

**UC Washington Center  
International Policy Seminar  
Spring Quarter: March 29 - June 4**

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Room: 317

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

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm and by appointment

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Course hashtag: #ucdcglobal

**COURSE INSTRUCTOR**

I have taught at UCDC since 2014. I have also taught Latin American politics and international affairs courses at George Washington University and the NYU and Pepperdine University programs in Washington, DC. My book, [\*Emigrants Get Political: Mexican Migrants Engage Their Home Towns\*](#) was published this year by Oxford University Press and other writing has appeared in both peer reviewed and policy-oriented venues. I am a political scientist (PhD 2013, American University) with training in comparative and international politics. My research interests include migration and refugee studies, violence, and other transnational phenomena and have implications for foreign and domestic policymaking in the US and abroad. I also 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. When not teaching, I work as an expert consultant on social science research methodology, migration and displacement, and Latin American politics and society. Additionally, I regularly serve as an expert witness on country conditions in Mexico and Honduras in US immigration courts.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This seminar is designed to help you to engage critically and think systematically about crucial questions that are global in scope and to guide you through the process of developing a significant research paper. This is *not* a field seminar in international relations. Lectures and readings will touch on some foundational theories and concepts in comparative and international politics but will be heavily focused on principles of social science research. The issues and problems covered during class discussions and that you read and write about 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 in your internships and the broader political ecosystem of Washington, DC. Through the course, we will collectively engage with some of the most crucial problems facing the world's peoples in the 21<sup>st</sup> century while examining their causes, consequences, and potential solutions.

## **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: You will give a short presentation that identifies how the work done by your internship organization seeks to affect the policy process in the U.S. and/or globally.

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

Objective #2: You will attend a Congressional hearing, a briefing, or a panel discussion on a pressing issue related to international affairs and write a memo on the topic. You may also hear presentations from guest speakers working on different aspects of international affairs, as scheduling permits.

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

Objective #3: You will do a lot of writing in this course and your classmates and I will give you extensive feedback. You will also give two short oral presentations in front of the whole class and meet in small groups to discuss your research and writing.

*Goal #4: Students will be able to critically examine competing arguments and use empirical evidence to research and 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**.

*Goal #5: To provide a framework 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. We will consider these in historical and theoretical perspective where appropriate, but the focus will be on contemporary issues.

*Goal #6: To learn about how to find and use key sources of knowledge on areas of international affairs, 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**

Course assignments are designed to help students to integrate their internships, and DC experiences more broadly, with the research component of the UCDC program. This is not designed as a lecture course. We will discuss current news, course readings, selected aspects of your internships, and your research papers during our class meetings. This requires that you prepare by doing your readings **PRIOR** to class.

| <b>Assignment</b>                  | <b>Points</b> |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| News briefing                      | 5             |
| Internship Presentation            | 5             |
| Hearing Memo                       | 5             |
| Engagement                         | 15            |
| Research Question                  | 10            |
| Literature Review                  | 25            |
| Oral Presentation                  | 10            |
| Policy Proposal or Research Design | 25            |
| <b>Total Points Possible</b>       | <b>100</b>    |

1. ***Weekly News Briefing [5 points]***. We will begin each class, by discussing news about issues that are global in scope. 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 in small groups. Post a citation and link to your article to weekly discussion boards created for this purpose on Canvas. You can receive a maximum of one point for each week and a maximum of 5 points for this assignment for the whole term.
2. ***Internship Presentation [5 points]***. During one of our class meetings (not counting the first or final three meetings) you will prepare a brief presentation (max 5 minutes, no ppt) in which you discuss how the organization, agency, bureau, etc. where you are interning engages with the policy process in the U.S. and/or globally. These will occur during the 2<sup>nd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> class meetings. I will circulate a Doodle.com poll during the first week to allow students to sign up for their presentation dates.
3. ***Hearing Memo [5 points]***. At some point during the term you will be required to attend a Congressional Committee or Sub-Committee hearing or other event (e.g., a think tank panel discussion) **connected to issues that are global in scope**. Based on your notes from the event, related materials (e.g., testimony, accompanying reports, publications, and other documents) you must produce a brief but professional policy memo (I will provide you with details in a separate handout). Your memo must be submitted on Canvas within **one week** of the date of the hearing. I'll deduct 0.5 points for each day it's late. You have until the end of the term to submit your memo.

4. **Engagement [15 points.]**<sup>1</sup> 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. I am particularly interested in participation and comments directly related to our readings or from your preparation for the class meeting (e.g., news discussion; research you’ve completed for your projects). Your engagement will be evaluated based on the following rubric from Vanderbilt University:

|                            | Strong work <sup>1</sup>   | Needs development  | Unsatisfactory  |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Listening                  | Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor  | Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others  | Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others  |
| Preparation                | Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions   | Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation  | Exhibits little evidence of having read or thought about assigned material                    |
| Quality of contributions   | Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of: assigned text(s); previous remarks of other students; and insights about assigned material | Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students | Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in seminar |
| Impact on seminar          | Comments frequently help move seminar conversation forward   | Comments sometimes advance the conversation, but sometimes do little to move it forward  | Comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it                        |
| Frequency of participation | Actively participates at appropriate times   | Sometimes participates but at other times is “tuned out”   | Seldom participates and is generally not engaged  |

Make note that on preparation, listening, quality of contributions, and impact on the seminar are listed before frequency of contributions. Also, ensure that contributions should be at appropriate times. You cannot participate when you are not present. We only meet 10 times, so I will deduct 1.5 points from your participation grade for every unexcused absence.

5. **Research Question [10 points].** You should start thinking about the topic you want to research as early as possible. This assignment is meant to be the first step in the development of your final paper. A short (max 1 page double spaced) presentation and justification of a concise, important, interesting, and puzzling research question should be posted to Canvas by **7:00 pm on Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>**. We will dedicate a significant portion of class on Tuesday to discussing your topics in small groups.
6. **Literature Review [25 points]:** Submission by class on **May 7<sup>th</sup>** of a 2,000 - 3,000-word review of the literature relevant to your research question to turnitin.com (class id: **TBD**; password: **TBD**). You will draw upon this literature review to frame and present your final assignment (policy proposal or research design). 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

<sup>1</sup> Based on Elizabeth Cohn’s syllabus, American University.

peer reviewed journal articles or books or chapters from academic presses). Additional guidelines will be circulated.

7. ***Oral Presentation of Research project [10 points]***. During the last three weeks of class, all students will give a short (5 minute) in-class presentation of their research. Presentation guidelines will be circulated.
8. ***Final Policy Proposal or Research Design [25 points]***. Submission by **June 4th at 11:59pm** of a ~3,000 to 4,000-word paper via turnitin.com (class id: **TBD**; password: **TBD**). You will choose to write: 1) a prescriptive policy proposal or 2) a research proposal (a.k.a., research design). Option “1” is more applied and policy oriented; whereas option “2” is more academic. Both should be grounded in theory and empirical evidence.
  - There is an opportunity for **three extra points** for those who turn in their papers and do their oral presentation on **May 21<sup>st</sup>**.

## **READINGS**

There is no text book for this course. Some readings will be available online, but most will be posted to our course Canvas page or are 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 a considerable amount of additional reading of scholarly works, government and think tank reports, and press articles related to your research topics.

## SCHEDULE

### **Week 1      March 26**

#### ***Introduction***

##### *Recommended:*

- Peters, *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance* 1-44
- DeLaet, Debra. 2012. "Interrogating 'They': A Pedagogy of Feminist Pluralism in the International Relations Classroom." *International Studies Perspectives* 13, 254–269.

### **Week 2      April 2**

#### ***What World Are We Living In?***

- 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>

**Activities:** News discussion; internship presentations

### **Week 3      April 9**

#### ***Finding a Topic and Conducting Research in the Age of TMI and "Fake News"***

- Kofman, Ava. "Bruno Latour, Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science." *New York Times Magazine*, October 25, 2018. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html>
- Achenbach, Joel. 2015. "The Age of Disbelief." *National Geographic*, March: 34-47. Available at: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2015/03/science-doubters/achenbach-text>
- Baglione, Lisa A. 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*, Chapter 2, "Getting Started: Finding a Research Question," pp. 15-39.

**Activities:** News discussion; internship presentations.

### **Week 4      April 16**

#### ***Emancipation Day, No Class***

### **Week 5      April 23**

→ASSIGNMENT DUE 7pm **April 22** (Night before class meeting)

**Activities:** News discussion; internship presentations; research question working groups.

### **Week 6      April 30**

#### ***Reviewing the Literature***

- Knomp. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review"
- Obenzinger. 2005. "What Can a Literature Review Do for Me?"

**Activities:** News discussion; internship presentations

**Week 7      May 7**

***Making a Good Argument***

→ASSIGNMENT DUE: Literature review

- Brancati, Dawn. 2018. "Chapter 6. Making Strong Arguments." In *Social Scientific Research*. Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 77-96.

**Activities:** News discussion; internship presentations; and **(time permitting)** literature review working groups.

**Week 8      May 14**

***Case Selection, Data, and Hypothesis Testing***

- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.
- Luker, ch. 6
- Few, Steven. N.D. "Data Visualization for Human Perception" in *The Encyclopedia of Human – Computer Interaction, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition*. Interaction Design Foundation. At: <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/data-visualization-for-human-perception>

*Recommended:*

- Luker, ch. 7 (this will be useful for people selecting the research proposal option)
- Gould, S.J. 2002. "The Median Isn't the Message."
- Lang, K. 2010. "Measurement Matters: Perspectives on Education Policy from an Economist and School Board Member." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 24(3)
- Hexter, J. 1971. "The Cases of the Muddy Pants, the Dead Mr. Sweet, and the Convergence of Particles, or Explanation and Prediction in History," in *The History Primer*. New York: Basic Books, 21-42.

**Activities:** News discussion; internship presentations

**Week 9      May 21**

***Round 1 of Presentations (Extra Credit with paper submission)***

**Activities:** News discussion; internship presentations

**Week 10      May 28**

***Round 2: Oral Presentations***

**Week 11      June 4**

***Round 3: Oral Presentations***

**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 and/or in class.

1. Do all required readings. You are strongly encouraged to bring questions, comments, and criticisms of the material to class.
2. Attend all class sessions, arrive on time, and stay until the end. You will lose points from your participation grade for missed classes and repeated tardiness or early departure. 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.
3. Show respect to me and to your classmates in all ways. This includes respecting the opinions and openly listening to arguments of your peers, not interrupting, and in general by paying attention and actively participating in class. I expect maturity and professionalism, so no feet on tables, "footsie" with your neighbors or similar flirtations, etc. When someone is speaking, I expect you to give their full attention with your eyes up. For example, no whispering to your neighbor, looking at your phone under the table, etc.
4. Except for certain *explicitly* approved times during class, I have a no laptop (or phone or tablet) policy. Exceptions to this rule include when you are doing group work that requires you to consult materials on-line, news articles being discussed, etc. Taking notes by hand, and fully engaging with the people in the room, [improves learning](#). Moreover, I know from past student evaluations that social media used by others is a major distraction.



5. 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.
6. I trust that you all know how to use email, Canvas, and turnitin.com. As such, mistyping my email address, forgetting to include the attachment, or any other human or technological errors are not valid excuses for late work. It doesn't matter if you can show me that you completed the work before the due date (e.g., with a date stamp), if I don't receive it, it is late. The simple reason is that it is insignificant when you complete the work. What is significant is when I have it in my possession to begin *my work* of evaluating it and providing feedback.
7. 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 with documentation in a timely fashion (at least 48 hours in advance), and you miss classes, turn assignments in late, or fail to do your work, you will be docked points accordingly.