

POL 203 International Politics

Semester One, 2009-10

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Office Hours: Posted on the door of my office. Other times are available by prior appointment.

Mode of Tuition: Lecture (2 hours per week) and tutorial (1 hour per week)

Programme Category: Required course for IS stream and elective course for CAPA stream.

Course Description and Aims: The course introduces you to the major developments in the history of international relations and to key theoretical approaches to understanding the world's politics. You will learn about the major actors, forces and ideas that influence contemporary political events and systems across the globe. You will examine some of the more significant features and characteristics of the international system and how it relates to both states and individuals. Through the use of particular case studies, you should appreciate better the dynamics of policy-making in the international arena.

This course serves as an introduction to other courses on international affairs being offered in the Social Sciences programme and has a direct linkage in particular with POL205 Global Governance, which is offered sequentially in second semester 2009-10.

Learning Outcomes: On completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. understand the forces shaping the global system today
2. apply fundamental political concepts to the study of current affairs around the world
3. evaluate and understand media reports, governmental and non-governmental organisations' official statements, as well as academic literature on international politics
4. understand your rights and fulfil your duties as a responsible global citizen

Language of Instruction: All lectures, discussions, readings and comments will be in English.

Course Content:

- I. International Politics: Conflict and Harmony
[read Chapter 1 of Mingst]
- II. The Historical Background to Contemporary International Politics:
 - Westphalian system
 - Nineteenth century/ twentieth century World Wars
 - Cold War and post-Cold War[read Chapter 2 of Mingst]
- III. Thinking Theoretically in International Relations: the Major Approaches:
 - Realism
 - Liberalism
 - Constructivism
 - Radical perspectives
 - Importance of Levels of Analysis[read Chapter 3 of Mingst]
- IV. Understanding the International System
[read Chapter 4 of Mingst]
- V. The State and its Role:
 - Nature and Sources of State Power
 - Policy-making
 - Challenges to the State[read Chapter 5 of Mingst]
- VI. The Role of Individuals: Elites and Masses
[read Chapter 6 of Mingst]
- VII. War, Peace and International Politics in the 21st Century

Case studies and examples from international events occurring while the course is being taken will be highlighted where appropriate.

Assessment and Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Assessment in various ways will contribute to the measurement of your learning.

The Continuous Assessment (60%) will be sub-divided into four components:

1.A tutorial presentation which demonstrates your ability to (i) research and organise content in a coherent and logical manner, (ii) present this content together with your own analysis in a clear manner, and (iii) defend your arguments during the discussion period. You will be arranged into groups of 2-3 students, so a collective group grade is given (15%). The lecturer reserves the right to lower a grade if there is clear evidence of a group member not pulling his/her weight.

2. An individually-written term paper in which a question related to the themes covered in this course is discussed in a logical and clear manner. Weight is given to your research and analytical skills as demonstrated by the nature of the content and your critical analysis. You must include footnotes/citations and references list/bibliography (see further details below). An individual grade is given (20%). Deadline is **Friday 4 December**.

3. Participation in class discussions. Your group will be given an opportunity to lead the discussion on other students' presentations, but credit will also be given to those who join in actively and regularly in class discussions. Your grade depends on quality as well as quantity of contributions (15%).

4. A Mid-term Test which will examine your knowledge and understanding of key concepts and factual information in the first part of the course (10%). This test will be held on **Wednesday 7 October**.

The Final Exam, to be held during the normal University exam period, will examine your knowledge and understanding of key concepts and factual information over the whole course (40%).

Tutorial Discussion Topics: to be outlined and allocated during the first week of tutorials.

Suggested Readings

Reading assignments are important as they provide you with the knowledge necessary to help you meet learning outcomes; in particular they help you to participate actively in class discussions. Class discussions and the mid-term test will be carried out on the assumption that you are keeping up to date with the textbook readings and with current affairs.

You should try hard to keep up-to-date with current international events, as we will be making reference particularly in the final two-thirds of the course to current affairs. You should regularly read a daily newspaper, such as the *South China Morning Post*, *International Herald Tribune*, or *Financial Times*. You can also keep yourself informed about daily news through radio and television (stations such as the BBC, CNN, Channel News Asia, and CNBC) and their appropriate websites (the BBC News website on <http://news.bbc.co.uk>).

Getting into the habit of regularly reading a quality newspaper will be of benefit to you not just for this course, not just for other courses in the Social Sciences Programme, but also for your future career, as major Hong Kong employers welcome graduates with good English-language skills and knowledge about ongoing events in the world.

Required

Karen Mingst 2007. *Essentials of International Relations* (4th edition). New York: W.W.Norton & Co.

This book will be on sale in the University Bookshop (approx. HK\$ 280).

Supplementary

Robert Art and Robert Jervis, 2007. *International Politics* (8th edition) . New York: Pearson

John Baylis and Steve Smith, eds, 2008. *The Globalization of World Politics* (4th edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Charles Kegley Jr., 2008. *World Politics: Trend and Transformation* (11th edition). Boston: Thomson Wadsworth.

Richard Mansbach and Kirsten Rafferty 2007. *Introduction to Global Politics*. London: Routledge.

Joseph S. Nye Jr., 2007. *Understanding International Conflicts* (6th edition). New York: Pearson.

Abdul Aziz Said, Charles Lerche Jr, and Charles Lerche III 1995. *Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Points to Note

1. Please try to remember to turn off pagers and mobile phones before entering the classroom/lecture room, as a courtesy to the lecturer and to your fellow students.

2. The term paper deadline is **Friday 4 December**.

Papers can be handed in early. For papers handed in late, you will be deducted 1 sub-grade and you would be given a grade F (for the coursework component) 5 days after the deadline.

This is an individual paper, with the choice of topic open to yourself. You may choose any theme related to the topics covered in this course. The ability to choose and develop a question is an important part of academic training. Please consult with me if you any doubts or problems about the theme you wish to choose.

The term paper should be around 1500 words in length. Keep it concise and relevant. It must include some form of referencing. There are several acceptable formats: either numbered footnotes or short citations in the text (using the 'Harvard style'). There should also be a list of references or bibliography at the end of the paper.

To avoid any plagiarism, make sure that you cite sources appropriately. You should be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. Your paper should be an original piece of writing, which has not been or is not being submitted in any other course. Checks using anti-plagiarism software will be made.