Political Science 115 Fall, 2010
International Politics: How the World Works Dr. Gary L. Olson
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Course Objectives:

Despite what you may have heard, the history of the modern world is the story of the origin and expansion of the capitalist system around the globe. Our current form of transnational corporate capitalism is carrying forward a process begun in early industrializing Britain and it continues its uneven impact, reaching into every corner of the world. George Soros calls the defenders of this system "market fundamentalists" and that's an appropriate term. And one of the consequences of this capitalist division of labor is a global class system of rich and poor. If you fail to grasp this basic fact, your chances of understanding how the world works are slim.

I'm not suggesting that global capitalism explains everything, but I am proposing that it will tell us a great deal about what goes on within and between nation states. Further, some of you may feel we're giving too much attention to the United States this semester. I choose to do so because we will explore the proposition that although three rival blocs divide the world: the American, European and Asian, there is only one hyper military power, the United States. For example, the combined military resources of the rest of the world would not pose a serious threat to the U.S. This magnitude of power differential has never existed in history.

This unequal situation is a highly sensitive topic outside the U.S. and one we will address over the term. For starters, there is vast ignorance (much of it programmed) within our country about America's past and current behavior around the globe. Two authors have termed this condition "knowledgeable ignorance" or "knowing people, ideas, civilizations, religions, histories as something they are not, and could not possibly be, and maintaining these ideas even when the means exist to know differently." (Z. Sardar and M.W. Davies, *Why Do People Hate America?*)

We need to grasp how the rest of the world=s people, some six billion of them, see America and we need to obtain a better appreciation of their experiences as subjects within what even conservative pundits now describe as "the American empire."

Shortly after September 11, 2001, the Indian political analyst Arundhati Roy wrote that bin Laden's message to the U.S. government could also have been "signed by the ghosts of America's old wars." And in one of the early readings in this course, Stephen Kinzer's book *Overthrow* describes this legacy of U.S. abuses of power and bloody intervention around the globe.

It's also worth noting here that this course does not presume any prior knowledge about world affairs. Indeed, if past experience is any guide, such "knowledge" may be a liability. In a very real sense we'll begin at the beginning and challenge certain shared "of course" assumptions about the world. In doing so we'll always seek to be objective but not neutral. That is, who could be neutral about the current world situation? Over the term there is every possibility for you to develop the intellectual tools for demystifying how the world works. I would go further and suggest that the material in this course could provide a challenging and even life-changing intellectual experience for you.

It's expected that you will be conversant with each day's reading assignment. Participation in class is a given. Of course it's impossible to meet this expectation if you're not in class. Be here. No exceptions.

Exams and Papers:

We'll have three exams, including the final. At this point I anticipate at least one paper/review essay, possibly combining two of the texts. I'll seek your input to make this a creative assignment.

Academic Honesty Policy:

Please refer to relevant sections on College policy in the Student Handbook.

Students with Special Needs:

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (Ext. 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Office of Learning Services.

Readings:

N. Chomsky, *Hopes & Prospects*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010
S. Polakov-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*. New York: Pantheon, 2010
S. Kinzer, *Overthrow*. New York: Times Books, 2006
M. Parenti. *The Culture Struggle*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006

Topics:

Intro: Critical Thinking: Plato's Cave & Columbus
I. Human Nature and Politics: "But it=s just human nature, isn't it?"
II. What is Neoliberal Globalization and What's New About It?
III. Myths About Globalization
IV. How the World Works: Capital Accumulation and Grabbing the Surplus
  A. The Creation of Our World
  B. The Center-Periphery Framework
  C. U.S. Hegemony: One Hyper Power
V. Structural Violence in the Periphery
VI. Terrorism and the "War on Terrorism"
VII. Global Governance: United Nations, International Law, World Bank, IMF, World Trade Organizations
VIII. The European Union: Model for the Future? (Prof. Lalande)
IX. Nationalism and Transnationalism
X. Was the "Battle in Seattle" (1999) a Turning Point for Globalization?
XI. The Future of Capitalist Globalization: Can We Transcend Hatred and Realize Social Justice?
XII. A Global Democratic Parliament?
XIII. Evaluating Our Experience This Semester