

PS160 - Section Syllabus - Introduction to World Politics

Winter 2014

Section Schedule: Monday/Wednesday 2-3PM (Section 4) - Tuesday/Thursday 4-5PM (Section 9)

Section Location: 271 Dennison Building (Section 4) - 2407 Mason Hall (Section 9)

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Course website: <http://umich.edu/~jasonsd/ps160.html>

“It had to do with Cuba and missiles, I’m pretty sure.” White House Press Secretary
Dana Perino on the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 2007.

Section Overview

We will, of course, spend plenty of time in section discussing topics related to the lectures and readings. However, it might be worthwhile for you to know that sections taught by different GSIs can vary substantially in their emphasis. My approach is to focus on developing *how* to engage with the substantive content, rather than emphasizing covering substantive content that you would be able to learn by reading on your own. Knowledge of substantive content is important (and expected of you), but it is not the area where I feel that sections can provide the most added value.

Active participation in section is expected, and you should always feel free to disagree with me and your classmates. It should go without saying that any such disagreement should be carried out in a respectful manner. A good portion of the section will consist of a diplomatic simulation exercise, the details of which will be provided later in the class. When I determine it may be helpful, I may provide notes on content covered in section, but these will likely be designed for my own use and should not be expected.

Suggested Current Events Reading

I highly recommend regularly reading *The Economist* as a way of keeping up with current events. The analysis tends to be better than most other news periodicals, and you get pretty broad coverage. Also worthwhile is the blog *The Monkey Cage* (currently hosted by *The Washington Post*), which posts news-article length accounts of research by political scientists. These blog posts tend to be more interesting (in my opinion) and better researched than most news articles, and are great for getting a sense of what political science actually looks like.

Course Grading Breakdown

20% - First midterm.

20% - Second midterm.

20% - Final examination.

20% - Diplomatic simulation.

10% - Response papers (four minimum).

5% - Attendance.

5% - Participation.

Response Papers

You are required to write at least four 250-500 word (approximately) response papers over the course of the term, which will be due by the end of the week of the lecture on the readings which your paper is a response to. If you submit a response paper before the lecture in question, I will grade it more leniently. At least one must be completed by February 17th. These will be graded using traditional letter grades. You are welcome to write more than four, and if you do, I will use only the grades of your top four papers. The goal here is to give you a chance to practice writing critically in a relatively low-stakes environment.

These papers should not merely summarize the arguments of the readings. You are, instead, asked to give your thoughts about the arguments presented in the readings; this should involve critical engagement. For instance, you can discuss the readings in terms of their benefits, pitfalls, implications, applications, etc.

Attendance and Participation

You get three unexcused absences without penalty, after which each following absence will result in a one percent reduction off your final grade, to a maximum of five points deducted (i.e. your entire attendance grade). Besides this, five percent will be allocated based on my assessment of your participation in discussions during section. Please be ready to begin class by the Michigan Time start of the section (i.e. 10 minutes after the hour).

Communication

Come by office hours! It is much easier to discuss papers and exams, course content, where to get the best doughnuts in Ann Arbor, etc. in person than via e-mail. That being said, you can expect a response to e-mails within 48 hours, and I generally respond much more quickly than that. Please include PS160 in the subject so that I do not confuse your e-mails with spam. If you can't make office hours due to some conflict, please send me a note to set up an appointment.

Academic Honesty

Please don't plagiarize. We usually catch the students who do, and the outcome ends up being way worse for them than it would have been if they had just submitted a paper they weren't particularly happy with. Be careful with citations, as lack of awareness that you should have cited something will not be considered an acceptable excuse for failure to cite things properly.