

CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CRISES

Winter 2016

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Any front page of newspapers today features a variety of global crises – from the conflict in Syria and its refugees to the potential collapse of the Eurozone to climate change negotiations. This course focuses on understanding these three crises: what are they, who all are involved in them, how did they become problems, and what can we do to solve them. It is aimed at students who are curious about the world and want to better grasp global politics.

The course goes beyond the headlines to reflect on the origins of today's global problems and to create network maps of friend, rival, and enemy relations between countries and organizations. We will also foreground who is seeking what over whom. For instance, we will examine why the Syrian refugee crisis is linked more with international security than human rights, why the Eurozone crisis threatens to derail the global economy, and why the Global Warming crisis remains the most serious yet least addressed problem of our times. These crises represent unique global challenges that will resonate for generations to come.

We will spend one week on understanding the background of each crisis and one week on mapping its key players and power relations. We will create network maps of friends, rivals, and enemies in a given crisis to better understand the shifting landscapes of global power. Reading assignments are selected from current long-form investigative journalism. All readings are required as they form the basis of meaningful discussions. Our classroom is a collaborative space with an emphasis on shared learning. We will together work through the various crises to understand how global politics and power affect daily life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Assemble a network map of major global actors and their relations in a current global crisis.
2. Demystify news headlines by breaking down complex problems into their bare components.
3. Analyze their understanding of the world and their place in it.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be expected to:

1. Complete required course readings.
2. Attend classes and thoughtfully participate in discussions.
3. Come prepared with one meaningful question based on the readings each week (I will provide more detail and examples in the first class).
4. Produce in-class network maps of major actors and their relations of the 3 global crises covered in the course.

5. Complete a comprehensive network map of major actors and their relations in a current global crisis due on March 14th. Students will select the crisis and get it approved by March 3rd.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Final course grades are composed of the following assessments:

Participation:	20% [Every class]
Weekly Questions:	15% [Due Feb 2, Feb 9, Feb 16, Feb 23, and March 3]
3 In-class Network Maps:	30% [Due Feb 9, Feb 23, and March 10]
Final Network Map:	35% [Due March 14]

POLICIES

1. All readings are required. It will be difficult to follow along in class without having done the assigned reading. The reading load is purposefully light so you may familiarize yourself with complicated material. I will also discuss effective reading strategies throughout the course.
2. All work must be thoughtful and punctual. Rushed assignments are easy to spot and are no fun to evaluate. Make-up assignments will be allowed only for students who have a medical excuse or a similarly serious valid reason. Computer, printer, or Internet failures do not count as valid reasons.
3. All work must be original. Please cite sources to give proper credit to concepts, ideas, quotations, facts, etc., whenever appropriate. Remember that I have access to Wikipedia as well. The standard ETHS Academic Integrity disclaimer applies.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: CONFLICT IN SYRIA

01/26: Introduction to Global Crises: how to read course material.

01/28: Readings:
BBC, "Syria: The Story of the Conflict"
BBC, "Syria Crisis: Where Key Countries Stand"

WEEK 2: REFUGEE CRISIS

02/02: Reading:
Jean-Philippe Rémy, "Chemical Warfare in Syria," *Le Monde*
Kathy Gilsinan, "A Brief Guide to the Syrian Civil War," *The Atlantic*
Weekly Question Due

02/04: Reading:
Nicholas Schmidle, "Ten Borders: One Refugee's Epic Escape from Syria," *The New Yorker*
BBC, "Migrant Crisis"

WEEK 3: THE EURO

02/09: Reading:

Der Spiegel, "The Ticking Euro Bomb"

Weekly Question Due

Network Map #1 Due

02/11: Reading:

Paul Krugman, "Can Europe Be Saved?" *The New York Times Magazine*

WEEK 4: EUROZONE CRISIS

02/16: Reading:

Michael Lewis, "Beware of Greeks Bearing Bonds," *Vanity Fair*

Weekly Question Due

02:18: Reading:

Mark Blyth and Cornel Ban, "Austerity vs Democracy in Greece," *Foreign Affairs*

Mark Blyth, "A Pain in the Athens," *Foreign Affairs*

WEEK 5: CLIMATE CHANGE

02/23: Reading:

John Van Tigglen, "Cold Comfort," *The Monthly*

Weekly Question Due

Network Map #2 Due

03/01: Reading:

Paul Krugman, "Gambling with Civilization," *The New York Review of Books*

WEEK 6: GLOBAL WARMING CRISIS

03/03: Reading:

Tom Clynes, "The Battle over Climate Science," *Popular Science*

Weekly Question Due

Crisis for Final Network Map Approved

03/08: Reading:

Brad Plumer, "Two Degrees: How the World Failed on Climate Change," *Vox*

Fiona Harvey, "Paris Climate Change Agreement: The World's Greatest Diplomatic Success," *The Guardian*

WRAP UP

03/10: Preview final network maps and recap course.

Network Map #3 Due

03/14: **Final Network Map Due**