

Researching World Politics in Interesting Times

University of California Washington, DC Program (UCDC)

Fall 2021

September 21 – November 30

Michael Danielson, PhD (he/him/his/himself)

Why pronouns matter : <https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/pronounsmatter>

michael.danielson@ucdc.edu

Class Meetings: Tuesdays, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Office: 336 | Zoom Office: [Zoom link](#)

Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:30 – 11:30 and by appointment

COURSE INSTRUCTOR

I have taught at UCDC since 2014. I am a Research Fellow at the American University Center for Latin American and Latino Studies and have taught courses in political science, international politics, and human rights at various universities in Washington, DC. My current research includes projects on the climate–migration nexus, migration and refugee studies, and violent democracy in Mexico and Central America. My book *Emigrants Get Political: Mexican Migrants Engage Their Home Towns* (Oxford 2018) examines the ways in which Mexican migrants engage with and shape the politics of their home towns. I have also studied the politics of indigenous rights movements in Latin America and am co-editor of *Latin America's Multicultural Movements and the Struggle Between Communitarianism, Autonomy, and Human Rights* (Oxford 2013). When not teaching, I work as an expert consultant on social science research methodology, migration dynamics, and democracy and autocracy in Latin America. I also occasionally serve as an expert witness on country conditions in Mexico and Honduras in US immigration courts. I am a political scientist (PhD 2013, American University) with training in comparative and international politics and hold an MA in International Policy Studies from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) and Spanish and Philosophy degrees from Santa Clara University.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar is designed to help you to critically engage with the dizzying array of problems faced by human societies today and to guide you through the process of developing a significant research paper on a topic of your choice **related to world politics**. This is *not*, however, a field seminar in international relations or comparative politics. Through a combination of lectures, discussions, and readings, the course will provide you with theoretical and historical frameworks to identify, diagnose, and devise solutions to important problems of world politics and identify the methods and data sources to answer your own research questions. The substantive issues covered during class discussions and that you research will be driven by your own geographical and substantive interests. The course is also designed to help you to connect your academic

pursuits with your professional development through your internships and experiences immersed in the broader political ecosystem of Washington, DC.

A NOTE ON TAKING A CLASS “IN INTERESTING” TIMES

From an abstract distance, I believe the times we are living through in the United States and the world are indeed interesting. Of course, most of us do not have the luxury to live our lives from an abstract distance. “Interesting” is something of a euphemism; times are just hard; and things are harder for some than others. I recognize this and will be accommodating and flexible with each of you to ensure that you succeed in the course. I expect that you will show up for our time together and that you will be prepared each time we meet. Your well-being is my top priority. If you need anything as we move throughout the term, please let me know. I cannot be helpful if I do not know there is a problem, and I want to be as helpful as I can be.

LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Students will be able to relate their internship experience with the skills and substance learned in the course.

Objective #1: Through class discussion and group work, you'll have opportunities to explore how the mission and objectives of your internship organization seeks to affect the policy process in the U.S. and/or globally. Course assignments and in-class exercises will also help you to develop useful skills for professionals working in policy, politics, government, and research fields.

Goal #2: Students will experience a cultural, historical, policy or other event in DC that relates to the course.

Objective #2: Class activities will include attending a Congressional hearing, a briefing, or a panel discussion on a pressing issue related to world politics, foreign policy, or international affairs.

Goal #3: Students will be able to communicate persuasively in writing and orally.

Objective #3: This course will require you to do a great deal of writing, and your classmates and I will give you extensive feedback. You will also give an oral presentation of your research for the whole class and be expected to participate in a range of small, medium, and large group discussions.

Goal #4: Students will be able to critically examine competing arguments and use empirical evidence to apply theory to practice.

Objective #4: Readings and class discussions will help you to build and improve your understanding of the process of conducting social science and policy research. You will draw on this background to research and write a theoretically sound and empirically grounded research or policy paper on a topic that is **global in scope** (and not predominantly US-focused).

Goal #5: To understand different frameworks for making sense of current problems and debates that are global in scope.

Objective #5: Readings, lectures, and class discussions will help familiarize you with current debates, problems, and relevant cases related to world politics. We will consider these in historical and theoretical perspective and as manifested in contemporary problems of world politics.

Goal #6: To learn about how to find and use key sources of knowledge in world politics, to improve research skills, learn how to identify high quality sources in writing, and integrate data and theory into cogent and persuasive arguments.

Objective #6: Through readings, discussions, lectures, and in-class workshops, as well as through feedback from your professor, you will learn about different types of data, how to gather and systematize them, and how to use them as evidence to support (and refute!) competing arguments.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Assignment	Points
News Briefing	5
Engagement	15
Panel/Hearing Memo	10
Research Question & Literature Review	25
Oral Presentation	10
Final Paper	35
Total Points Possible	100

*Semester students: These requirements will account for 85% of your final course grade. The remaining 15% of your grade will be earned in the four-week module at the end of the. I will be your instructor of record; as such, I will add your module grade to your seminar grade and submit your final course grade at the end of the semester.

1. ***Weekly News Briefing [5 points].*** We will begin each class, by discussing news about *selected problems* and issues in world politics. Some weeks you will be free to choose an article focusing on any issue or region in the world, but typically I will designate an issue or problem area of world politics to help focus our discussions. To prepare for these discussions, you should read a piece of news or analysis published **during the previous week** and be prepared to discuss it with your classmates and present key facts and questions in small groups or to the whole class. To receive credit, you must post a citation and link to your article to weekly discussion boards created for this purpose on Canvas and actively participate in discussions. You can receive a maximum of one point for each week and a maximum of 5 points for this assignment for the whole term. I will circulate detailed guidelines, including a schedule of issue areas, for this assignment separately.
2. ***Engagement [15 points.]***¹ This grade component is more typically referred to as “participation,” but engagement is a better word. You will be evaluated based on how engaged you are with the readings, supplementary materials, class discussion, and other course content. Weekly activities beyond the required readings will be required to prepare for our meetings and this preparation will be reflected in the engagement grade. Examples of such weekly preparation may include following and being prepared to comment on world news, participation in discussion boards on Canvas, reporting on the work you do at your internship, programs, or actions being pursued by your organization or office, etc.
3. ***Policy Panel Discussion or Congressional Hearing Memo [10 points].*** This assignment has two functions. First, it is a way to get you engaged in the DC policy “ecosystem” during the first couple of weeks of the term. Second, you will use this as a jumping off point for

¹ Based on Elizabeth Cohn’s syllabus, American University.

developing a topic for your paper. You may attend a hearing or panel that occurs during the first 2+ weeks of the course (virtually or in person) **or** consult video archives of an event that has already occurred recently (within the past year or so). A memo summarizing key points from the event should be submitted by **9:00 pm EST on the day before our Week 3 meeting**. Students discuss key topics from the events they attend during our Week 3 class meeting and provide each other with constructive feedback. Additional guidelines will be circulated.

4. ***Literature Review and Research Question [25 points]***: A 2,000 - 3,000-word review of the literature, including a concise and answerable research question and a brief introduction. These should be submitted by **9:00 pm EST on the day of our Week 6 meeting** to turnitin.com (class id: **TBD**; password: **TBD**).² You will draw upon this literature review to frame and present your final paper. The review should track the existing academic and policy-oriented publications relating to your question or policy problem. You must include properly formatted citations and a reference list of **at least 10** cited sources (5 of which must be from peer reviewed journal articles or books or chapters from academic presses). Additional guidelines will be circulated.
5. ***Oral Presentation of Research Project [10 points]***. All students will give a short presentation of their research during the final weeks. Presentation guidelines will be circulated.
6. ***Final Policy Proposal or Research Paper [35 points]***. Submission by **11:59pm EST** on the final day of class of a ~4,000 to 5,000-word paper via turnitin.com (class id: **TBD**; password: **TBD**).

READINGS

There is no textbook for this course. Some readings will be available online, but most will be posted as pdfs to a **G-drive** folder I'll share with you. Most readings will also be accessible through your home institution library databases. Readings are meant to prepare you to conduct your research, to provide a common foundation for our class discussions, and to help you to think analytically about international and global issues. You will be required to do extensive additional reading of scholarly works, government and think tank reports, and press articles related to your research topics.

² Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 September 21

Introduction to the seminar and each other: Understanding world order in the 21st century

Recommended reading:

- Zvobgo, Kelebogile and Meredith Loken. “Why Race Matters in International Relations: Western dominance and white privilege permeate the field. It’s time to change that.” *Foreign Policy*, June 19, 2020. Accessed at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/19/why-race-matters-international-relations-ir/>
- Rose, Gideon. 2018. “Which World Are We Living In? A half dozen choices of grand narrative for an increasingly turbulent era.” *Foreign Affairs Anthologies*, July/August 2018. Access at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/which-world-are-we-living>

Week 2: September 28

Framework 1: Violence and Conflict

Read:

- Kotkin, Steven. 2018. “Realist World: The Players Change, but the Game Remains.” *Foreign Affairs Anthologies*, July/August 2018.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1915. “The African Roots of War.” *The Atlantic Monthly* 115: 707–14.

Recommended:

- Seymour, Richard. 2014. “The Cold War, American Anticommunism and The Global ‘Colour Line,’” in *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, edited by Alexander Anievas, et al., Taylor & Francis Group, 2014. Check for e-Book at your campus library.

Week 3 October 5

Policy Panel/Hearing Discussions

→ASSIGNMENT DUE: Hearing/panel memo (Night before class meeting)

Week 4 October 12

Framework 2: International Institutions: Democracy and Global Governance

Read:

- X, Malcolm. 1965. “Not Just an American Problem, But a World Problem.” Speech at Corn Hill Methodist Church, Rochester, New York, February 16. Access at: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/community/text10/malcolmxworldproblem.pdf>

- Deudney, Daniel and G. John Ikenberry. 2018. "Liberal World: The Resilient Order." *Foreign Affairs Anthologies*, July/August 2018.

Week 5 October 19

Framework 3: Political Economy: Poverty, Inequality, Development

Read:

- Varghese, Robin. 2018. "Marxist World: What did you Expect from Capitalism?" *Foreign Affairs Anthologies*, July/August 2018.

Recommended:

- Dani Rodrik, 2020. "Why Does Globalization Fuel Populism? Economics, Culture, and the Rise of Right-wing Populism," NBER Working Papers 27526, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.
- Amin, Samir. 1972. "Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa—Origins and Contemporary Forms." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 10: 503–24.
- Centeno, Miguel A. and Joseph N. Cohen. 2012. "The Arc of Neoliberalism." *Annu. Rev. Sociology* 38:317–40.

Week 6 October 26

→ASSIGNMENT DUE: Research question and literature review

Helpful reading:

- Baglione, Lisa A. 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*, Chapter 2, "Getting Started: Finding a Research Question," pp. 15-39.
- Knomp. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review"
- Obenzinger. 2005. "What Can a Literature Review Do for Me?"

Week 7 November 2

Framework 4: Identity: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Race, Religion, Ideology

Read:

- Chua, Amy. "Tribal World: Group Identity is Everything." *Foreign Affairs Anthologies*, July/August 2018.
- Bass, Gary. "The Terrible Cost of Presidential Racism." *The New York Times*, September 3, 2020. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/03/opinion/nixon-racism-india.html>

Recommended:

- Marx, A.W., 1996. "Race-making and the nation-state." *World Politics*, pp.180-20. URL:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25053960>

- Brubaker, Rogers. 2009. "Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:21–42.

Week 8 November 9

Oral presentations of research

Week 9 November 16

Oral presentations of research

Thanksgiving Week—No Class

Week 10 November 30

Oral presentations of research

FINAL PAPERS DUE FOR ALL STUDENTS BY 11:59 PM

GRADING POLICIES

There are 100 points possible in this course. Grades will be allocated according to the following criteria, on a 100-point scale (and I round up):

- A: for superior work (93-100 on scale)
- A-: for excellent work (90 - 92 on scale)
- B+: for very good work (88 - 89 on scale)
- B: for good work (83 - 87 on scale)
- B-: for work between good and just satisfactory (80 - 82 on scale)
- C+: for high satisfactory (78 - 79 on scale)
- C: for satisfactory work (73 - 77 on scale)
- C-: for borderline satisfactory work (70 or 72 on scale)
- D: for work which is not satisfactory, not completed, or demonstrative of some other failure on the student's part (such as to participate in class)
- F: failure to meet minimum course goals

CLASS POLICIES

By taking this class, you agree to adhere to the rules and obligations presented in this syllabus, but also acknowledge my right to alter them, as necessary, and accept that while I will notify all students of any changes via email, during our meetings, and/or via Canvas.

1. **BREAKS:** I will give frequent bathroom/snack/stretch breaks. If you feel it has been too long between these breaks, please alert me. That said, if you need to urgently take a break for any reason, please do so. Please try, however, not to make this a habit.
2. **DISTRACTIONS:** Please refrain from doing other things on the computer during class (i.e., instant messaging, checking email, shopping, etc.) You will not retain information if you are distracted.
3. **NOTES:** I encourage students to take notes with paper and pen. Studies show that students who take notes longhand have a better retention of material. In addition, taking notes longhand will keep your fingers from doing other things (like instant messaging) and keep your mind engaged in the material.
4. **RESPECT:** This class will sometimes involve the discussion of controversial topics that you may feel passionate about. During these and all discussions students are expected to express themselves and engage with one another in a respectful and thoughtful manner.
5. Do all required readings. You are strongly encouraged to bring questions, comments, and criticisms of the material to class.
6. Attend all class sessions, arrive on time, and stay until the end. If you know in advance that you will arrive late or leave early, you should notify me before the class period begins and minimize disruption.

7. Show respect to me and to your classmates in all ways, whether in person, on discussion boards, or in any other modes of communication. This includes respecting the opinions and openly listening to arguments and perspectives of your peers, not interrupting, and in general by paying attention and actively engaging in class. When someone is speaking, I expect you to give them your full attention.
8. You will lose **5 percentage points** for every day that written work is late. That means that a late piece of written work that would have a grade of 10/10 will receive 9.5/10. After 24 hours, the same assignment would receive a 9. After an assignment is a week late, I may not be able to provide you with feedback, but I will do whatever possible to still work with you to progress in the course and develop your final paper.
9. If something comes up during the term that you think may affect your ability to successfully complete the requirements for the course, please notify me as quickly as possible and I will do my best to accommodate you. If you do not let me know about your emergency in a timely fashion and you miss classes, turn assignments in late, or fail to do your work, you will be docked points accordingly.
10. UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in university programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates this policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

Students who wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct should contact UCDC's Counseling Services at UCDCCounseling@gmail.com. Students who wish to report sexual misconduct or to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct may do so with any UCDC faculty or staff, or contact Debbie Deas, Director of Student Services (debbie.deas@ucdc.edu, 202-872- 8937). Please note that because the University California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed. This policy can be found at the following link: <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV>.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In compliance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Public Law 93- 112) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336), University of California policy prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability in its programs, services, and activities. A link to the full policy can be found here: <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710534/PACAOS-140>.

If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.