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Rethinking Global Issues

Course Code: SSC143/GEC343
Recommended Year of Study: None
No. of Credits/Term: 3
Mode of Tuition: Lecture-Tutorial
Class Contact Hours: 3
Category in Major Program: General Education
Prerequisites: None

Course Aims:

This course seeks to develop students' ability to think critically and globally. They should be able to recognize that many global issues embody important value choices by mankind. Further, they should also comprehend inevitable conflicts of values that face the world community. Students should be able to consider different perspectives and alternatives on selected global issues, and develop skills such as problem-solving, presentation, debate, and team-work. Students will be required to select an important issue that challenges the world today and develop a set of feasible strategies or policies to resolve the problem. Students will gain greater insight into the critical issues of the world.

Learning Outcomes:

- i. that students gain overall knowledge in current issues around the world;
- ii. that students demonstrate the ability to apply different perspectives (such as Cultural Studies, Socio-economic or Political Science) in the analysis of current global issues;
- iii. that students successfully develop skills in research, problem-solving, presentation, debating, and interview techniques through discussions and completion of term projects;

- iv. that students demonstrate appreciation of important value choices and value conflicts that are associated with global problem solving.

Teaching Method:

In addition to regular lectures and discussions, the class may utilize lectures by outside guests, such as foreign diplomatic officials in Hong Kong, international business leaders, local or international non-governmental organizations, to present their views on selected issues. Students may also work on team projects, attend cultural events, or design educational kits. Film screenings and literature appreciation are also ways to generate lively discussions and debates.

Assessment of Outcomes

- i. Examinations are indicators of how well students could actively apply various perspectives in critical reflection of various global issues;
- ii. Problem solving exercises and presentations will effectively develop students' aptitude and knowledge in the various skills specified in the learning outcomes, such as interview, debating, presentation, problem-solving and research.

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| Tutorial | 20% (attendance 10%, participation 10%) |
| Problem Solving Project | 30% |
| Exam | 50% |

In the problem-solving exercise, the students (individually or as a team) will design a set of practical and realistic solutions for a current global challenge, such as confronting climate change, preserving cultural diversity, containing terrorism, or reducing poverty. The students need to produce an essay to elaborate the suggestions and discuss the constraints in the implementation of the suggestions.

Requirement: Each student should individually submit a paper based on the project, participate in tutorial discussions, and do a final exam.

Textbook:

Michael T. Snarr and D. Neil Snarr. 2008. *Introducing Global Issues*.

Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations.

Topics

Jan 11. Introduction

Jan 18. Global Economic Governance

What is Globalization? What is Governance? Is Global Governance possible? Does the world have an effective coordination mechanism to prevent global economic upheavals? Should we reform the UN, the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, etc., to make them more responsive and effective? Is the G20 the right institution for global economic governance?

Jan 25. Global Poverty

Is global capitalism consistent with poverty alleviation? Should rich countries have global responsibilities in helping poor developing countries? Is global equality an important goal for mankind?

Feb 1 Trade

Does free trade make sense? Does fair trade make sense? Does globalization benefit rich countries more than poor ones? Should globalization benefit all countries equally? If so, what should be done to ensure global redistributive justice for poor countries?

Feb 8. Environmental Protection

Why is environment protection a global concern? Is differentiated responsibility a fair principle for global environmental protection? Should rich countries contribute more in controlling climate change? Should developing countries sacrifice their current economic gains for the past mistakes of rich countries?

Feb 22. Human Rights

Should the world have universal standards for human rights? Are countries entitled to their own views of human rights? Is the so-called Beijing Consensus, which combines authoritarian rule with market economy, a legitimate norm for the mankind?

March 1. Democracy

Is Western liberal democracy the only form of legitimate government? Does the West have the right to impose democracy on other countries?

March 8. Terrorism

Can violence be ever justified? Do good causes legitimize terrorist tactics against innocent people? What constitutes good causes? Is there such a thing as “just war,” which is fought by the West against global terrorism?

March 15. Nuclear Proliferation

Do all countries have the right to own nuclear weapons? If not, why should big countries like the United States and China have them? What are the motivations for Iran and North Korea to seek nuclear weapons? How realistic is the idea of a nuclear-free world?

March 22. Western Media Hegemony

How do some Western media, such as the CNN and BBC, shape global understanding of issues and events? What can be done to promote “non-Western” perspectives? How can alternative media play a role?

March 29. Cultural Globalization

Has the uneven flow of cultural products, such as Hollywood films, around the world led to the erosion of national/local cultures? What are the mechanisms of cultural globalization? What may be done to counter the desire for an “American Way of Life”?

April 12. Commodification of Culture

Does development inevitably conflict with cultural preservation? Must consumption lead to the commodification of everything?

April 19. Alternative Cultural Values

How are local/ rural/ indigenous/ national values impacted by globalization? Should we go for alternative globalization, or alternative to globalization? What may be the cultural basis for alternatives?

Class Dates

Ho Lok-sang

Jan 18, 20

Jan 25, 27

Feb 1, 3

Feb 8, 10

Zhang Baohui

Feb 22, 24

March 1, 3

March 8, 10

March 15, 17

Lau Kin-chi

March 22, 24

March 29, 31

April 12, 14

April 19, 21