two postings--at the bare minimum--and ideally more, in response to each of these discussions. Postings should use complete sentences and paragraphs, and tone needs to be collegial and all responses need to be appropriate to the flow of discussion.

Press Reports

During the course you will be required to write ten press reports, where you will search for a recent news article on an international event or issue connected to a weekly theme or topic. The article should be accompanied by a short but intelligent typed commentary of one double-spaced typed page (one-inch margins, 12 point font), with the best reports clearly connecting to concepts from readings, and with all reports including a link to the article on the Internet.

Video Reflections

To supplement the reading and discussion, there will be shorter videos assigned each week relevant to our exploration of global issues. You will be asked to write weekly one double-spaced typed page (one-inch margins, 12 point font) reflecting on the relevance of the topics covered in the videos to our weekly global issues themes.

Course Schedule

<p>Week 1 February 17</p>	<p>Global Issues and Globalization: the Gap between Problems and Responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: Problems without Passports • Video Reflection 1: <i>The Crisis of Civilization</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/crisis-civilization • Press Report 1: The Global Gap • Chapter 1 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 1; Love, “Global Problems, Global Solutions”
<p>Week 2 February 24</p>	<p>States and Ethno-National Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: Ethno-National Contention in the United States • Video Reflection 2: <i>All About Darfur</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/all-about-darfur • Press Report 2: Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict • Chapter 14 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 14; <i>CQ Press</i> “Muslims in America” • On campus class meeting and course overview: Sunday, February 23
<p>Week 3 March 2</p>	<p>Human Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: Gender and Human Rights • Video Reflection 3: <i>Lost Girls of South Africa</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/lost-girls-south-africa • Press Report 3: Gender Inequality and Failed States • Chapter 3 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 3; <i>CQ Press</i> “Girls’ Rights”
<p>Week 4 March 9</p>	<p>Terrorism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: The Transnational Terrorist Threat • Video Reflection 4: <i>Jihad 2.0</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/jihad-20 • Press Report 4: Six Different Types of Terrorism • Chapter 5 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 5; <i>CQ Press</i> “Terrorism in Africa”
<p>Week 5 March 16</p>	<p>Weapons of Mass Destruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: A Nuclear Free World? • Video Reflection 5: <i>The Nuclear Requiem</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/nuclear-requiem • Press Report 5: Weapons of Mass Destruction • Chapter 6 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 6; <i>CQ Press</i> “Modernizing the Nuclear Arsenal”
<p>Week 6 March 23</p>	<p>Transnational Crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: Is Transnational Crime a New Problem? • Video Reflection 6: <i>Not My Life</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/not-my-life • Press Report 6: Types of Global Crime • Chapter 12 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 12; <i>CQ Press</i> “Transnational Crime”

Week 7 March 30	Globalization and Infectious Disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: Preparedness for the Next Pandemic? • Video Reflection 7: <i>Fire in the Blood</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/fire-blood-0 • Press Report 7: Diversity of Infectious Diseases • Chapter 13 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 13; <i>CQ Press</i> “Pandemic Threat”
Week 8 April 6	Global Environmental Degradation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: Environment as National Security Concern? • Video Reflection 8: <i>Climate Refugees</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/climate-refugees • Press Report 8: Global Environmental Challenges • Chapter 10 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 10; <i>CQ Press</i> “Climate Change and National Security”
Week 9 April 13	Refugees and Mass Migration of Peoples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: Immigration and Nationalism • Video Reflection 9: <i>A Requiem for Syrian Refugees</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/requiem-syrian-refugees • Press Report 9: Push and Pull Causes of Migration • Chapter 11 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 11; <i>CQ Press</i> “European Migration Crisis”
Week 10 April 20	Globalization and Inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded Discussion: How to Best Address Global Inequality? • Video Reflection 10: <i>March of the White Elephants</i> http://smcvt.kanopystreaming.com/video/march-white-elephants • Press Report 10: Growing Global Inequality • Chapter 9 Quiz • Readings: Payne, Chapter 9; <i>CQ Press</i> “Universal Basic Income”

Additional Information

Academic Integrity and Accommodations

The SMC Academic Integrity Policy is fully supported and applied. Any assignment violating the Academic Integrity Policy will receive a zero score, and your course letter grade will be lowered by at least one letter. Learning differences can be accommodated if I am notified in advance and a satisfactory plan is agreed upon. Talk to me as soon as possible and we will work together to address your needs.

Department Website

For more information on the Political Science Department at Saint Michael’s, including details on the majors in International Relations and in Political Science, departmental faculty teaching and research interests, and other curricular and co-curricular opportunities, please visit:
<http://www.smcvt.edu/academics/majors-minors-and-curriculum/international-relations.aspx>