PSC 103
Introduction to International Relations
Fall, 2015

Class Time: MWF 10:10-11:00, EB 133
Instructor: Dr. Robert Blanton
Office: Heritage 423
Office Hours: MW 9:00-10:00; 13:30-14:15
e-mail: rgblanton@uab.edu

Course Purpose and Objectives:
Why has our history been consistently marked by armed conflict? What factors drive groups of people towards organized violence, including civil wars and genocide? What is the global financial system and how does it affect you? Do international organizations, such as the WTO and UN, actually accomplish anything worthwhile? These are but a few of the issues that are addressed in the study of international relations (IR).

This course is intended to introduce students to some of the basic issues and dilemmas of IR. After addressing the major theoretical approaches within the scholarly field of international relations, inquiry will focus on the major actors in the international realm, including states, international organizations, and non-state actors such as multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations. Next, we will assess some of the major issues in international relations, such as the armed conflict, human security, the global economy and demographics.

The overall goals of this course are to enable you to:
- Identify and articulate key concepts and approaches in the study of IR.
- Understand some of the important issues and areas of concern in the global system.
- Successfully apply these theories and concepts to key issues of contention in the world.

Required Text:

NOTE: Unless indicated otherwise all other readings are available on the Canvas page for this course.

Course Requirements:
Quizzes (20%). University courses proceed at a rapid pace, thus keeping up with the course readings is imperative for your success in this course. To encourage this, brief quizzes which cover the assigned readings for the day will be given at least once a week. Quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class. Make-up quizzes will NOT be given,
nor will they be made available to those who arrive to class late. However, your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

**Class Participation (10%).** The learning process is very much a "two-way street," and a steady regimen of lectures can prove tedious in a summer course. Thus a sizeable component of your grade will depend on active participation in class discussions. Specifically there are two main components of this grade:

**Daily Participation.** Keeping up with the required readings is a necessity for both enjoyment of class meetings and successful completion of this course. To this end, the class participation component will assess the level of knowledge that students demonstrate regarding course material as well as the level of preparation that students demonstrate on a daily basis. Specifically, students should be familiar with the main concepts covered in the textbooks. As for the remaining readings (articles in the readers and the reserve materials), students should be able to provide the following information:
- What is the author's argument/thesis?
- What evidence does the author use to support his or her argument?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument?
- How does the argument compare with related concepts and readings?

**Current Events Discussions.** In addition, International Relations is integrally connected with things which occur in the "real world," and keeping up with current events is necessary to be a both a good citizen and a scholar of International Relations. Thus we will devote class time -- 10-15 minutes at the beginning of every Friday meeting -- to coverage of world affairs which are germane to the course. Students will be asked "What's going on in the world?" and should provide a knowledgeable answer based on article(s) from a credible source. Over the course of the semester, it is expected that each student will make at least 3 contributions to this discussion.

**Written Exercises (20%).** Towards helping you develop your analytic skills, particularly your ability to express yourself in written form, you will also complete three short papers that show your ability to (a) link current events to course concepts as well as (b) use these concepts to help you critically assess a given issue. **These written exercises will be due on Sept 16, Oct 19, and Dec 4.** These assignments will be three normal paragraphs (approximately 3-5 sentences) in length and will have the following basic structure:

**Top of Page:** Article citation
**First paragraph:** contains a brief summary of the article itself
**Second paragraph:** links the article to a specific course concept. This paragraph begins with a thesis sentence that explicitly provides this linkage e.g. “Power transition theory provides some guidance for analyzing China’s actions in this article” or “The problems shown in the article exemplify some of the dilemmas in dealing with nonstate actors.” The remainder of the paragraph should attempt to show the insights that the particular concept provides for the issue addressed in the article.
**Third paragraph:** given the information in the first two paragraphs, provide your assessment of the issue. This can include such insights as your own policy recommendations for a given issue or a critique of the policies that were enacted by one of
the actors covered in the article – for example, you could make a recommendation in dealing with, the threat from ISIS in Syria or articulate a specific weakness in US policy in this issue. There are different ways to go here, but this paragraph should primarily demonstrate (a) your understanding of the concept and (b) your ability to formulate an argument based upon it.

**Examinations (2 @ 25% each).** Two exams will be administered. The final exam will not be cumulative.

**Course Policies**

**Grading:**
As per University policy I award grades based on a ten-point scale (90-100 for an “A” and so forth). I do not grade on any type of “curve” or set distribution.

**Makeup/Late Assignments:**
Make-up exams will be allowed ONLY in the case of a documented medical emergency. Five points will be deducted for each additional day.

**Attendance:**
Attendance is necessary for successful completion of the course. Given the nature of the course schedule you will be allowed up to three absences without penalty. However, you are responsible for all material covered during each class (whether they are present or not) and any assignments due that day. Each absence over three will result in a one-point reduction of your final grade.

**Academic Dishonesty:**
Any type of academic dishonesty will result in severe disciplinary action on the part of the instructor. Cheating and plagiarism will be grounds for receiving an “F” on the assignment/examination or an “F” for the course, depending on the severity of the offense. UAB policy regarding academic dishonesty is outlined in [https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/honor-code](https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/honor-code) (Links to an external site.)

**Students with Disabilities:**
If you are registered with Disability Support Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call 205-934-4205 or visit DSS at 1701 9th Ave. South.

**Assignments and Readings:** (may be subject to change):

**Week 1 (August 24, 26, 28)**
Topic: Course Introduction and Theories of World Politics Part I: Realism
Readings:
- K&B chapter 1, K&B chapter 2, section on realism (pp. 22-29).
- Walt, Stephen. 2014. “How to Get a B.A. in International Relations in 5 Minutes,” accessible at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/05/19/how_to_get_a_ba_in_international_relations_in_5_minutes

**Week 2 (Aug 31, Sept 2, Sept 4)**

**Topic:** Alternatives to Realism: Liberalism, Constructivism, and Feminism.

**Readings:**
- K&B ch. 2, remainder.
- Tickner, Ann. 2003 “Critique of Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism.”

**Week 3 (Sept 9, 11)**

**Topic:** Debating Theories of International Relations

**Readings:**
- Betts, Richard. 2010. "Conflict or Cooperation?" Foreign Affairs
- Choose one of the following:
  - Drezner, Daniel. 2010. "Night of the Living Wonks: Towards an International Relations Theory of Zombies" Foreign Policy

**Week 4 (Sept 14, 16, 18)**

**Topic:** Foreign-Policy Decision-Making

**Written Exercise #1 Due Sept 16**

**Readings:**
- K&B ch. 3
Week 5 (Sept 21, 23, 25)
Topics: Great-Power Relations, Global South (part 1)
Readings:
- K&B ch. 4

Week 6 (Sept 28, 30, Oct 2)
Topics: Global South (part 2), Nonstate Actors
Readings:
- K&B ch. 5, remainder
- K&B, ch 6, pp. 144-166.

Week 7 (Oct 5, 7, 9)
Topic: Non-state Actors
Readings:
- K&B ch. 6, remainder

Mid-term Examination Oct 9

Week 8 (Oct 12, 14, 16)
Topic: Armed Conflict
Readings:
K&B, ch. 7
- The Onion. 2008. "U.S. Advises Allies Not to Border Russia." Available at http://www.theonion.com/content/news_briefs/u_s_advises_allies_not_to

Week 9 (Oct 19, 21, 23)
**Written Exercise #2 Due Oct 19**
Topics: The Pursuit of Power; Quest for Peace
Readings:

- K&B ch 8
- K&B ch 9, pp. 267-290.

Week 10 (Oct 26, 28, 30)
Topics: International Law, Globalization of Finance
Readings:
K&B, ch. 9, remainder
K&B, ch. 10

Week 11 (Nov 2, 4, 6)
Topics: Financial Crises, Global Trade
Readings:
- K&B, ch. 11

Week 12 (Nov 9, 11, 13)
Topic: Culture and Demographics
Readings:
K&B ch. 12

Week 13 (Nov 16, 18, 20)
Topic: Human Development and Human Rights
Readings:
- K&B, ch. 13

Week 14 (Nov 30, Dec 2, Dec 4)
Topic: Environmental Issues, Contrasting Futures of World Politics

Written Exercise #3 Due Dec 4
Readings:

- K&B ch. 14
- K&B ch. 15

Final Examination: Friday Dec 11, 8:00-10:30 a.m.