

Sample Syllabus #2

Issues of Our Times Political Science 105, Sec. 02 Spring 2006

Dr.
Office: Holmstedt Hall
Phone:

Class Times: MWF 10-10:50
Room: 115 Holmstedt Hall
Office Hours: Mon 1:30-2:30,
Th 10-11 & by appointment

Overview of Course

“Issues of Our Times” examines a variety of controversial political issues related to international concerns, and is designed to fulfill the **Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity** requirement of the **Foundational Studies** curriculum. In looking at these issues, such as global warming or coping with the rise of China, we will consider how social, economic, political, and cultural factors shape and impact the perspectives and worldviews of the U.S as well as other countries and peoples. While you will not become an expert on these issues, hopefully by the end of the course you will have developed a greater appreciation for how different people and countries can have differing views on these important international issues.

To some extent, this is a “current events” course. However, it is much more than this. First, this course is intended to help you become an informed citizen, and to foster in you a life-long desire to be informed about the major political issues we face, particularly at the international level. Second, this course will also help you develop important skills, including critical reading and thinking, effective communication (both written and oral), and working with others in a group setting. Third, and in support of these other goals, it is intended to help you grapple with issues that may challenge your current beliefs and world-views, to think critically about these positions and consider alternative ways of looking at issues. The end result may be that you reconsider and alter your position on an issue, or that you hold to your ideas and are now better equipped to challenge the opposing view; in either case, your position on these issues will be based on more careful and informed reasoning.

Finally, this course is designed to promote active learning. ISU wants its students to be active learners, not merely passive note-takers in a lecture class. Toward this goal, you and your groupmates will be responsible for presenting on how some of these issues affect various countries. The final issues to be examined will also be ones generated by student input.

Foundational Studies Learning Objectives Met by this Course

“Issues of Our Times” is designed to help students meet the following **Foundational Studies Program goals**:

- Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems;
- Critically evaluate the ideas of others;
- Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship;
- Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures within and across societies;
- Demonstrate the skills to place their current and local experience in a global, cultural, and historical context;
- Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

It is also designed to help students meet the **Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity category learning outcomes**:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of cultures and worldviews;
2. Identify social, economic, political, and environmental inter-relationships between cultures and worldviews;
3. Use multiple lenses such as race and ethnicity, gender, social class, regional culture, and religion to evaluate one's culture in comparison to those studied; and
4. Articulate how the social construction of culture and worldviews shapes contemporary social and political issues.

Finally, the course will help students to develop their critical thinking skills, their information literacy skills, and their writing skills.

Requirements

Students are expected to complete all of the reading assignments (before class), to attend class (attendance will be taken), and to participate in class discussions. To underscore the importance of attending class, **if you miss 10 classes (i.e., on the 10th absence), you will automatically fail this course.** Extenuating circumstances will be considered on an individual basis. Absences due to university-sponsored events (games, performances, etc.), illness, court dates, or similar reasons can be considered excused absences that allow you to make up an assignment (if you notify me ahead of time or immediately after the missed class period), but they will still count toward your total of 10 absences.

On a similar note, just as the professor is expected to treat the students with respect, students are expected to treat the professor and their classmates with respect. This includes **turning off cell phones, not reading newspapers during class, and not being habitually late for class.**

This course will have **two midterm exams**, and a **final exam**. In addition, there will be a quiz a couple of weeks prior to each exam to check your understanding of the material. There will be a two- to three-page paper regarding your views on the appropriate role for the United States in the world today. More information on this paper will be handed out later.

In addition to these written assignments, each student will be placed into a group, and each group will make two presentations: one related to the Kyoto Protocol and global warming, and the other related to the student-generated topics. Along with the oral class presentation, each group will be expected to provide the class with written notes from their presentation, and for the student-generated topics, each group will be expected to contribute part of the readings for the day. More information regarding the presentation requirements will be provided later in the class.

Finally, each student will be expected to turn in **two news articles** pertaining to our topics at specified dates on the syllabus; these articles should be *news* articles, not articles taken from a journal or from some organization's website (unless it originally appeared as a news story in a newspaper or news magazine). These articles should have been read by the student as part of their research for their group presentation or for use in the class discussion on that topic (articles that were required reading for the class will not be accepted). ***Each set of two articles (they must be satisfactory to the professor) will be worth one point of extra credit on the final exam.***

How Assignments Meet the Learning Outcomes

Readings and Class Discussions:

Completing the readings and discussing them in class will help students to demonstrate their knowledge of various cultures and worldviews; identify the social, economic, political, and environmental inter-relationships between culture and worldviews; use multiple lenses to evaluate one's culture in comparison to those studies; and articulate how the social construction of culture and worldviews shapes contemporary social and political issues. These assignments and activities will also help students to critically evaluate the ideas of others; demonstrate their understanding of the diversity of cultures within and across societies; demonstrate the ability to place their current and local experiences in a global, cultural, and historical context; and express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively in oral fashion.

Exams and Quizzes:

Utilizing both objective questions and essays, the exams in this course will achieve many of the same outcomes as the readings and class discussions: they will assess the student's ability to critically evaluate the ideas of others and assemble their own arguments based on these ideas; demonstrate knowledge of various cultures and worldviews, and an understanding of how various social, economic, political, and cultural factors shape those worldviews; and link their own experiences to global issues. In addition, the essay portions of the exams will help students to develop their written communication skills.

Reflection Paper:

This paper will help students to critically evaluate the ideas and arguments of others, and then to formulate their own position on the role of the U.S. in the world today based on their critical assessment of those other ideas and viewpoints. The paper will be a developmental exercise involving feedback from the instructor as well as from peers and then revision of the paper based on this feedback. Feedback and grading of the final version of the paper will take place prior to the first exam so that students can use this exercise to inform their writing of the essays on the exams.

Group Project and Presentations:

These two group research projects and presentations will help students to develop their information literacy skills and their ability to locate, critically read, and evaluate information necessary for their projects. They will also help students to develop their oral presentation skills – particularly since there will be peer and instructor feedback after the first set of presentations to provide guidance for the second set of presentations. In addition, these presentations will assist students to develop their understanding of various cultures and worldviews on specific topics; develop their understanding of how various social, economic, political, and cultural factors shape and impact worldviews; and develop their understanding of how various perspectives and worldviews shape national and international responses to international political issues.

The development of these various learning outcomes will enhance the student's ability to locate information, to think critically about ideas and international issues, to understand the diversity of viewpoints and how social, economic, political, and cultural factors shape and impact these worldviews, and help students understand their local experience in a global context. By developing these skills and competencies, the student will be developing the skills necessary for citizenship in the 21st century.

Grading

Each of your assignments will be awarded a letter grade (A through F). Your final grade will be determined by the following formula:

Midterm Exams	30% (2 x 15%)	Quizzes	10%
Final Exam	20%	Reflection Paper	10%
Global Warming Pres.	10%	Class Participation	5%
Student Topic Pres.	15%		

Academic Dishonesty (Plagiarism)

Students are required to familiarize themselves with ISU's policy on academic dishonesty, which can be found at: <http://www.indstate.edu/academicintegrity/studentguide.pdf>. Bottom line: you need to give credit to others when you borrow their ideas in your academic work. Violations of academic integrity will result in a failure of the assignment or of the course (if the violation is serious enough), and these violations will be reported to Student Judicial.

Academic Freedom

“Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.”

<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/1940statement.htm>

Laptop Policy

Laptop Not Required for Course: Usage Permitted: While there will be no assignments or examinations for which the laptop will be used, your use of a laptop is generally permitted as long as such usage remains within the bounds of the Code of Student Conduct and it conforms to the provisions of its use as laid out in this syllabus. There may be occasions where laptop usage is forbidden and if that occurs, failure to comply with this direction will be viewed as a violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

ADA Policy

“Indiana State University seeks to provide effective services and accommodation for qualified individuals with documented disabilities. If you need an accommodation because of a documented disability, you are required to register with Disability Support Services at the beginning of the semester. Contact the Director of Student Support Services. The telephone number is 237-2301 and the office is located in Gillum Hall, Room 202A. The Director will ensure that you receive all the additional help that Indiana State offers. If you will require assistance during an emergency evacuation, notify your instructor immediately. Look for evacuation procedures posted in your classrooms.”

Readings

There is no required text for this course. However, there will be numerous readings. These will be either handed out in class (indicated by **xerox** on the syllabus) or will be available on-line via the course Blackboard site (indicated as **on-line**). To access the course Blackboard site, go to <http://blackboard.indstate.edu>, log in, and click on our course number. If there is an occasional on-line reading that I can not put onto Blackboard, I will give instructions in class on how to access the article. To help defray the costs of copying articles and presentation notes, I will be collecting \$1.00 from each student.

Class Schedule

Jan 9 Introduction

Issue #1: The Role of the U.S. in the Post-Cold War World

This issue helps the students to understand the role of the U.S. in the current international political system and its basic foreign policy. These are connected to its power position in the international system, history, political values, and cultural values. The unit ends by examining the views of the U.S. and its policies by several other countries, and then asks the students to explain what they feel should be the U.S. role in the world today.

Outcomes met by this issue unit:

FS Program: #2, 6, 7, and 10 are met through discussions in class of the various readings and topics, and the writing of the paper. In particular, critical analysis of the arguments made in the readings on the U.S. Role (Jan 18 and 20) will meet #2.

GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4 are met through class discussions and the paper. In particular, issues of race/ethnicity and social class typically arise as we discuss the appropriate role of the U.S. (especially those favoring a more isolationist vs. a more internationalist approach).

Skill & Applied Learning Req's: # 1 is met through class discussion of various readings and viewpoints, and #1 and 3 are met in the paper – particularly having peer review of the initial drafts.

- Jan 11 The Emergence of the Post-Cold War International System
► Kennedy, The Rise & Fall of the Great Powers, pp. 357-72; Brooks and Wohlforth, “American Primacy in Perspective” (**both xerox**)
- Jan 13 The Nature of America: “American Exceptionalism”
► US News & World Report special report, “Defining America” (**xerox**); Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Worldviews 2002: American Public Opinion & Foreign Policy, “Findings in Summary” (**xerox**); Tucker, “The Future of a Contradiction” (**on-line**)
- Jan 16 **MLK Jr. Day: No Class**

- Jan 18 The U.S. Role: Hegemony? Unilateralism? Internationalism?
 ► Kagan, “The Benevolent Empire;” Maynes, “The Perils of (and for) an Imperial America” (**both xerox**); Crook, “There’s Nothing Wrong with Enlightened Self-Interest” and Schwarz & Layne, “A New Grand Strategy” (**both on-line**)
- Jan 20 ► Berger, “Foreign Policy for a Democratic President” and Hagel, “A Republican Foreign Policy” (**both on-line**)
- Jan 23 ► Pres. Bush’s Second Inaugural Address (**on-line**); Reviews of Pres. Bush’s foreign policy (**xerox**)
- Jan 25 Foreign Perception of the U.S.
 ► News stories (**xerox**)
- Jan 27 **Discussion: What Should the U.S. Role Be in the World Today?**
 *** **Paper Due**
- Jan 30 Discussion of Group Presentation Requirements
 *** **Quiz #1**
 *** **Peer Review of Papers Due**

Issue #2: Radical Islam and the War on Terrorism

This issue unit helps students to understand Islam, differences within that religious tradition, and the radical variant of Islam that poses a threat to the U.S. and other countries around the world. The issue unit stresses diversity within Islam and the Muslim world, the role of women in the Muslim world, cultural and political differences between fundamentalist Islam and America, and the use of terror to achieve the political goals of some Islamic fundamentalists.

Outcomes met by this issue unit:

FS Program: #2, 6, 7, and 10, primarily through class discussion
GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4, primarily through class discussion
SALR: #1 and 2 (information literacy is developed through the news article exercise)

- Feb 1 Islamic Fundamentalism
 ► Masci, “Islamic Fundamentalism” (**on-line**)
- Feb 3 Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda
 ► Lewis, “License to Kill;” Eickelman, “Bin Laden, the ‘Arab Street,’ and the Middle East’s Democracy Deficit;” Haqqani, “Islam’s Medieval Outposts” (all **on-line**)
 *** **Revised Paper Due**
- Feb 6 Islamic Anger at America
 ► Ford, “Why Do They Hate Us?” (**xerox**); Cooper, “Hating America” (**on-line**)
 *** **2 News Articles discussing Arab/Muslim views on the U.S. due in class**

- Feb 8 Islamic Terrorism and 9/11
 ► Stern, “The Protean Enemy” (**on-line**); Robbins, “Bin Laden’s War” and Tyler, “Feeling Secure, ...” (both **xerox**)
- Feb 10 The War on Terrorism
 ► Masci, “War on Terrorism” (**on-line**); Pillar, “Counterterrorism after al Qaeda” (**xerox**)
- Feb 13 **TBA**
- Feb 15 **EXAM #1**

The exam will be a combination of objective questions and an essay question. The essay question will ask them to link together and assess different perspectives and viewpoints, and to express their own argument and support it with evidence from the readings. Through the exam, students will achieve the following learning outcomes:

FS Program: #2, 6, 7, and 10
GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4
SALR: #1 and 3

Issue #3: Global Warming

This issue unit requires student participation and group presentations (12-15 minutes per group) on one of ten countries and their policies on global warming and international agreements related to this issue, or on the positions of either global warming proponents or skeptics. Students are provided some basic information and are given guidance on how to find additional relevant information. Students provide constructive criticism of the presentations after all groups have presented. Instructor will draw attention to linkages and themes in the national positions of various countries (or attempt to ask the students to find these).

Outcomes met by this issue unit:

FS Program: #1, 6, 7, and 10
GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4
SALR: #2

- Feb 17 Introduction
 ► *CQ Researcher*, “Global Warming Treaty” (**on-line**); **TBA**
- Feb 20 **Preparation Day for Group Presentations**
- Feb 22 **Preparation Day for Group Presentations**
- Feb 24 Presentations 1-3
- Feb 27 Presentations 4-6
- Mar 1 Presentations 7-9

- Mar 3 Presentations 10-12
- Mar 6 Critique of Group Presentations
*** **Quiz #2**

Issue #4: Coping with the Rise of China

This issue unit examines the economic and political rise of China during the past 25 years, and how the U.S. and China's Asian neighbors are attempting to cope with this international development. To understand the challenges facing China's development, we examine such issues as the urban/rural divide within China, class-based tensions, and environmental problems. At the international level, subtopics include changes in the international distribution of power; how culture, history, and different political views lead to different responses to China's rise; and the possibility that China is offering an alternative economic and political model to the U.S. for other countries. Students work on information literacy by locating and reading two news articles on Asian perceptions of China's rise and using those in the class discussion on March 22.

Outcomes met by this issue unit:

FS Program: #2, 6, 7, and 10 (primarily through class discussions)
GPCD: # 1, 2, 3, and 4
SALR: # 1 and 2 (news article exercise)

- Mar 8 Intro to the PRC
▶ Katel, "Emerging China" (**on-line**)
- Mar 10 Economic Factors
▶ News articles (**xerox**); Hale and Hale, "China Takes Off" (**on-line**)
- Mar 13-17 **No Class: Spring Break**
- Mar 20 Security Factors
▶ Sutter, "Why Does China Matter?" and Bernstein & Munro, "The Coming Conflict with America" (both **on-line**)
- Mar 22 ▶ Chambers, "China and Southeast Asia: Creating a 'Win-Win' Neighborhood;" Wang, "China's Changing Role in Asia;" "Chinese Perceptions" (all **xerox**)
*** **2 News articles discussing Asian views of China's rise due in class**
- Mar 24 Discussion: Is China the Next Big Threat?
▶ Friedberg, "The Struggle for Mastery in Asia" and Sutter, "Asia in the Balance: America and China's 'Peaceful Rise'" (both **on-line**); **Review** Wang (from 10/28)
- Mar 27 **TBA**
- Mar 29 **EXAM #2**

The exam will be a combination of objective questions and an essay question. The essay question will ask them to link together and assess different perspectives and viewpoints, and to express

their own argument and support it with evidence from the readings. Through the exam, students will achieve the following learning outcomes:

FS Program: #2, 6, 7, and 10

GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4

SALR: #1 and 3

Issue #5: Troubles in Africa

This issue unit is not always used – depends on timing of the semester. The unit is used to provide students the opportunity to consider the ethnic/racial/tribal diversity of Africa, the impact of the colonial experience and its contribution to contemporary political troubles, and the challenges of addressing contemporary humanitarian crises with so many different cultures involved (e.g., addressing the AIDS epidemic in cultures where women are not equal to men and extramarital sex is commonplace for men).

Outcomes met by this unit:

FS Program: #6 and 7

GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4

SALR: Not applicable

Mar 31	History and Overview ► TBA
Apr 3	Failed States and Civil Wars ► TBA
Apr 5	Humanitarian Crises ► TBA

Issue #6: Student Generated Topics

This issue unit allows students to pick 1-3 topics that the class will examine, and then the student groups pick sub-topics on which they will conduct research and then deliver a class presentation (c. 20-25 minutes per group). Student groups also select the reading for the day on their topic. This unit thus requires the students to work on their information literacy and critical thinking skills, to further develop their oral presentation skills, and to demonstrate an understanding of social, economic, political, cultural, and/or environmental factors shaping worldviews and policies.

Outcomes met by this unit:

FS Program: #1, 2, 6, 7, and 10

GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4

SALR: #1 and 2

Apr 7	Preparation Day for Group Presentations *** Quiz #3
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Apr 10	Preparation Day for Group Presentations
Apr 12	Preparation Day for Group Presentations
Apr 14	Student Presentations 1-2
Apr 17	Student Presentations 3-4
Apr 19	Student Presentations 5-6
Apr 21	Student Presentations 7-8
Apr 24	Student Presentations 9-10
Apr 26	Student Presentation 11-12 *** 2 News articles related to your presentation due in class
Apr 28	Concluding Discussion
May 1	10:00 a.m. Final Exam *** No Early Exams Will Be Given, So Plan Your Travels Accordingly ***

The final exam will be a combination of objective questions and an essay question. The essay question will ask them to link together and assess different perspectives and viewpoints, and to express their own argument and support it with evidence from the readings. Through the exam, students will achieve the following learning outcomes:

FS Program: #2, 6, 7, and 10

GPCD: #1, 2, 3, and 4

SALR: #1 and 3