Spring Semester 2016
Understanding Global Politics (POLS 110)
Syllabus

Women activists lie down on the road near the police barricade during their sleeping protest demanding women's rights in the new constitution in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Aug. 7.
(Photo: Navesh Chitrakar/Reuters)

Course Instructor: Riddhi Shah
Lecture Timings: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 12.30 to 1.20 pm
About the Course

This course is designed to equip undergraduate students with knowledge and tool kit to understand and analyze significant political issues facing us today. We will begin with understanding what we mean by ‘politics’; the role of politics in society; the origin of the modern state and graduate to issues such as the political and social consequences of colonialism and imperialism; how people politically participate; and the challenges increasing political violence presents us with. Very importantly, the readings assigned largely focus on Hawaii, Pacific Islands and Asia. Students will therefore be exposed to issues, debates and perspectives from diverse backgrounds and communities.

At the end of this course, students will be equipped to interrogate and analyze issues and global actors that are vital to our lives in a critical fashion. Students will not only have gained an understanding but will also have gained the capacity to express their understanding of these complexities fluidly through class discussions and their writing assignments.

Class Objectives

- To understand better what issues diverse people across Hawai‘i, Pacific and Asia are facing and how they respond to them creatively and even in alliance.
- To generate a better comprehension of key Political Science concepts necessary for new students such as politics, nation-states, colonialism, imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism, postcolonial, political violence, development, sustainability, transnationalism and so on.
- To be able to undertake incisive analysis of intersecting issues and be able to produce coherent and comprehensive thought-provoking articles and/or papers such as neo-liberalism, self-determination, race, class, struggles for indigeneity, food sovereignty, development, trade and conflict.

Texts

Since the course aims at dealing with varied issues, actors and regions the readings assigned are drawn from a variety of sources. Readings will be uploaded to Laulima for easy access. Students are expected to have done most of the readings assigned before each class.

Assessments

Weekly Journals (40%): Students are expected to maintain a weekly journal, where they will provide a 400 words (approximately one page) summary of the issues discussed in class and their reflections on the topics. Summary of the readings must be kept at a minimum. Please feel free to engage with any opinions that were aired in class. This engagement can be positive and can even contradict or argue with others.
comments and opinions as long as it is done respectfully. At least two students will present their reflections and points for discussion at the beginning of the each class. You must have submitted at least 14 journals by the end of the semester.

**Research Paper (45%)**: The final assignment for the class is a 6-7 page (double spaced excluding your references and bibliography) research paper. The paper will reflect the student’s ability to critically analyze and coherently communicate their arguments on any of the issues discussed in class. The student will engage with 6 readings assigned in class as references and four others not assigned in the syllabus in the process of writing their research papers.

**Research Paper Outline (10%)**: Students will write a 300 word outline or abstract for their intended research paper topic and present it in class. It is expected that students will discuss any topics of interest with the instructor before submitting their outlines. The due date for the paper outline will be assigned in class and details on what this presentation must include will be further discussed in class.

**Class Participation (5%)**: The class encourages students to participate in class discussions. It is healthy to speak your mind especially in a political science class. The final aim of encouraging discussions and debates is to stimulate a healthy respect for difference as well as an open mindedness to other opinions.

**Please Remember:**

1. We will be discussing important, interesting, difficult and sensitive topics. Respectful disagreement and debate are welcome. Personal attacks, however, will not be tolerated.
2. Be on time. Our class time is limited.
3. Late journals will NOT be accepted
4. Three unexcused absences will mean a failed grade
5. Please see me if you have a problem or issues that you feel will affect your final grade in this course.
6. Cell phones MUST be turned off during every class

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1**
We will spend this week getting to know each other and begin acquiring a better understanding of politics. The week will address questions such as how can we study politics critically?

Readings:


**Week 2**

We will delve deeper into the origins of the state as we know it today.

Video: Treaty of Westphalia, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-WO73Dh7rY


Moʻolelo Aloha ʻĀina, About the Project, http://moolelo.manainfo.com/


Week 3

The next few weeks have been dedicated to understanding political systems of the past and the present that exist(ed) at local, national and international levels. Questions to be explored this week include: what do we mean by democracy? Is democracy suited and beneficial to all? Does the free market system deliver its promise? Does trade ensure economic development?

Holiday on 18th January, Monday

Readings:


**Week 4**

This week we will continue our conversation on political systems. Furnished with a critical understanding of democracy and liberalism, we are now prepared to discuss authoritarian forms of governance meaningfully along with justice dispensation in democracies and authoritarian states. Questions we may address are: What are the forms of authoritarianism – new and old? Is justice dispensation in democracies more fair compared to other forms of governance models? Are local communities equipped and/or autonomous enough to dispense justice themselves?

Readings:


Effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Systems, Problems and National Declaration Harihar Sethy

*Increasing participation in democratic institutions through decentralization: Empowering women and scheduled castes and tribes through panchayat raj in rural India*, E Bryld - Democratization, 2001 - Taylor & Francis

**Week 5**

Our discussions on political systems will be incomplete without addressing colonialism and imperialism – the political systems prevalent in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Understanding what colonialism and imperialism are and their continuing impact on our society is integral for this course. Questions for the week are: How is colonialism different from imperialism? What were some of the consequences of colonialism/imperialism?

Reading:

Sankaran Krishna, “How does Colonialism Work?” from Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss (eds.) *Global Politics*


Moore, C., Inventing Melanesia, History Department, University of Queensland, 12th Pacific History Association Conference, 22-26 June 1998.


**Week 6**

Elderly Okinawans trying to block the planned expansion of a U.S. military base last month. Credit: Kyodo/Reuters

This week’s discussions will once again take up the issue of colonialism and imperialism. However we will shift our focus from history to more contemporary issues. Questions: Have colonialism and imperialism really ended? What are some consequences of colonialism and imperialism that continue to manifest themselves in the present?

Holiday February 15, Monday

Guest Lecturer: Noelani Goodyear-Kaopua

Readings:


Nancy Lutkehaus, “Transpacific studies and the cultures of U.S. imperialism”, in Janet Hoskin edited Transpacific Studies: Framing an emerging field

**Week 7**

This week we will attempt to de-mystify the complex transnational structures put in place by the international community. Globalization and Regionalism are both integral to this discussion. Interestingly, we will attempt to unravel and understand structures and alliances that are traditionally not addressed under this heading. Questions are: What is globalization? What is regionalism? What is the impact of globalization on local communities? Is globalization advantageous for everyone involved?

Documentary Film: Life and Debt


Week 8
This week we will focus our discussion on the impact of globalization on the fishing, agriculture and food sovereignty. Questions: What is sustainable development? Is sustainable development in fishing and agriculture truly beneficial to nature or us? Can science not be the answer when it comes to saving nature? Is traditional farming and fishing truly unscientific? Do GMOs represent the epitome of scientific agriculture? Is ‘scientifically’ intensive agriculture really the answer to all the woes of the world?

Assignment: Collect idioms, phrases, saying, jokes on fishing and/or agricultural practices for sharing in class.

Video: Dynamite and Cyanide Fishing, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0dDk_EARJw

Readings


Week 9
Video: Vandana Shiva on GMO Crops, University of Hawai’I, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzFFz14r_tg

Readings:
Hawai’i Seed, “About GMOs”, http://www.hawaiiseed.org/about-gmos/


Clare Gupta, “Return to Freedom: Anti-GMO AlohaʻĀina Activism on Molokai as an Expression of Place Based Food Sovereignty”, Globalizations Special Issue: Food Sovereignty: Concept, Practice and Social Movements, 12(4), 2015.


Week 10

Our discussions in the last few weeks have hopefully impressed upon us the complex political system and climate in which we survive. This week our goal is to understand how we and people around us politically participate in these complex structures. Questions: Does the power to choose your leader necessarily ensure that people’s leader gets elected? Do democracies ensure equal rights from everyone? How do people politically participate in failed states?
Video: Her War: Women vs ISIS (RT Documentary)  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqI0a4VgEs8

Readings:


Roderick Labrador, “Chapter 4” and “Conclusion: Unsettling Hawaii”, in *Building Filipino Hawaii*, University of Illinois, 2015.


**Week 11**  
Spring Recess, March 21 to 25th 2015

**Week 12**  
**Presentations of your research paper outlines due this week!**

We continue our conversation on how people can participate politically this week. Questions: How the internet plays an integral role in social movements today?

Readings for this week have been kept to a minimum to give students time to prepare their outlines as well as presentations.

Video: *How Facebook Changed the World: Arab Spring Part - 1*, BBC Documentary, Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WNd-Zm0K9A

Readings:

Week 13

Questions for this week: What are Non-Governmental Organizations? Can civil societies bring about change? Is the impact of civil society always positive? Should civil society work with the military in difficult environments? Are there consequences of such an alliance?

Readings:

Stuart Kirsch, Indigenous movements and the risks of counterglobalization: Tracking the campaign against Papua New Guinea’s Ok Tedi mine. [Link](http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/73268/ae.2007.34.2.303.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)


Week 14

Having discussed several political systems prevalent around the globe, it is time to discuss one of the most debated political system – religion. Questions to be explored:

What is the role of religion in politics and of politics in religion? Is religion inherently traditional and opposed to ‘modernity’? Can traditions and customs become a pillar of community involvement and strength? What do we mean by ‘secularism’? Is there a difference between being secular and being tolerant?

This is a sensitive issue for all of us but requires a discussion and exchanges of opinions nonetheless. It is therefore expected that everyone in class will be at their best behavior, especially when people will disagree with each other.

Holiday April 13th, 2016 Wednesday
Guest Lecturers: Nevzat Soguk

Readings:


Week 15

In today's world of hyper-violence it would be remiss to not address the issue of political violence prevalent in societies. This class has a number of readings that deal with different forms of political violence including communal violence, ethnic violence, gender violence, racial violence and civil wars. Questions are: What do we mean by terrorism? Is one man’s freedom fighter always another’s terrorist? Where is the place of state based violence in narratives of political violence? How is ethnicity different from race? How can civil society prevent political violence? How should we understand the root causes underneath political violence?

Movie: Parzania, 2005, 1hr.54 minutes

Readings:
Ashutosh Varshney, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, in Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, Yale University, 2002.

Omar Sarwar, “Human Terror, Sacrificial Horror: Suicide Bombings and Contemporary Global Politics”, 3 Quarks Daily

**Week 16**

We will continue our discussions on political violence.


**Week 17**

May 02nd, Monday study leave to prepare for your research paper.

May 04th, Wednesday submission of your research papers.

Please Note: The Professor withholds all rights to make changes to the syllabus as needed.