

## POLITICAL SCIENCE 110: GLOBAL ISSUES

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### Course Description:

Looking across the global landscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we encounter some curious paradoxes: *Why do we see vigorous drug trafficking in the Western Hemisphere even as governments (including the United States) spend billions of dollars in attempts to restrain such activity? What explains why famine and chronic malnutrition engulf much of the African continent even as the “Green Revolution” of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century vastly increased global food production? Why are many of the countries most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change those who contribute least to the problem of global warming?*

There are two main objectives of this course. The **first objective** is to provide an introduction to some of the major issues and challenges facing world populations and leaders today. What explains the above paradoxes, and what’s being done to address these global challenges? The **second objective** is to understand how major issues and challenges globally are also experienced *locally* in Colorado. Students in the course will gain this “local perspective” in part through identifying, contacting, and having a conversation with a local business or organization involved with an important global issue of their choosing.

**So, what *are* “global issues”?** Let’s consider four assumptions about global issues that together provide a framework we’ll use throughout the course:

- ✓ *Global issues are global in scope.* Being “global in scope” may mean that an issue is inherently cross-border, like migration. But, it can also mean that an issue is *experienced* globally—like violence against women—even if it doesn’t literally “cross borders.”
- ✓ *Global issues are complex and interdependent.* That is, global issues not only are multi-dimensional, but also overlap in regard to causes and consequences. Understanding global issues oftentimes requires looking at political and social systems as well as natural (e.g. ecological) systems. In addition taking an interdisciplinary approach, we must pay attention to how aspects of global issues play out at local, national, and inter/transnational scales—and how these scales relate to each other in practice.
- ✓ *Global issues are inherently “political.”* That means that they are shaped by who is making decisions, how, and to whose benefit—or peril. In other words, *power matters* when we’re talking about the causes and consequences of global problems, and their solutions.

- ✓ *Global issues require collective action and problem-solving.* Global issues not only cross national borders, but also are subject to multiple interpretations within and across countries. How do we frame global issues and their potential “solutions”? How can and do multiple governments, domestic and international organizations, and businesses collaborate to address global problems? What distinguishes “business as usual” from alternative practices and/or dramatic efforts at change?

We’ll consider the ideas in this framework as we study four overarching issue areas. These include **1) the global economy, 2) violence, armed conflict, and “drug wars,” 3) environmental degradation and climate change, 4) and food and agricultural politics.** Within each of these areas, we will pay attention not only to how various people and groups present and define key issues and problems, but also to what proposed “solutions” and/or alternatives have surfaced in local and global contexts.

### **Course Objectives:**

- To identify and explain the overarching features of several major issues and challenges facing world populations and leaders today.
- To describe and analyze the substance of major contemporary global issues including global trade, violence against women, industrial agriculture, water scarcity, and climate change.
- To compare and contrast government, private sector, and civil society responses and proposed solutions to global issues.
- To assess and think critically about how global issues are experienced *locally* in Colorado through identifying, contacting, and talking with a local business, organization, or government entity.
- To learn about career opportunities in Political Science and International Affairs related to major global/local issues.

### **Required Texts:**

1. Brown, Lester. (2011) *World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co. Inc.
2. Rivoli, Pietra. (2009) *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
3. Carolan, Michael. (2011) *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*. New York: Earthscan.

**All required texts will be available for purchase at the UNCO Bookstore located on the first floor of the University Center (970-351-2135).** Brown’s book has also been uploaded as a PDF to Blackboard. The book is also available for purchase (\$15) or free download here: <http://www.earthpolicy.org/books/wote>.

**All required readings *not contained* in the above texts are posted on Blackboard (BB). You are also responsible for material contained in films, handouts, lectures, guest lectures, and other supplements to the readings.**

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:**

1. **Attendance (5%).** Attendance is mandatory. Attendance will be taken at the start of class (you run the risk of being marked absent if you arrive late). Missing more than five classes—

i.e. almost two full weeks of class—will result in failing this course requirement. *Because of this attendance policy, you do not need to email me if you miss class. However, a written letter of explanation and in-person meeting with me during office hours is required if you miss five or more courses. Missing more than five classes will put you at risk for failing the course.*

2. **Preparation and Engagement (10%).** This part of your grade includes graded short exercises and quizzes—some of which you will submit online before coming to class and others will be completed in class. The best way to perform well in this category is to 1) come to class, and 2) complete the readings due prior to class. *Note that you will have more opportunities to participate and be engaged in class if you bring the required readings with you to class (books, and when possible, articles printed from Blackboard). Exercises and quizzes cannot be made up, nor are there late submissions accepted.*
3. **Current events. (10%)** Staying informed about what’s going on in the world is one of the best ways to see what you’re learning in class in action. For this assignment, you will deliver a 3-minute presentation in class on a news story about a global issue of your choice. On the day of your presentation, you will turn in a hard copy of the article. **See Blackboard for full instructions and to sign up for your presentation through the “Current events sign-up” link on the Blackboard menu (first come, first serve!).** *There are no make ups for this assignment. To change your presentation date, you must find an open spot on the sign-up sheet at least two-days before your original presentation date.* To search for articles, see the “Newspaper Source” full text database on the library website.
4. **Global Issues in Local Perspective Interview and Report.\* (25%)** What do “global issues” look like on a *local* scale? For this assignment, you will identify, contact, and talk with one agency, organization, or business in Greeley or the surrounding area (in Colorado) that directly relates to a “global issue” of your choosing. There are several mini-assignments you will complete before submitting your final report, each with their own deadline (see below), in order to help you progress at a steady pace. The final outcome of the assignment will be a 4-6 page report that details your local findings and puts them in the context of the “global issue” you are examining. Assignment details are provided on Blackboard in the Assignments folder. *No late final reports accepted. Mini-assignments will be docked 10% for each day they are late.*
5. **Midterm exam.\* (25%)** To be taken March 2. This in-class exam will cover readings, films, and other course materials introduced thus far.
6. **Final Exam.\* (25%)** To be submitted on Friday, May 8.

\* **There are no exam make-ups.** Please note the date of class exams on your calendar and talk to me ASAP if you foresee a problem with an exam date. Dates of final exams are determined by the University and cannot be adjusted.

**Academic Integrity:** *Any violation of academic integrity standards (plagiarism, etc.) will result, minimally, in failing the compromised course assignment, and potentially the entire class. All violations of the Student Code of Conduct will be addressed in accordance with University policy. See [http://www.unco.edu/dos/pdf/StudentCodeofConduct.pdf#nameddest=SC\\_integrity](http://www.unco.edu/dos/pdf/StudentCodeofConduct.pdf#nameddest=SC_integrity).*

**Technology Policies and Expectations:** It is expected that during our relatively short amount of time together each week in class you will be respectful of your instructor and peers. This is demonstrated by **not using headphones in class and keeping phones off (or silenced) and in your bag -- not on your desk -- for the entire class period.** If you prefer to take notes on a laptop or other device, please sit towards the side of the classroom so as not to distract your peers.

**Disability Accommodations:** Any student requesting disability accommodations for this class must inform the instructor to receive appropriate and timely accommodations for the semester. All accommodations will be given on a confidential basis. Students are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Services office on campus (970-351-2289) to receive certified documentation and an accommodation letter to present to the course instructor. If you are unsure if you qualify for accommodations, please contact the Disability Support Services office at the number above.

## **PART I: GLOBAL ISSUES, GLOBAL PROBLEMS**

### **What are “global issues”? What’s to be done about them?**

- Jan. 12* Course Introduction & Overview
- Jan. 14* Brown, *World on the Edge*, Chap. 1
- Jan. 16* Macy and Johnstone, “Three Stories of Our Time”  
✓ **Due by 3 pm:** One-page reading response. See Assignments folder in BB for prompt and submission instructions.

## **PART II: THE GLOBAL ECONOMY**

### **Global Trade and Globalization**

- Jan. 19* **NO CLASS – Martin Luther King Jr. Day**
- Jan. 21* Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Chapters 1 and 2
- Jan. 23* Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Chapter 5
- Jan. 26* Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Chapters 6, 7, 8
- Jan. 28* Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Chapters 9 and 10
- Jan. 30* Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Chapters 13 and 14

## **PART III: VIOLENCE, ARMED CONFLICT, AND “DRUG WARS”**

## “Everyday” Violence against Women

- Feb. 2** World Health Organization (WHO), “Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence,” Introduction and Section 2
- Feb. 4** World Health Organization (WHO), “Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence,” Sections 3 and 4
- Feb. 6** Luden, “Student Activists Keep Pressure On Campus Sexual Assault,” NPR  
✓ **Due by 3 pm**: Proposal for GILP assignment. See GILP folder under Assignments on BB for prompt and submission instructions.

## Violence against Women in the Context of War/Conflict

- Feb. 9** Goodwin, “Silence=Rape”
- Feb. 11** Mayanja, “Armed Conflict and Women”
- Feb. 13** Bachelet, “Increasing Women’s Access to Justice in Post-Conflict Societies”

## Cross-Border “Drug Wars”

- Feb. 16** Kellner & Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War,” *World Policy Journal*
- Feb. 18** Reiss, “Beyond Supply and Demand: Obama’s Drug Wars in Latin America,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* (Jan/Feb. 2010), pp. 27-31.
- Feb. 20**  
→ **Due by 3 pm**: Draft interview questions for GILP assignment (include questions, plus the name of the person and organization/business you are contacting in a single document; see Assignments folder on BB for instructions). **Bring a copy of your interview questions to class.**
- Feb. 23** Barcott, “The Great Marijuana Experiment: A Tale of Two Drug Wars,” *Rolling Stone*
- Feb. 25** Neuman, “Coca Licensing is Weapon in Bolivia’s Drug War” (NYT, 12/26/2012)
- Feb. 27**  
→ **In-class review for midterm exam** – bring your notes and questions!
- March 2** **Midterm exam**

## PART IV: THE GLOBAL COMMONS

### Environmental Degradation and Crises: the Challenge of Global Governance

- March 4** Brown, *World on the Edge*, Chapters 2 and 3, “Falling Water Tables and Shrinking Harvests” and “Eroding Soils and Expanding Deserts”
- March 6** Agrawal & Lemos, "A Greener Revolution in the Making," *Environment* 49(5) (2007)

### The Politics of Fossil Fuels: Energy and the Environment

- March 9** Brown, *World on the Edge*, Chapters 4 and 6
- March 11** McKibbin, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math”
- March 13** Connor, “UN Climate Change Deal in Peru”
- March 14-22** NO CLASS – Spring Break

### “Blue Gold”: Water Scarcity, Conflicts, and Dispossession

- March 23** Pearce, “Splash and grab: The global scramble for water”  
Rulli, Saviore, & D’Odorico, “Global land and water grabbing”
- March 25** Guest Speaker: Gregory McNamee, University of Arizona: “Gila: The Life and Death of an American River”
- March 27** Finnegan, David, “Leasing the Rain, *The New Yorker* (2002)  
\* **Due by 9 am**: GILP interview notes and report outline. Include in one document your (typed) notes and your report outline. See Assignments folder on BB for submission instructions and **bring one hard copy to class**.

### The Debate over Hydraulic Fracturing

- March 30** Natural Resources Defense Council Fact Sheets (2)
- April 1** Pierce, Richard, “Natural Gas Fracking Addresses All of Our Major Problems,” *Journal of Energy and Environmental Law* (May 2013).
- April 3** Brown, *World on the Edge*, Chapters 8 and 9

### Making Progress on GILP Report

*April 6*

\* **Due by 3 pm**: GILP Report Rough Draft (see Assignments folder on BB for submission instructions). **Bring hard copy to class for peer-editing session and Q & A.**

*April 8*

\* **Due by 3 pm**: GILP Final Report (see Assignments folder on BB for submission instructions)

## **PART V: GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEMS**

*April 10* Rivoli, *Travels of a T-Shirt*, Chap. 3

*April 13* Carolan, *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*, Chapter 1

*April 15* Carolan, *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*, Chapter 2

*April 17* Carolan, *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*, Chapter 3

*April 20 & 22* Carolan, *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*, Chapter 5

*April 24* Carolan, *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*, Chapter 6

*April 27* Carolan, *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*, Chapter 7

*April 29* Carolan, *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*, Chapter 9

*May 1* **Course review & conclusion**

**Final Exam: Friday, May 8**