



## Introduction to International Relations

### POLS 3620-02

UW 11:30-12:45

Professor: Sean McMahon, Ph.D.

Sept.-Dec. 2017

Office: 2017 HUSS

Office Hours: U 10:00-11:30 and W 10:00-11:30, or by appointment

Course Hashtag on Twitter: #POLS3620

### Course Description, Expectations and Objectives

POLS 3620 introduces students to the relations and processes, and their forms of expression and modes of appearance in ideas, institutions, practices, and theories, of International Relations/Global Politics. More specifically, this course familiarizes students with, *inter alia*, relations between classes and states, institutions such as the balance of power and the United Nations, the war, anarchy and sovereignty problematiques, the processes of capital accumulation and imperial value destruction, the functions of international institutions and theories such as realism, Marxism and poststructuralism.

Students are expected to regularly attend class. Furthermore, students are expected to have engaged, thoughtfully and thoroughly, the assigned materials (readings and videos) at the start of each week and come to class prepared to discuss them. Students are encouraged to stay informed of international relations and events and identify those manifesting ideas discussed in class.

Through the learning process realized by POLS 3620, students will be able to critique commonsensical knowledge of international relations/global politics by thinking historically, abstractly and holistically.

### Course Requirements and Assessment

Participation	5%
Weekly Twitter Contributions	10%
“Diplomacy” online (5%) and Reflective Essays (4 X 5%)	25%
Exam (written <b>18 October 2017</b> )	20%
Research Essay (due <b>15 November 2017</b> )	25%
Critical Film Analysis (due <b>3 December 2017</b> )	15%

The course work for POLS3620 consists of six elements: 1) attendance and participation in class discussions, 2) tweeting about course related matters (#POLS3620), 3) simulating “Diplomacy” online and writing four reflective essays on the experience, 4) an exam, 5) a research essay and 6) a critical film analysis.

First, the grade assigned for participation is based on regular class attendance, evidence of preparedness and thoughtful participation in class discussions and exercises. A student who does not attend class obviously cannot participate. University policy stipulates that a student who misses more than the equivalent of three weeks of classes during a semester for any reason may be assigned a reduced grade for the course—including the grade of “F”—solely on the basis of inadequate attendance, regardless of excuse. Students who miss fewer than three weeks of class sessions may not be penalized on the grounds of attendance alone. Students are personally responsible for making up any academic tasks and assignments missed due to their absence.

Second, students will regularly tweet ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)) about issues relating to international relations and global politics. Tweets can engage an idea (i.e. state sovereignty, deterrence), event (i.e. act of political violence, negotiations), institution (i.e. the United Nations or Arab League), or practice (i.e. imperialism, peace/war) pertinent to POLS 3620. They can also reference or recommend books and news and journal articles relevant to the course, though the post must consist of more than a link. The avatar of the student’s account should be a representation of a political figure, broadly defined, the student finds interesting. The professor’s avatar, for example, is Karl Marx. To receive credit, students must post, at minimum, one tweet a week, ensure their tweets are substantive in nature and conclude the tweet with the course hashtag (#POLS3620). The professor will use the medium to recommend books, articles and websites relevant to the course, and offer pithy political insights and analyses.

Third, students will play an online game of “Diplomacy.” Students will play as the sovereign of either Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Italy or Turkey in early twentieth-century Europe. In so doing, students will become more familiar with practices such as war, anarchy, foreign policy, negotiation and diplomacy. A student’s active and engaged participation in the simulation will be weighted five per cent of the course grade. In addition to participating in the simulation, students will periodically submit four reflective essays of approximately 250 words responding to specific questions. The questions will be distributed weekly once the simulation is underway. Each reflective essay is worth five percent, with the total of the four reflective essays constituting 20 per cent of the course grade. Students will receive instructions on how to register for and participate in the simulation later in the semester.

Fourth, students will write one exam in POLS 3620. It will be written in class on **18 October 2017**. The exam is based on class lectures, readings, assignments and discussions, and will test all of the course material covered until the moment of writing. The exam constitutes 20 per cent of the course grade.

Fifth, students will produce one research essay over the course of the term. The essay will be 10-12 pages in length, including footnotes and bibliography. Topics must be chosen from a chapter of the assigned text not covered in the syllabus. For example, students can explore an issue associated with nuclear proliferation or human rights as they are chapters from *The Globalization of World Politics* not covered in the syllabus (chapters 23 and 30 respectively). Students are encouraged to discuss their research

question, thesis and outline with the professor prior to writing and submitting the essay. The research essay constitutes 25 per cent of the course grade. It is due **15 November 2017**.

Sixth, students will author a critical film analysis. Films can be forms of expressions of ideas of International Relations. For this assignment students will watch one of the following films: 1) Lawrence of Arabia (1962), 2) Dr. Strangelove (1964), 3) Battle of Algiers (1966), 4) Burn! (1970), 5) The Killing Fields (1984), 6) Salvador (1986) or 7) Three Kings (1999). Students will then analyze the film in historical and theoretical terms. Questions upon which students need to reflect include, but are not limited to: from what perspective is the story told?; why, of all the possible narratives, was this story told?; how does the film tell its particular historical story?; how does the film help us understand contemporary politics?; what is the film's "truth" and how does it accord with commonsensical/hegemonic/dominant "truths" in international relations?; how was the film's presentation of "facts" determined by the theory on which the film is premised?; and what does the film's allegory say about international relations/global politics?

The critical film analysis is to be 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced with proper font and margins. It counts 15 per cent towards the total course grade. All research used to produce the critical film analysis must be cited in a proper bibliography (not included in the page limit). The critical film analysis is due **3 December 2017**.

In order for all written work to be graded it must be properly formatted (12 point font, double-spaced with proper margins), stapled—it is not to be affixed by folding corners or with a paperclip, or inserted into a plastic folder/cover—and prefaced with a cover page clearly indicating the student's name and ID number. Assignments that do not conform to these criteria will not be accepted for assessment.

In all of the written work for this course, students must use footnotes and provide a proper bibliography (in-text citations and "Works Cited" pages are not acceptable) in order to acknowledge their intellectual indebtedness. Use of the Chicago Manual of Style is mandatory. Consult the following link for a proper citation guide: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>. You will be penalized if you do not follow this format.

Research conducted and used for POLS 3620 must be of an academic nature. Wikipedia, for example, is not an acceptable resource. Its content does not meet academic standards. If a student is in doubt as to the quality or academic relevancy of a particular resource, (s)he should contact the professor. Assignments will be submitted only in hardcopy and are due during class time. Assignments submitted on the due date, but after class time are late. The penalty for late assignments is five per cent per day (including weekends).

The following scale will be employed in the assessment of undergraduate student work:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93+	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76

B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D+	67-69
B-	80-82	D	60-66
		F	Below 60

The American University in Cairo is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated and, in accordance with departmental policy, will result in the immediate assignment of a grade of “F” for the course.

Students are expected to be familiar with the standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the university in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with their rights and responsibilities and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offense. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and will be treated as such.

Two final notes. POLS 3620 is supported by a Moodle site. It is accessed through the following URL: <http://moodle.aucegypt.edu>. Also, the professor does not use email. Email undermines the professor-student relationship, is heavily surveilled, distorts temporal balances and structures, atomizes communities and reduces productivity. All class related conversations will be had during the assigned office hours, which are extensive, or by appointment. Exceptions will be made *only* in case of emergency ([smcmahon@aucegypt.edu](mailto:smcmahon@aucegypt.edu)).

### **Student Support**

Audio and video recording of lecture, seminars or any other teaching relation is allowed only with the prior written consent of the professor or as part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be distributed for any purpose. Laptop computers are permitted in class, but their use is discouraged because the technology 1) does not enable students to internalize knowledge as well as hand-writing notes, and 2) interferes with the social relations of the classroom.

Students with disabilities or special needs should contact the professor at the start of the semester with the appropriate documents. Every effort will be made to accommodate such students, but in all cases prior arrangements must be made to ensure any special needs can be met in a timely fashion and in such a way as that none of the members of the classroom community are disadvantaged. Students requiring special support or services should be registered with the Student Disability Services Unit. Here is the URL for the unit’s webpage: <http://in.aucegypt.edu/student-life/student-well-being/disability-services>. While society’s dividing practices constitute students requiring support and/or accommodations as “abnormal,” they should never feel stigmatized in POLS 3620. Speak to the professor. He empathizes.

Students who feel alienated from themselves—experience what bourgeois psychology calls “stress” or anxiety— or are otherwise emotionally or psychologically taxed should contact the Student Counseling Center: <http://in.aucegypt.edu/student-counseling-center>.

## Required Text

There is one required text for this course.

- 1) Baylis, John, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

The text is on reserve in the AUC library. Be sure to use the 5<sup>th</sup> edition. *Inter alia*, its chapter 4 provides much needed history on the theoretically-assumed end of the Cold War and subsequent crises in the global totality, as well as a separate chapter on poststructuralism.

In addition to doing the assigned readings, students are encouraged to regularly consult periodicals such as *International Organization*, *International Security*, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, *Middle East Critique*, *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* and *Review of Radical Political Economics*.

## Schedule of Readings (this is a guideline and subject to change)

Date	Topic	Reading(s)
Sept. 6	Course Overview and Introduction	Introduction & Chapter 1 (optional)
Sept. 10 & 13	The Evolution of International Society	Chapter 2
Sept. 17 & 20	International History, 1900-1990	Chapter 3
Sept. 24 & 27	From the Cold War to the world economic crisis	Chapter 4 *Harvey lecture "The 17 Contradictions of Capitalism"
Oct. 1 & 4	The Changing Character of War and Diplomacy	Chapter 13 Chapter 17 from the 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition ( <b>note: this reading will be made available as a scanned copy</b> ) *Caldicott lecture "The Medical Implications of Fukushima, Nuclear Power"

		and Nuclear Proliferation”
Oct. 8 & 11	Realism	Chapter 5
Oct. 15	TBA	
Oct. 18	EXAM	
Oct. 22 & 25	Liberalism	Chapter 6
Oct. 29 and Nov. 1 & 5	Marxian Theories of International Relations	Chapter 8
Nov. 8, 12 & 15	Gender in World Politics	Chapter 16
Nov. 19, 22 & 26	Poststructuralism	Chapter 10
Nov. 29 and Dec. 3	Post-colonialism	Chapter 11
Dec. 6 & 10	Social Constructivism	Chapter 9
Dec. 13	Course Reprise	

\*In addition to the regularly scheduled readings, students will watch two videos that relate to the course material. First, students will watch Dr. David Harvey’s lecture entitled “The 17 Contradictions of Capitalism” (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AULJlwoI3TI>) for the days of 24 and 27 September. Second, students will watch Dr. Helen Caldicott’s lecture entitled “The Medical Implications of Fukushima, Nuclear Power and Nuclear Proliferation” (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hTuqy6RpFQ>) for the days of 1 and 4 October.