

Political Science 231: International Relations

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This course introduces some of the fundamental themes and problems of international relations. We shall begin by reading essays by Francis Fukuyama, Samuel P. Huntington, and Henry Kissinger, three of the most influential analysts of the contemporary world. We shall then move back in time to Woodrow Wilson and Immanuel Kant for a deeper examination of the moral principles and political assumptions that underlie the United Nations and almost all contemporary efforts at peacemaking.

The course will conclude with a careful study of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides, which is still, after all the years and many changes, the best available account of international relations. Thucydides helps us to reflect on such issues as the following: the causes of war, what makes a peace treaty succeed or fail, how an imperial center should deal with its allies, how domestic politics influence foreign policy, the relation between economics and foreign policy, what makes for a good diplomat, and the relation of justice and compulsion in international affairs. Thucydides presents these issues in such a way that we, the readers, are drawn into his narrative of events. We listen to the speeches of the participants in the war and, like them, possess only some of the information needed to make important life and death decisions. A careful reading of Thucydides thus engages us in the problems of international relations not as disinterested scholars, but as the statesmen and citizens who must handle them. One important goal of the course is therefore to use Thucydides to help us develop the capacity to think prudently about foreign affairs; that is, the capacity, when faced with new and unexpected problems in international relations, to analyze them and determine the best course of action.

Throughout the course, we will keep a close watch on contemporary international events.

Required Readings

Foreign Affairs Agenda, The New Shape of World Politics

Thucydides, The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War

Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace and Other Essays

Readings by Henry Kissinger and Woodrow Wilson on reserve in the library

Regular reading of the New York Times, Washington Post, or some other chronicle of current international events is strongly recommended.

Course Requirements

Attendance is required and you are expected to attend all class meetings **having read the assigned texts carefully and prepared to discuss them**. A record of unexcused absences from class may reduce your final grade by up to one full grade (at the instructor's discretion). Attendance and participation will also influence my decision on borderline grades (for example, if your grade falls between a B and a B+).

First Essay (25%). This will be an analytical essay on one or more of the shorter essays or books that we will read in the course. I will hand out topics later.

Second Essay (35%). This will be an analysis of some problem, event, or speech that appears in Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War. You will analyze Thucydides' presentation of the problem and draw from it the lessons we can learn about international relations.

Research essay (40%). Over the course of the term, each of you will become an expert on the international relations in a particular area of the world. There is some scope for defining your area, but examples might be Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the Balkans, Southern Africa, North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, Central America, South America, South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East; do not write on North America. You should begin thinking now about what area you will study and start assembling information and thoughts about it. Your ultimate goal is to write a 10-12 page essay analyzing the relations among the countries of your area *using what you learn about international relations from the other readings in the course as a guide*. Let me repeat that: you should examine your area in the light of the categories, approaches, opinions, etc. that you have examined in the texts in this course.

By February 8 you must hand in a two-page statement telling me what area you have decided to study and describing the most important international issues that appear in it. Your statement should have a bibliography, in correct form, containing at least 3 books that you plan to consult in the course of writing the essay. These statements will not be graded, but they must be handed in to get full credit for this assignment.

Plagiarism. You should study the statement on academic honesty in the AU Student Handbook. I assume you know what plagiarism is and will apply the policy stated in the Handbook.

I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE ESSAYS unless an arrangement has been made in advance or there is a very good excuse, such as severe illness, death in the family, and so on. Unexcused late essays will receive a grade of "F".

Summary

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| First Essay | - | 25% |
| Second Essay | - | 35% |
| Research Essay | - | 40% |
| Topic Statement | - | Due February 8 |