Spring Semester 2020
MC 221 (Section 001)
IR II: Politics of International Economic Relations
Professor Mark Axelrod (email: axelrod3@msu.edu or phone: 517-353-8607)

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Overall Grade	Further details on page(s):
Attendance and Quality Participation	Every class period; reading notes weekly	20%	2
Short Essay on Theoretical Approaches	January 29	5%	2
Preliminary Research Question & Hypotheses	February 17	10%	3
Midterm Exam	February 26, in class	20%	2
Final Research Proposal	April 13	20%	3-4
Final Exam	Apr 30, 7:45-9:45am	25%	4

You are strongly encouraged to meet and discuss all assignments with Professor Axelrod and classmates, as well as staff in the MSU Libraries, throughout the semester. One goal of these assignments is to learn more about a set of substantive topics. Perhaps more importantly, they are designed to enhance your research, writing, and oral communication skills, including your familiarity and comfort with legal documents. By receiving and integrating instructor and peer feedback along the way, you will strengthen those skills.

You will receive a grade for each day of class and each assignment on the 4.0 scale. At the end of the semester, those grades will be weighted and averaged as indicated above. Weighted averages of greater than 3.75 will result in a 4.0 reported grade for the semester; 3.25-3.75 = 3.5 reported grade; 2.75-3.25 = 3.0 reported grade; 2.25-2.75=2.5 reported grade; 1.75-2.25=2.0 reported grade; and so forth.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS COURSE WILL BE CONDUCTED IN LINE WITH MADISON COLLEGE AND MSU POLICIES ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY.
The Student Handbook states: *"**Academic Honesty**: Article 2.III.B.2 of the Academic Freedom Report states: "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, James Madison College adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course unless explicitly authorized by the professor. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades may receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment and be reported for academic integrity violations."*
Violations of academic dishonesty principles will result in punishments up to and including a 0.0 grade for the course. Under MSU guidelines, I must report all such incidents to the University.
Among other requirements, academic honesty requires citing the source of any and all facts or ideas in all written assignments with a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical documentation immediately after that source is utilized. You may use any citation format, as long as it is consistent and provides sufficient detail for your sources to be checked. The MSU library provides a number of well-known formats at: http://www2.lib.msu.edu/research/cite-resources.jsp If you plan to attend law school, I recommend that you follow the Blue Book format, which is required for all legal research.
Any paper that does not follow this standard will receive zero credit.
Please also remember that the internet is a powerful source of information. While it may ease your research efforts, it can also help to identify your use of other people's work.
IF IN DOUBT, I WILL BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS THE PROPER COURSE OF ACTION.

Grading and Assignment Details

All written assignments – except reading notes – must be submitted <u>on paper</u>.

> **REMINDER: For all assignments, late papers (unless accompanied by doctor's note or other verified excuse) will receive a reduction of one grade point for every two days after the deadline (i.e., 1 minute to 48 hours late reduces grade by 1.0; 48-96 hours late reduces grade by 2.0). I do recognize that difficulties arise outside of the course, and I will therefore allow <u>a single</u> "life happened" extension on <u>one</u> written assignment (short essay, research question, OR final proposal). If something happens and you need an extension, you may use this option for a three-day extension, no questions asked. Please email me before the deadline so I know you are using the extension. However, you can only use this option once during the semester, so plan accordingly. <u>The "life happened" extension may not be used to reschedule exams.</u>**
>
> **Similarly, you may use <u>one</u> free absence from class with no questions asked and no grade impact. For all other excused absences, please discuss with me ahead of time and provide a reason for your need to miss the session.**

Additional details will be provided in class before each assignment. If you have any confusion, please ask for clarification!

1. **Attendance, preparation, small group activities, and *quality* class participation** (**20% of your overall semester grade**) – <u>Quality participation involves comments and questions that advance our collective understanding of concepts discussed in this course</u>. In past semesters, I have observed a high correlation between quality participation and exam grades in MC 221, suggesting that classroom participation is an important method for internalizing concepts and lessons from this course.
   In order to reward your preparation for class, and encourage you to stay on top of the readings, a portion of your participation grade will be drawn from <u>weekly reading notes</u>. These notes will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis and must be either submitted by email or brought to class in hard copy <u>at least once each week, prior to Wednesday class meetings</u>. Reading notes may be in summary, outline, or any other form that best helps you process the readings. They need not be comprehensive, but should <u>demonstrate that you have read and understood **all** assigned material</u>. Reading notes will receive full credit (i.e., 4.0) each week, as long as they demonstrate you have read all assigned material. I reserve the right to give partial (or zero) credit for incomplete notes. In addition, we may have up to 3 graded quizzes on assigned readings throughout the semester.

   I will assess preparation and participation each class period in order to establish the remainder of your semester participation grade. On a daily basis:
   > **4.0** indicates that you attended class, prepared well, participated actively, and contributed important insights to the discussion based on sound preparation for class;
   > **3.0** indicates that you attended class, prepared well, listened attentively, and made an occasional contribution;
   > **2.0** indicates that you attended class but declined to participate or arrived unprepared;
   > **0.1-1.0** indicates that you attended class without paying attention to class activities (e.g., you were sleeping, or focused on an electronic device instead of the discussion);
   > **0.0** indicates that you did not attend class or provide a reasonable excuse in advance for your absence. [As noted above, you may use <u>one</u> free absence from class with no questions asked and no grade impact. For all other excused absences, please discuss with me ahead of time and provide a reason for your need to miss the session. If you cannot let me know in advance, please provide written documentation of the situation afterwards.]

   Most grades will fall between these categories, but this rubric outlines expectations.

2. **2-3 page essay on which theoretical approach to international political economy you find most compelling** – *__due by the beginning of class January 29__* (**5% of final grade**). This assignment will prepare you for the midterm exam by requiring you to comment on the different theories considered in class (liberalism, mercantilism/realism, structuralism, feminism, constructivism). You will select a recent news story on international political economy, identifying which theoretical approach provides the strongest explanation for states' economic behavior in the story. You will then support your claim

with evidence regarding why that theory is most accurate. The best essays will also explain why other theoretical approaches are insufficient. A feedback sheet will be posted on D2L in advance to help you understand expectations.

For the short essay, **4.0** indicates exceeding expectations, a clear understanding of theoretical approaches, successful response to alternative arguments, and an innovative analytical approach to the study of international economic relations; **3.0** indicates clear understanding of one theoretical approach with limited response to alternative perspectives; **2.0** indicates limited grasp of theoretical approaches, and any lower grade indicates that you have not properly completed the assignment. Most grades will fall between these categories, but please use these ranges as a guide for expectations.

3. **Midterm Exam** – in class, February 26 (**20% of final grade** – 4 identification questions each worth 10% of the exam grade, and 1 essay question worth 60% of the exam grade). Identification and essay questions *will be drawn from both readings and class sessions*. Sample identification questions and answers will be posted on D2L, along with grading information for essay questions. The essay grade scale is similar to that for the short essay assignment above.

4. **Preliminary Research Question and Hypotheses** – *due by the beginning of class February 17* (**10% of final grade**) [Details for both parts of this assignment are provided below]

5. **6-8 page Research Proposal** – *due by the beginning of class April 13* (**20% of final grade**)

Your research proposal will pose a "why" question and should be designed to *explain* some aspect of the international political economy. The proposal may address any topic of your choosing related to the theme of this course. The assignment will take place in two parts detailed below.

This assignment has four primary goals: 1) to become more comfortable conducting international relations research; 2) to better understand how scholars have developed and tested the explanations you read in course materials and the news; 3) to identify areas in which international political economy research requires additional evidence; 4) to strengthen writing skills. Previous students in MC221 have used their research papers as first steps towards senior thesis or field experience projects.

Explanatory research goes beyond description to show *why* the world works as it does. For example: *Why* does the United States give more food aid than Canada? Or, *why* did India open its markets to foreign investment more in the last 20 years than it did previously? Or, *why* does the United States ratify international economic agreements more frequently than international human rights treaties? Note that each of these questions starts with an observation about *how some outcome varies* (i.e., level of food aid in different countries, India's openness in different time periods, US behavior in different subject areas). Research can then be designed to explain that variation.

Scientific research tests hypothesized explanations for the observed variation. *For this assignment, you are not expected to carry out the proposed research. Instead, you will design a clear process for conducting future research*, identifying key case studies or data and how they would be analyzed. Your proposal should be as detailed as possible in order to demonstrate the plausibility of carrying out this project if resources (e.g., travel money, unclassified documents, etc) were available.

a. Preliminary Research Questions and Hypotheses are due February 17 at the beginning of class
The first part of this assignment will outline the research question you will ask, and possible explanations for the variation that you wish to explain. It should be 1-3 pages and include the following information:
- Proposed topic and why it is interesting for the world or research purposes
- A "why" question, including the variation to be explained
- Hypothesized answer(s) to the question, *and the logic behind your explanation(s)*; these hypotheses should draw on existing scholarship related to your topic.
- Though not required, you may also include a preliminary idea of how to test your hypotheses – what cases or evidence you would use in an ideal world (Remember that your proposal will focus on the *ideal* data or case material...think about the *best possible evidence*, rather than the best currently available)
- *At least* 2 preliminary sources other than course readings – these references can be academic publications or primary sources (i.e., not your friend's blog); these sources should demonstrate where your research is headed.
You will receive in-depth comments from Professor Axelrod by spring break to facilitate your efforts in preparing the full research proposal.

b. Final research proposals are due <u>April 13</u> at the beginning of class
Your final proposal will be the result of this semester's research efforts. It should contain a refined explanatory research question (including the variation to be explained), a brief review of existing scholarship on the topic, and hypothesized answer(s) drawing on existing IR theories and your own clear logic. You should then clearly identify what evidence would help you differentiate among possible explanations. The proposal should be 6-8 pages (not including reference list), double spaced with 1" margins and 12-point Times New Roman or similar font.

<u>There is no minimum number of sources, but every fact or idea drawn from external sources must be identified with a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical documentation immediately after it is presented.</u>
You may use any citation format, as long as it is consistent and provides sufficient detail for your sources to be checked. The library provides a number of well-known formats at: <u>http://www2.lib.msu.edu/research/cite-resources.jsp</u>
<u>Any final proposal that does not follow this standard will receive zero credit.</u>
The following categories will be used to assess your final research proposal:
- Clearly defined question and hypotheses – Have you explicitly noted your research question and expected findings? Do your question and hypotheses guide the research design?
- Clarity/organization/structure – Is the paper organized in a logical manner (with hypotheses that would answer the question and research methods that would assess the hypotheses)? Is the writing clear and easy to follow?
- Accurate representation of theories/concepts – Does your analysis draw on appropriate concepts discussed in class and/or other sources? Have you fully addressed existing scholarship on this topic? Did you correctly apply those concepts to your situation?
- Analysis/logic – Does your hypothesis make logical sense, and have you explained why? Have you addressed relevant alternative explanations? Is the research design appropriate for testing hypotheses?
- Clear understanding of the desired evidence – Have you selected appropriate cases for analysis? Have you clearly identified appropriate data/evidence from each of those cases, and appropriate means of analyzing that evidence? Have you clearly explained why this research design is the best way to test hypotheses?
- Answered question completely – Will your proposed research fully answer the question? Have you addressed all required parts of the assignment?

A **<u>4.0</u>** grade indicates positive responses to all of these questions and an innovative research idea that will advance the field of international political economy. **<u>3.0</u>** indicates mostly positive responses to these questions, while **<u>2.0</u>** indicates mixed responses, and any lower grades indicate that you have not properly completed the assignment. Most grades will fall between these categories, but please use these ranges as a guide for expectations.
I will post examples of strong research proposals for your reference. If you do not see them on D2L, please feel free to remind me!

6. **Final Exam** – <u>Thursday, May 3, 5:45 - 7:45pm</u> (**25% of final grade** – 2 essay questions, equally weighted)
   The final exam grade scale will be similar to the midterm, with **<u>4.0</u>** indicating in-depth understanding of a broad range of concepts, clear reasoning and strong evidence to support arguments, clear explanation of the limits to alternative explanations, an ability to integrate across different components of the course, and innovative thinking; **<u>3.0</u>** indicates clear understanding of concepts and a well-supported argument, with limited attention to alternative explanations or innovative thinking; **<u>2.0</u>** indicates a more limited grasp of relevant concepts, and any lower grade indicates an overall lack of understanding.

Additional details will be provided in class before each assignment. If you have any confusion, please ask for clarification!

Again, you are strongly encouraged to meet and discuss your research proposal with Professor Axelrod and classmates throughout the semester!