Learning objectives and overview of the course

This course examines the main issues and actors dominating today’s global processes. The transnational reality of the last decades raises profound challenges to traditional understandings of international relations and world order, and many challenges that once were of national domain now affect multiple countries or the system as a whole. Civil wars, international crimes, transnational criminal and terroristic organizations constitute threats to the security of both individual states and the international system, and socio-economic factors—such as poverty and inequality, ethnic differences—also matter across countries and are tackled in an increasingly internationalized fashion. Furthermore, advances in technology and social media have affected economic and political dynamics at a much faster rate than before.

In this course we will explore the nature of the actors playing a relevant role in today’s global politics, and consider both state-based actors and non-state based actors. Among the major threats to global stability, we will focus on wars, violence, and ethnic diversity; we will analyze both what drives these conflicts but also, and in a critical way, what the global system is doing to cope with them.

This syllabus lists the topics that will be covered. They are grouped by argument rather than by date. A schedule is provided at the end of the syllabus. The syllabus lists the required readings. Additional suggested readings may be provided during the course. All readings (both required and recommended) will be uploaded on bCourses.
Requirements

The assignments and activities aim at developing analytical and critical thinking. The written requirements described below are based on the required readings and supplemental individual research.

The grade will be computed according to the following components:

- Three class discussion preparatory research memos (3 pages each, 10 points each – total of 30 points). You will be assigned a prompt to prepare for class discussion ahead of class, and will need to submit a memo in class on the day of the discussion.

- A in-class midterm (30 points). The midterm will include a combination of identification questions, short essay answers and one longer essay. It will include material presented both in the required readings and in the lectures. Your response should demonstrate both an understanding of the readings’ key ideas and some critiques of their potential shortcomings.

- A briefing paper (40 points) for the new Secretary of State of your home country (you will be provided a list of potential ‘home’ countries in class). She has had a distinguished career as an academic, but has never had international responsibilities. In this paper you have to explain her the key facts of global governance and how they are changing. In particular, you should elaborate on the structure of global governance, the relevant alliances, dynamics, and trends, and the major threats that the country (and the system) is facing.

Policies

Attendance is mandatory. Assignments should be submitted on time. As members of the campus community at UC Berkeley, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work. In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution—that is by fully identifying the original source and extent of your use, usually in the form of a footnote or parenthesis. As a general rule, if you are citing from a published source or from a web site and the quotation is short (up to a sentence or two) place it in quotation marks; if you employ a longer passage from a publication or web site, please indent it and use single spacing. In both cases, be sure to cite the original source in a footnote or in parentheses.

Students with disabilities will be asked to provide a “letter of accommodation” from the University’s Disabled Students’ Program. They should contact me at least a week before the assignment is due (or the exam is scheduled in class) in order to receive the requested accommodation.
Session 1. Actors: the State, and the rest


4. Robert I. Rotberg (Eds) State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror, Chapter 1 – Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators

5. Matthew Doidge, The European Union and Interregionalism – Chapter 1 “Regional Actors and the rise of interregionalism”, Ashgate.


Session 2. Conflict and Violence


5. Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, *Civil war*, Journal of Economic Literature Vol. 48, No. 1 (March 2010), pp. 3-57


Session 3. Democracy promotion


Session 4. Ethnicity and Conflict


7. Michael Minkenberg, The European Radical Right and Xenophobia in West and East: Trends, Patterns and Challenges. In Ralf Melzer, Sebastian Serafin (Eds.) “Right Wing Extremist in Europe”

Session 5. Technology and Politics


Session 6. Room for thought..


Schedule

Week 1 (January 20) Introduction, Actors: Globalization, the state. Readings: Actors 1-4
Week 2 (January 27) Actors: regionalism, the EU. Readings: Actors 5-7
Week 3 (February 3) Actors: crime, terrorism, NGOs, Readings: Actors 9-12
Week 4 (February 10) Class work: Assignment 1 due
Week 5 (February 17) Violence: evolution of war and violence. Readings: Violence 1-5
Week 6 (February 24) Violence: post-conflict peacebuilding. Readings: Violence 6-8
Week 7 (March 2)
Week 8 (March 9) Democracy promotion. Readings: Democracy 1-7
Week 9 (March 16) Midterm
Week 10 (March 23) Spring Break
Week 11 (March 30) Ethnicity and Conflict: ethnicity and international and domestic conflicts. Readings: Ethnicity 1-4
Week 12 (April 6) Fieldwork
Week 14 (April 20) Technology and politics. Readings: Technology 1-6
Week 15 (April 27) Room for thoughts. Readings: RfT 1-4 and class discussion. Last assignment due (8 points)
Week 16 (May 4) RRR week
Week 17 (May 11) Final