

Contemporary Issues JTB023 WS 2023 - Mgr. Zachary Lavengood  
Wednesday 15:30-16:50  
Room C322

### **Annotation**

Contemporary Issues is an obligatory course offered as part of International Area Studies and other relevant BA programs curricula. It is a two-semester course running round the year and regularly updated.

### **Aims and objectives**

The course discusses contemporary issues in international politics. Having successfully completed this highly interactive course, students are expected to have gained understanding of some of the most pressing contemporary problems and development trends in regions covered by the International Area Studies program. The primary aim of the course is to encourage students to follow news on a regular, daily basis and thus to foster their working habits and critical reading/analytical skills as well as help them refine their reporting and presentation skills.

### **Teaching Method**

This course emphasizes discussion in the classroom as a means to reinforce critical thinking, debate skills, and the ability to quickly digest unfamiliar information and place it within a wider, global context. During the course students will be required to provide a weekly news synopsis and one 15 minute presentation with supporting essay.

### **Course Requirements**

Participation-40%

Weekly news synopsis -30%

Presentation & essay-30%

Due to the nature of this course attendance and active participation is mandatory. Students are permitted one unexcused absence, further absences will require explanation and could result in a lower grade or failure of the course.

Students will prepare a minimum 1 page (300-400 words) synopsis weekly on an impactful contemporary issue of their choosing. Topics should focus on international, regional, or national affairs (ex. Conflict, development, economics, politics, environment, etc.) and have occurred within the past year. These synopsis should not be focused on the topic of the week that they are turned in (ex. No students should write about the Ukraine war weeks 2). Citations are mandatory and should take the form of footnotes. If you are unsure about a topic please consult the instructor.

Each student is required to present one topic in a 10 minute presentation at the end of the course. The students should have their topic chosen by week 6 and approved by the instructor, the sign-up sheet can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zArbiJeBK-wn51L6nP6MfGq86Q0zZ6gcoN5s6I92XIE/edit?usp=sharing>

The topic of this presentation should not correspond to any of the instructor's weekly topics, though they may be related. The topic may be the same as one of the student's weekly synopsis papers. The presentations should provide an analytical overview of the topic similar to the instructor's weekly presentations. Presentations should end with two open-ended questions to prompt class discussion (~5 min, total presentation time 15 min per student). A corresponding essay of 5 standard pages (not including bibliography) on the topic will be due in place of a final exam (due date TBD). This essay should also be properly cited with footnotes and a bibliography.

Weekly synopsis papers should be emailed to [contemporaryissuesims@gmail.com](mailto:contemporaryissuesims@gmail.com) by the Sunday before class

Presentation essays must be submitted to turnitin.com (**do not try to sign up for turnitin before week six due to ongoing issues with the CUNI license**)

Class ID:40605132

Enrollment Key: abc123

### **Course Schedule**

Note: Should a major event occur (war, major political shift, etc.) weekly topics may change

**Week 1** Introduction to course, syllabus discussion, presentation instructions

**Week 2** Ukraine War - background and recent developments

**Week 3** Israel, Gaza, and the world

**Week 4** National issues in the upcoming 2024 US election

**Week 5** Coups and armed conflict in Africa

**Week 6** China in the 21st century

**Week 7** Global flashpoints

**Week 8** India in the 21st century

**Week 9** Climate change- global highlights

**Week 10** Global poverty and un-development

**Week 11** Presentations

**Week 12** Presentations