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Introduction to World Politics

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CUNY City College

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Introduction to World Politics

PSC 10300

Fall 2020

Instructor

Nicholas Rush Smith

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Discussion Sections:

Thursday 9:30-10:45

Online via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Office Hours

Thursday 11:00-12:00

Virtual via Zoom

Email for Appointment and Zoom link

Available other times by appointment

Course Overview: Where do states come from? What is a state anyway? Why would some people want membership in a state while others try to avoid it? To what extent do states shape the use of violence? How can we understand states' interactions with one another in the international system? This course uses questions like these to introduce students to the study of world politics. In doing so, it serves as a foundational course for further study in two subfields of political science: comparative politics and international relations. To achieve these goals the course tells the story of the rise of states, how they eventually became the dominant mode for governing, and their interaction in the international system. The course is divided into three modules. The first module examines where states have come from historically. The second module examines how states regulate their societies. The third module explores theories of international politics that help us understand why states interact with one another in the international system.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course students will gain:

- A stronger understanding of world politics
- Insight on foundational questions in comparative politics about the growth and development of states and their relationship to the global economy
- An introductory understanding of the major theoretical schools in international relations
- Critical thinking skills that enable the application of these theoretical schools to contemporary issues in world politics

Course Assignments: The primary assignments for the course are three essay exams (one at the end of each course module), weekly quizzes, and class participation.

Grading and Evaluation: The course will be graded on a 100-point scale with the following breakdown:

- Essay Exams: 60 points
 - 3 exams x 20 points per exam

- Exam 1: Due Oct. 1
- Exam 2: Due Nov. 5
- Exam 3: Due per CCNY Final Exam Schedule
- Weekly quizzes: 30 points
 - Based upon the average score of all quizzes
 - Due on Thursdays by 9:29am (see Course Schedule for quiz dates)
 - Late quizzes will not be allowed and will count as a zero
- Participation: 10 points
 - See attendance policy for details

Attendance Policy: Participation in class discussions is crucial to the success of the course, so participation is an important component of students' final grades. However, I also recognize that some students may have difficulty attending discussions live because of technical difficulties. To that end, I will offer two modes of participation. The first mode is to attend the weekly discussion sessions, which will take place via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra on Thursdays from 9:30-10:45am (certain weeks excepted – see course schedule). Information on accessing Blackboard Collaborate Ultra can be found here: https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Participant/Get_Started.

The second mode, for students facing technical difficulties, is to respond to a weekly prompt in the Discussion section of the course Blackboard site. Responses to that prompt will be due by the end of the day when we have a live discussion (i.e. Thursdays by 11:59pm), although they can be written and submitted at any point prior to that deadline. Responses to the prompts should be a thoughtful 200-word response to the week's question to receive credit for participation that day.

Because weekly participation in the course material is so important for student's learning, **students will lose 2.5 points from the participation portion of their grade for each class missed or discussion blog not completed (i.e. 2.5% off the final course grade for each discussion missed up to a maximum of 10% off the final grade)**. I will allow one unexcused absence or one missed discussion blog without penalty. However, each subsequent unexcused absence or missed blog will incur this penalty.

Should a student run into a health or personal challenge which means they will have difficulty participating in a live discussion or completing a weekly blog, I will consider excusing the absence. However, students must contact me *before* the discussion that will be missed explaining the absence. **To encourage active participation in the live discussions, some weeks will have unannounced extra credit opportunities. Equivalent opportunities will be given for students writing optional blog entries.**

Accessibility and Academic Accommodations: Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Students should register with the AccessAbility Center/Student Disability Services and email me documentation from the center describing the required accommodations. Information on how to register can find be found on the AccessAbility Center's Website/Student Disability Services website (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/accessability/register>). If you are aware of a disability, please advise me of your needs as soon as possible to ensure that we can make the necessary accommodations in a timely manner.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to do their own work. Evidence of cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of a zero on that assignment. Repeated episodes will incur more serious penalties.

Current Events Reading: As this is a course on World Politics, students are expected to keep abreast of the news happening in the world. We will begin most discussion sessions with a brief discussion of the news for that week and try to apply conceptual tools learned in class to help us understand the event better. To facilitate these discussions, students are required to sign up for an electronic subscription to either the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal* and to read its world coverage. Free electronic subscriptions are available to both newspapers to all students using a CUNY email address.

You can sign up for free access to the *Times* website and mobile apps here: <https://myaccount.nytimes.com/verification/edupass>

You can sign up for free access to the *Wall Street Journal* website and mobile apps here: <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/cunyufs/2018/03/09/wall-street-journal-access-for-cuny-faculty-and-students/>

Books to Purchase: None. This is a Zero Textbook Cost course and all readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course Outline: See below. Also available as separate document under the Syllabus/Course Schedule tab in Blackboard.

Week dates	Learning Outcomes	Read/Watch	In-Class Activity	Assignments	Due Dates
MODULE 1: POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION AND POLITICAL COLLAPSE					
Week 1: Course Introduction August 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial understanding of themes in course Course policies and procedure Course expectations 	Read: Review Syllabus and Course Outline	Introductory Discussion (Thursday, 8/27 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)	None	N/A
Week 2: In the Beginning September 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How life was lived before 	Watch:	In-Class Discussion:	Week 2 Quiz	9/3 at 9:29am

	<p>durable states emerged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why it took so long in human history for durable states to develop • Why political power has historically collapsed more than it has stabilized 	<p>Week 2 Lecture – Before there Were States</p> <p>Read: James C. Scott. 2017. <i>Against the Grain: A Deep History of Early States</i>. New Haven: Yale University Press: Chapter 1.</p> <p>Listen: BBC. “Egyptian Clay Model of Cattle.” <i>The History of the World in 100 Objects Podcast</i>.</p>	<p>Would you be better off living in a swamp?</p> <p>(Thursday, 9/3 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>		
<p>Week 3: The Emergence of States September 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of a state • How political power initially became durable • Relationship between state development and alluvial agriculture 	<p>Watch: Week 3 Lecture – Caging and the Origins of States</p> <p>Read: Michael Mann. 1986. <i>The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760</i>. New York: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 3.</p> <p>Listen: BBC. “King Den’s Sandal Label.” <i>The History of the World in 100 Objects Podcast</i>.</p> <p>BBC. “Indus Seal.” <i>The History of the World in 100 Objects Podcast</i>.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: When you eat pizza, are you tasting a little bit of your own political domination?</p> <p>(Thursday, 9/10 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Week 3 Quiz</p>	<p>9/10 at 9:29am</p>

<p>Week 4: Escaping the State and Collapsing the State September 17</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why historically people have fled the state • Why hill regions are difficult for valley states to dominate • The state-building consequences of mass flight 	<p>Watch: Week 4 Lecture - Escaping the State and Collapsing the State</p> <p>“Building a Border at 4,600 Meters.” Vox Media.</p> <p>Read: James Scott. 2010. <i>The Art of Not Being Governed</i>. New Haven: Yale University Press: Chapter 5.</p> <p>“Military Tensions Mount on the India-China Border.” <i>The Economist</i>. May 29, 2020.</p>	<p>In-class Discussion: Should French fries be called “freedom fries?”</p> <p>(Thursday, 9/24 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Week 4 Quiz</p>	<p>9/17 at 9:29am</p>
<p>Week 5: The Challenges of Extending Institutions across Space September 24</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why it is difficult for rulers to extend power across space • How the relationship between population density and land affects leaders’ choices to extend infrastructure (or not) • Understanding the difference between sovereignty over land versus 	<p>Watch: Week 5 Lecture – The Challenges of Extending Institutions across Space</p> <p>Read: Jeffrey Herbst. 2000. <i>States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press: Chapter 2.</p> <p>Listen: BBC. “Kilwa Pot Shards.” <i>The History of the World in 100 Objects Podcast</i>.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: How sovereignty over territory and sovereignty over people are different.</p> <p>(Thursday, 9/17 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Week 5 Quiz</p> <p>Take Home Exam 1 Question Distributed via Course Documents Tab in Blackboard (Due 10/1 at 9:29am)</p>	<p>9/24 at 9:29am</p>

	sovereignty over people.				
MODULE 2: CONSOLIDATING MODERN STATES					
Week 6: States as Protection Rackets October 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relationship between tax and state formation Why states mirror criminal protection rackets How war can help fuel state making 	<p>Watch: Week 6 Lecture – States as Protection Rackets</p> <p>Read: Charles Tilly. 1985. “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” In <i>Bringing the State Back In</i>, edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. New York: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Listen: BBC. “The Mechanical Galleon.” <i>The History of the World in 100 Objects Podcast</i>.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Your taxes or your freedom. Your taxes are your freedom.</p> <p>(Thursday, 10/1 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	TAKE HOME EXAM 1 DUE	10/1 at 9:29am (see exam prompt for submission instructions)
Week 7: Weaponry and the Transformation of Political Power October 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role that warfare plays in state making How patterns of warfare and state making were historically different between Europe and China 	<p>Watch: Week 7 Lecture - Weaponry and the Transformation of Political Power</p> <p>Read: William McNeill. 1982. <i>The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since AD 1000</i>. Chicago:</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Did you fall in love with a war machine? Did you have to?</p> <p>(Thursday, 10/8 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	Week 7 Quiz	10/8 at 9:29am

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What a state not based in warfare might look like 	<p>University of Chicago Press: Chapter 3.</p> <p>Listen: BBC. "Pillar of Ashoka." <i>The History of the World in 100 Objects Podcast.</i></p>			
<p>Week 8: States and Violence October 15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term patterns of violence • Reasons for the long-term decline of violence • How state-making has shaped personal habits over time and how this relates to violence 	<p>Watch: Week 8 Lecture – States, Habits, and Violence</p> <p>Steven Pinker. 2007. "The Surprising Decline in Violence." Ted Talk. (NOTE: Contains disturbing images.)</p> <p>Listen: "Land of the Lenape: A Violent Tale of Conquest and Betrayal." <i>The Bowery Boys Podcast.</i> (NOTE: Includes a graphic description of a violent encounter)</p> <p>Read (Optional): Steven Pinker. 2011. <i>The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined.</i> New York: Penguin: 31-58.</p> <p>Robert Muchembled. 2012. <i>A History of Violence.</i> Malden, MA: Polity: Chapter 7.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Are states better thought of as a solution or a cause of violence?</p> <p>(Thursday, 10/15 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Week 8 Quiz</p>	<p>10/15 at 9:29am</p>

<p>Week 9: Rights and Violence October 22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How rights emerged historically • The ways citizens can use rights to constrain states • How empathy and other emotions are important for politics and violence 	<p>Watch: Week 9 Lecture – States, Rights, and Violence</p> <p>Read: Lynn Hunt. 2008. <i>Inventing Human Rights</i>. New York: Norton: Chapter 1.</p> <p>Listen: PRX. “The Invention of Human Rights.” <i>Innovation Hub Podcast</i>.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: The most important book you have ever read.</p> <p>(Thursday, October 22 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Week 9 Quiz</p>	<p>10/22 at 9:29am</p>
<p>Week 10: State Order Today October 29</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideology of high modernism • How order can be an aesthetic experience • Why people might still flee the state today 	<p>Watch: Week 10 Lecture – State Order Today</p> <p>Read: James Scott. 1998. <i>Seeing Like a State</i>. New Haven: Yale University Press: 103-147.</p> <p>Listen: Bijlmer (City of the Future, Part 1). <i>99% Invisible Podcast</i>.</p> <p>Reading (Optional): Richard J. Williams. 2020. “Will You Want to Go Straight Back into the Crowd?” <i>New York Times</i>. May 5.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: If order is so beautiful, why do so many of us run from it?</p> <p>(Thursday, 10/29 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Week 10 Quiz</p> <p>Take Home Exam 2 Question Distributed via Course Documents Tab in Blackboard (Due on 11/5 at 9:29am)</p>	<p>10/29 at 9:29am</p>
<p>MODULE 3: PERSPECTIVES ON</p>					

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS					
<p>Week 11: Foundations of International Relations November 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history of sovereignty in international relations • How ideas of sovereignty have changed over time • The consequences of changing idea of sovereignty for the international system 	<p>Watch: Week 11 Lecture - Foundations of International Relations</p> <p>Read: Daniel Philpott. 2020. "Sovereignty." <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>. Edward N. Zalta (ed.).</p> <p>Listen: BBC. "Sovereignty." <i>In Our Time Podcast</i>.</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Is it ever acceptable to violate a state's sovereignty?</p> <p>(Thursday, 11/5 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>TAKE HOME EXAM 2 DUE</p>	<p>11/5 at 9:29am (see exam prompt for submission instructions)</p>
<p>Week 12: Perspectives on International Relations November 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introductory understanding of three major theories of international relations: realism, liberalism, constructivism 	<p>Watch: Week 12 Lecture - Perspectives on International Relations (Realism)</p> <p>Week 12 Lecture – Perspectives on International Relations (Liberalism)</p> <p>Week 12 Lecture – Perspectives on International Relations (Constructivism)</p> <p>“Theory in Action: Realism.” Soomo Publishing</p> <p>“Theory in Action: Liberalism.” Soomo Publishing</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: When the aliens arrive, how should the government respond?</p> <p>(Thursday, 11/12 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Week 12 Quiz</p>	<p>11/12 at 9:29am</p>

		<p>“Theory in Action: Constructivism.” Soomo Publishing</p> <p>“Theory in Action: The War in Iraq.” Soomo Publishing</p> <p>Read (Optional): John Mearsheimer. <i>The Tragedy of Great Power Politics</i> (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 1-36.</p> <p>Moravcsik, Andrew. 2011. “The New Liberalism.” In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Science</i>. Robert E. Goodin (ed.): 1-23.</p> <p>Alex Wendt. 1992. “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics.” <i>International Organization</i> 46 (2): 391-425.</p>			
<p>Week 13: Democracy’s Value November 19</p> <p>(NOTE: No Discussion Meeting because Professor is Presenting at Conference)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How democracies respond to development challenges • The incentives and tools democratic states have to respond to challenges 	<p>Watch: Lecture Week 13 – Democracy and Autocracy</p> <p>Amartya Sen, “Democracy and Social Decisions”</p> <p>Read: Amartya Sen, 1999. “Democracy as a Universal Value.”</p>	<p>NOTE: No Thursday Discussion because Professor is Presenting at Conference</p>	<p>Week 13 Quiz</p>	<p>11/19 at 9:29am</p>

		<p><i>Journal of Democracy</i> 10 (3): 3-17.</p> <p>Read (Optional): Amartya Sen. 2000. <i>Development as Freedom</i>. New York: Random House: Chapter 7.</p>			
<p>Week 14: Democracy, Its Opposites, and Its Threats November 26</p> <p>(NOTE: No Discussion Meeting Because of Thanksgiving)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats to democracy around the world • How democracy has been subverted • The allure and problems of “benign” despotism 	<p>Watch: Week 14 Lecture: Democracy, Its Threats, and Its Opposites</p> <p>Read: Nic Cheeseman and Brian Klaas. 2020. “How to Steal an Election in Broad Daylight.” <i>Foreign Policy</i>. May 21.</p> <p>Ashish Thakkar. 2015. <i>The Lion Awakes: Adventures in Africa’s Economic Miracle</i>. New York: St. Martin’s University Press. Chapter 9.</p> <p>Anonymous. 2017. “Faking It: The Rwandan GDP Growth Myth.” <i>Review of African Political Economy Blog</i>.</p>	<p>NOTE: No discussion because of Thanksgiving</p>	<p>No assignment (Thanksgiving)</p>	<p>No Assignment (Thanksgiving)</p>
<p>Week 15: Democracy, War, and Peace December 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How scholars from different schools of international relations understand the 	<p>Watch: Week 15 Lecture: Democracy, War, and Peace</p> <p>Read:</p>	<p>In-Class Discussion: Would a world of democracies be peaceful?</p>	<p>Week 15 Quiz Take Home Exam 3 Distributed via Course</p>	<p>12/3 at 9:29am</p>

	<p>relationship between democracies in the international system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the degree to which different scholars find the theory of democratic peace persuasive (or not) 	<p>Immanuel Kant. <i>Perpetual Peace</i>.</p> <p>Sebastian Rosato. 2003. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 97 (4): 585-602.</p> <p>Michael Doyle. 2005. "Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 99 (3): 463-466.</p>	<p>(Thursday, 12/3 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p>	<p>Documents Tab in Blackboard (Due per CCNY Final Exam Schedule)</p>	
<p>Week 16: Optional Discussion about the Politics of the Coronavirus Pandemic TUESDAY, December 8 NOTE TUESDAY CLASS</p> <p>NOTE ATTENDANCE OPTIONAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional discussion of the course's lessons for our understanding of the coronavirus pandemic 	<p>Read:</p> <p>Charles Mann. 2020. "Pandemics Leave Us Forever Altered." <i>The Atlantic</i>. June.</p> <p>Jeffrey Smith and Nic Cheeseman. 2020. "Authoritarians are Exploiting the Coronavirus. Democracies Must Not Follow Suit." <i>The Atlantic</i>. April 28.</p> <p>"Covid-19 Is Undoing Years of Progress in Curbing Global Poverty." 2020. <i>The Economist</i>. 23 May.</p> <p>Arundhati Roy. 2020 "The Plague is a Portal." <i>Financial Times</i>. 3 April.</p>	<p>Optional discussion of the course's lessons for our understanding of the coronavirus pandemic</p> <p>(TUESDAY, 12/8 at 9:30am in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra)</p> <p>NOTE TUESDAY CLASS</p>	<p>Take Home Exam 3</p>	<p>Reminder Final Due as per CCNY Final Exam Schedule (see exam prompt for submission instructions)</p>

		<p>Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. 2020. "Finding a Vaccine Is Only the First Step. No One Will Be Safe Until the Whole World Is Safe." <i>Foreign Affairs</i>. April 30.</p> <p>Arundhati Roy. 2020. "After the Lockdown, We Need a Reckoning." <i>Financial Times</i>. May 23.</p>			
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