

## **Course Syllabus**

PLSC397Z: Applied Skills in Political Science

Instructor: Professor Bidisha Biswas

### **PLSC 397Z APPLIED SKILLS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE SYLLABUS**

*Instructor:* **Professor Bidisha Biswas**

*Phone:*

*Email:*

*Class time and location:*

*Office hours and location:*

### **Course Objectives**

This course is designed to provide students with practical experience in political science research approaches and tools. We will explore tools that can help identify, analyze, and understand a range of political phenomena, as related to political risk. The focus will be on tackling important questions in international relations and developing problem-solving skills necessary to address them, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Political risk is broadly defined as those events, actions, processes, or characteristics of a socio-political nature that have the potential to – directly or indirectly – significantly and negatively affect the goals of foreign direct investors or other actors. Private companies, governments, and NGOs all have interest in understanding, and possibly mitigating, political risk. Excellent research, analysis, and communication abilities are necessary to succeed in this field. This course will work on each of these skills.

Successful completion of this course will lead to the following learning outcomes.

1. Develop analytic skills in interpreting quantitative data and qualitative information on issues relating to international relations and political risk analysis.
2. Demonstrate writing competence through the written assignments required in the course.
3. Demonstrate confidence and competence in making verbal presentations through the assignments in this course.

4. Engage in independent research on specific topics.

Please note that this course has significant online components. Please contact ATUS for help with Canvas and other online resources.

## Course Materials

We will refer to both of the following books regularly in the class. Copies of the books are available in the library.

Wilkenfeld, Jonathan. 2015. *Myth and Reality in International Politics: Meeting Global Challenges through Collective Action*. Routledge. (Required)

LaVaque Manty, Mika and Danielle LaVaque-Manty. 2015. *Writing in Political Science: A Brief Guide*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Recommended)

Articles given in the syllabus are available through Western's online databases.

## Course Requirements

**Your final grade will be based on the following**

*Written Briefings: 30%*

On several occasions through the term, you will be asked to submit a written briefing. The briefings will be on specific issues that will be pre-assigned to you. All students are required to submit a minimum of **four** briefings. Each briefing should incorporate suggestions and comments from the assessments of previous briefings.

*Team Presentation: 20%*

In teams of two, you will prepare and present a briefing in class on a given topic. Dates and themes are provided in the syllabus. More details will be given in class.

*Risk Assessment 25%*

Your final project involves the following steps:

- I. **Choose an actor that you would like to represent.** This actor is considering entry into a country that is provided in the list at the end of the syllabus. An actor could be a private corporation (for example,

Lockheed Martin), a human rights organization (for example, Amnesty International), a financial services firm (Citibank), a research organization (for example, Carnegie), a university (for example, New York University) etc. I have provided examples of actors at the end of the syllabus.

2. Next, think of a **geopolitical challenge** that would expose that actor to risk with relation to its area of interest. An example would be an IT company attempting to enter Pakistan and encountering blasphemy laws that run counter to its work philosophy and business goals. A human rights organization entering India might face significant roadblocks to reporting from insurgency-affected areas, such as the Kashmir Valley.
3. Provide an **assessment** of the challenge for the actor. Discuss the pros and cons of entering the market and **make a recommendation** to the senior leadership of your organization. You must justify your recommended course of action. The assessment should be based on the geopolitical environment of the country of your choice.

Deadlines relating to this project are provided in the syllabus and will also be posted on Canvas. Late submissions will not be accepted.

*Midterm Exam: 15%*

You will have a take-home, midterm exam. Details will be provided in class.

*Class participation and in-class writing assignments: 10%*

Periodically, I will give you several minutes in class to reflect on the readings in writing in response to a question that I pose. The reflections will be on the readings *for that day* so be sure to complete the assigned reading before coming to class. I assess these brief writing assignments based on how you engage with the materials. I do not expect you to have mastered or memorized the reading. I do require that you have thought critically and carefully about them. I expect you to demonstrate the ability to integrate the readings for the day. **I might call upon you to present your reflection to the class. Think of these assignments as pop quizzes.**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions, and to participate in class discussions. Participation will be graded on several criteria: evidence of careful reading of weekly course materials; willingness to volunteer for presentations and to answer questions; appropriateness, enthusiasm, and civility of comments; eagerness to contribute to the *process* of discussion; listening skills; a capacity for building on and encouraging the ideas of others, and posing constructive and

thoughtful questions. Regular attendance and punctuality are expected during the quarter.

### Discussion

In-class discussion will be encouraged throughout the class. You are required to do your reading assignments before each class session. You are also expected to be aware of current world events. Possible news sources include (but are not limited to) [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) and [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com). The DC blogosphere, particularly [Foreign Policy](#), [Politico](#), [The Hill](#), and [The Huffington Post](#), are also useful. I invite and encourage to explore and share non-American sources of information pertaining to political risk analysis. A good journal to consult on an ongoing basis is *Foreign Affairs*. **Note that failure to keep with current events will make it significantly more difficult for you to meet the requirements of the course.**

Students are expected to respect the opinions of other students and to engage in discussion and debates in a sensitive and respectful manner.

### Netiquette

E-mail correspondence with the instructor should follow basic etiquette, as you would use in business communication, such as applying for a job. Make sure you include a subject in the subject line. Please write your emails using appropriate grammar, spelling and tone. **I will not reply to correspondence that neglects to follow these guidelines.**

### Additional points

Students are responsible for following the academic honesty guidelines provided in the WWU Academic Dishonesty Policy and Procedure. The penalty for academic dishonesty can and will include a failure in the course.

Students with disabilities should inform the instructor of their needs at the beginning of the semester.

While every effort will be made to adhere to the schedule provided below, unforeseen circumstances might compel changes. Adequate notice, to the extent possible, will be given about any changes to schedule.

This course has no extra-credit or make-up assignments.

### Course Schedule

#### January 5

- General introduction

#### January 6

#### Online Session

- Discussion forum on making effective presentations

## January 10

### Tools of Communication

- Making Oral Presentations
- How to Work on Excel
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn7Sd5Uu42A&t=22s>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJnJTff4Na8>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NUjHBNWe9M>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2St4a\\_zpaNY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2St4a_zpaNY)

## January 12-January 17

### I. Understanding Political Risk

- Ake, Claude. 1975. "A Definition of Political Stability," *Comparative Politics* 7(2): 271-283.
- Petersen, Karen Lund. 2011. "Risk Analysis – A Field within Security Studies?" *European Journal of International Relations* 18(4): 693-717.
- Sign up for teams and team presentations

### II. How to Write Memos and Influence People

- Kennan, George F. 1947. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct". *Foreign Affairs* (July).
- Tuchman, Barbara. 1973. "Why Policy Makers Do Not Listen." *Foreign Service Journal* (March): 18-21.
- Kushlis, Patricia H. 2009. "Why Barbara Tuchman's 1973 Speech on US Foreign Policy Remains Relevant Today". <http://whirledview.typepad.com/whirledview/2009/08/why-barbara-tuchmans-1973-speech-on-us-foreign-policy-remains-relevant-today.html>
- Boot, Max. 2015. Defeating ISIS: Policy Innovation Memorandum 51. <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/defeating-isis/p33773>

## January 19

### Online Session

#### Data Visualization

- Yau, Nathan. 2013. *Data Points: Visualization that Means Something*. New York-Wiley. Introduction and Chapters 1-2.
- (Recommended) : Self-guided introduction to Tableau: <https://public.tableau.com/s/resources>
- Briefing Exercise I: Data Visualization

**January 20**

Online Session: Work on Paper Proposals

**January 24**

Using Indices I

Tips on Writing

- Briefing Exercise 1 Due
- Presentation Group 1: Index of Economic Freedom:  
<http://www.heritage.org/index/>
- Presentation Group 2: Corruption Perceptions Index:  
<https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/>
- Tips on Writing, LM, Chapters 1-2.
- Briefing Exercise 2 Assigned

**January 26**

Tracking Terrorism

Human Rights

- Presentation Group 3: Global Terrorism Database
- Presentation Group 4: US State Department Terrorist Designations 2016
- Presentation Group 5: Freedom House Reports
- Final Paper Project Proposals Due

**January 27**

Online Session

Peer Review

**January 31**

Lessons from an Alum

Recording Oral Presentations

- Instructor Guidance on Camtasia
- Guest Lecture: Kristin Pettersen, Department of Defense
- Briefing Exercise 2 Due
- Briefing Exercise 3: Write a memo defending a pre-assigned country against HRR

**February 2**

Human Rights

- Presentation 6: State Department Human Rights Report and Human Rights Watch Reports

- Guest lecture: Elise Carlson-Reiner, University of Washington and Department of State

**February 3**

**Online Session**

Data Visualization

**February 7**

**Development Indicators**

- Presentation Group 6: Human Development Report
- Guest Lecture: Anish Goel, Senate Armed Services Committee

**February 9**

**Writing Tips**

- Learning Commons Workshop, HH 233
- Briefing Exercise 3 due

**February 10 and 14**

**Midterm Exam**

**February 16**

**Risk Analysis**

**Review**

- Bremmer, Ian. 2005. "Managing Risk in an Unstable World," *Harvard Business Review* (June).
- <http://time.com/3652421/geopolitical-risks-2015-ian-bremmer-eurasia-group/>
- Class Review on Briefings and Presentations
- Presentation Group 7: International Crisis Group
- Briefing Exercise 4 Assigned
- Final Paper Draft 1 Due

**February 17**

- **Online Session: Peer Reviews of Draft 1**

**February 21**

**Myth and Reality**

- JW, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Guest Speaker, Sofia Javed: Department of State

- Briefing Exercise 4 due
- Briefing Exercise 5 assigned

**February 23**

**Congressional Research Service**

**Conflict**

- Presentation Group 9: Pros and Cons of the TPP
- Presentation Group 8: Fragile State Index
- JW, Chapter 3 and 4
- Briefing Exercise 5 due

**February 24**

**Online Session: Draft 2**

**February 28**

**Tips on Writing**

**Democracy and Instability**

- JW, Chapter 3
- Tips on Writing, LM Chapters 6-7
- Final Paper Draft 2 Due
- Briefing Exercise 6 Assigned: The Links Between Democracy and Instability

**March 2**

**Development**

- JW, Chapter 4
- Trickle Down Economics: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/07/it-s-time-to-demolish-the-myth-of-trickle-down-economics>
- Briefing Paper 7 Assigned: Globalization- Good for Whom? This is the last briefing paper for the term

**March 7**

**Global Challenges**

**Opinion and Analysis**

- JW, Conclusion
- Pffaff, William. 2010. "Manufacturing Insecurity," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December). Available through Canvas.
- Walt, Stephen. 2011. "Where Do Bad Ideas Come From?" *Foreign Policy*(Jan/Feb): 49-53.

- Briefing Papers 6 and 7 Due

**March 9**

**Final Paper Presentations (via Camtasia)**

**March 10**

**Final Paper due by midnight, March 10.** Late submissions will not be accepted.

*Have a good spring break!*

### **Examples of actors involved in Country Risk Analyses**

#### **Corporate political risk analyst.**

You are a multinational corporate political risk analyst, and your corporation is planning to expand operations in one or more developing nations located in South Asia, Africa, or Latin/South America. Your corporation is not sure where to form joint ventures or locate new manufacturing facilities. They are unsure of the risk involved and options open to them. They request that you perform a political risk analysis of a country. Present them with your analysis and tell them how you made your decision. Is your country an acceptable risk? Why or why not?

#### **Option 2**

##### **United Nations senior risk advisor.**

You work for the United Nations as a senior risk advisor. In the past several years the United Nations has been asked to supply troops to many multinational peacekeeping areas. The UN is trying to look forward to further understand what areas in the world are potentially high-risk areas where they may need to deploy a multinational peacekeeping force. They ask you and your team to develop a political risk model that allows them to predict risky area. You have to identify a country that you think is high risk and explain why you think this country is high risk.

#### **Option 3**

##### **Foreign Policy and Military Analysis Team**

You are a team of U.S. foreign policy or military advisors to the National Security Advisor to the President. In an attempt to develop foreign, defense, and

intelligence policies you have been given the task to analyze a particular country's risk to the United States. Risk can mean any number of things, including cyberthreats, terrorist attacks, government-to-government tensions and challenges to US business investments overseas, among others. Be specific about the risk you are seeking to address. Based on your analysis, the National Security Council and National Security Advisor can make recommendations to the President that would affect various policies for defense and intelligence spending.