

Department: Political Science

Course No. : 3208/W

Title: Politics of Oil

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Jennifer Sterling-Folker

Content Area: CA 2 Social Science

WQ: W

Catalog Copy: POLS 3208/W. Politics of Oil Either semester. Three credits.

Recommended Preparation: POLS 121 or 143. Historical and contemporary role of oil in comparative politics and international relations.

POLS 32XXW. Politics of Oil. Either semester. Three credits. Prerequisite: ENGL110 or 111 or 250. Recommended Preparation: POLS 121 or 143.

Justification: Oil is undeniably one of the most important global commodities to affect the domestic and foreign policies of nation-states. This course is unique in the sense that it focuses on a commodity rather than a nation, region or political institutions. It brings together elements from various subfields of political science and contributes directly to expanding and deepening students' knowledge about the political process. This course will help meet the demand for "W" offerings in the department and comparative politics subfield. It strengthens the department's curriculum and has no effect on other departments or the regional campuses. It does not overlap with existing courses or require specific costs. There will be no mixing of POLS 32XXW and the regular POLS 32XX.

How Course Meets Goals of Gen Ed.: The course is designed to meet these goals in general education:

Become articulate: The course encourages students to become articulate in two ways. First, it requires the students to understand the background and positions of real life people involved in the oil business and role play in a simulation game, articulating the interests of those people in reaction to a scenario. Students are also expected to participate in a debate at the end of the semester on a certain aspect of the oil diplomacy. They will be asked to express their ideas orally and defend their position.

Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility: This is an interdisciplinary course that will draw on history, economics, geography and engineering to examine the role of oil in history as well as contemporary politics. Students will learn how to draw on disparate sources of knowledge to develop their arguments.

Acquire critical judgment: The course encourages students to acquire critical judgment by requiring them to repeatedly consider and articulate their views on the political economy of oil and the ways by which we can reduce our dependence on this commodity. By comparing the role oil played in the economic and political development of many societies in the world, students begin to develop a critical understanding of how a single commodity can affect the relations among as well as within states.

Acquire moral sensitivity: The course seeks to develop moral sensitivity and moral awareness by encouraging students to reflect on the ways in which the world has been hitherto using and misusing a valuable natural resource like oil.

Acquire awareness of their era and society: This course makes students aware of the global struggle to acquire access to oil and some of the similar development models oil dependency has created in national economies and politics. It also gives students perspective on the different ways countries (and their own country) can manage these resources.

Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: This course encourages students to appreciate the different ways countries have dealt with issues related to access to oil, use of oil resources and revenues, reducing dependency on oil etc. This course illustrates that there is tremendous diversity among countries and it underscores the variety of political, economic, and social conditions that exist in both the developed and developing world.

CA2 Criteria : This course enables the students to analyze and understand interactions of the numerous social factors that influence behavior at the individual, cultural, societal, national or international level, and meets the four required criteria in this manner.

Introduce students to theories and concepts of social science: The course exposes students to theories of economic development, international conflict, rentier state and sustainable development, among others. It examines these topics in a comparative context, so that the role of oil is analytically and empirically analyzed and ultimately problematized in both the developed and the developing world. In so doing, the course exposes students to the complexities and nuances of social scientific theory.

Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including the ethical problems social scientists face: The course relies on a combination of historical analysis, qualitative case-study analysis and quantitative analysis, as well as drawing on other disciplines such as history, economics, engineering, and environmental sciences. Students will learn about the comparative method as well as issues such as cross-national analysis, the appropriate use of case studies, and historical analysis. Students will also be exposed to discussion of the ways normative assumptions can color analysis and sometimes complicate the definition of concepts.

Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment: This course pays particular attention to how institutions and different oil actors structure incentives for state behavior both domestically and internationally. A large component of the class is also dedicated to how decisions that nations make regarding oil development affect the natural environment.

Provide students with tools to analyze social, political or economic groups and social issues at the societal, national and international levels: The concepts and themes of the course are examined from a methodology that is basic to the study of comparative politics. This comparative methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative techniques, ways to operationalize key concerns, examine data presentation in a wide array of formats, and find and assess a wide variety of types of data. The students are taught these analytical tools with the goal and expectation that they will be able to apply them in the simulation game, class debate as well as their own written research.

W Criteria:

Describe how the writing assignments will enable and enhance learning the content of the course.

Describe the page requirements of the assignments, and the relative weighting of the “W” component of the course for the course grade: The written assignments will enable students to understand and analyze the background and policies of oil actors they will be role playing in the simulation game, to articulate their responses to an international oil scenario and finally to reflect on their experiences and defend a clear position in the class debate. The written assignments will include a 5-7 page profile paper. They will write a first draft which they will revise into a final draft based on comments received. The final draft will be worth 20% of their final grade. Their second written assignment will be 5 e-mail postings which will be worth 10% of their final grade. Finally, they will write a 10-15 page evaluation paper. They will write a first draft which they will revise into a final draft based on comments received. The final draft will be

worth 30% of their final grade. The syllabus will inform the students that they must pass the W component of the course in order to pass the course.

Describe the primary modes of writing instruction in the course: Time will be set aside in class to discuss the instructions for writing these assignments. I will also provide written comments on the first drafts that are submitted. Finally, I will schedule individual conferences to discuss papers and comments on them.

Explain how opportunities for revision will be structured into the writing assignments in the course: Both the profile papers and evaluation papers will receive feedback and comments. Students will also receive verbal feedback during individual conferences. They will be required to incorporate feedback and suggestions in their final drafts.

State that the syllabus will inform students that they must pass the “W” component of the course in order to pass the course: The syllabus clearly informs the students of this component (see above).

Supplementary information:

Syllabus: -

POLS 32XX/W: POLITICS OF OIL

Sample Abbreviated Syllabus

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Course Objectives: This is a course on the complex relationship between oil and politics. It seeks to develop students’ research, thinking and writing skills about the role of oil in the international political system as well as in domestic politics. Today, oil undeniably affects all aspects of our lives but who really

controls oil resources and what does that mean for national and international distribution of political power? How has the contest over oil resources affected the relations among nations as well as the economic, political, social and environmental development of oil-rich countries? What are the alternatives to oil and what needs to be done to reduce dependency on it? This course will address these questions as well as analyze and compare individual cases of how oil shapes the way we think about the world.

Course Design: The course will consist of five parts.

Facts about Oil

- a. the distribution of global oil resources and infrastructures
 - b. demand, productive capacity, depletion rates, price history
 - c. actors involved in the oil business
2. Political history of oil development
 - a. evolution of the industry from 'Seven Sisters' to OPEC
 - b. current international arrangements
 - c. changing relations among oil actors.
3. Relationship between oil and geopolitics
 - a. how struggle over access to oil, distribution of oil reserves, and pipeline routes have shaped relations among nations and fueled various international conflicts
 - i. World Wars
 - ii. Arab-Israeli conflict

- iii. Iran-Iraq war
 - iv. Gulf Wars
 - v. 'Great Game' in Central Asia
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- 4. Domestic effects of oil: how and where oil is causing
 - a. distortions in political institutions (rentier state)
 - b. civil wars
 - c. environmental degradation (global warming)
 - d. human rights violations.

 - 5. Alternative sources of energy and what needs to be done to reduce dependence on oil.

Course Requirements:

Exams (40%): 1 midterm and a final exam

Research Project:

60% of the final grade depends on passing the writing requirements of the course and if students do not pass these requirements, they will not pass the class.

A) Students are expected get into teams of 3 or 4 and focus their research on a particular company or country engaged in the international petroleum industry. In order to understand the industry policies and business strategies of these actors, students will have to rely on a diverse set of resources; i.e. annual reports of various companies, government ministry websites, specialized oil journals as well as academic journals and books.

B) Students will be asked to write a 5-7 page profile paper for the character they are role playing. They will also be expected to provide an annotated bibliography, i.e. a brief critical summary of each of the books and/or sets of articles that pertains to the background information of that character. After receiving the first draft, the instructor will meet with students individually to provide feedback and comments that students must address and accommodate in successive drafts. The final draft will be posted online for other students to view and learn from. The final draft is worth 20% of the grade.

C) Next, students will be expected to role play a simulation of oil diplomacy in the post-Cold War era. They will be corresponding by electronic mail with other members of the class. They are required to contribute to the computer conferencing of the simulation at least with five e-mail postings. During this computer conferencing, they will take on roles of real politicians, company executives, diplomats etc. and interact with each other based on an oil scenario that the instructor will generate. This assignment will be 10% of the grade.

D) At the end of the game, students will organize a debate on one of the political and/or philosophical questions raised by the various aspects of the oil diplomacy game. At that stage, students are expected to write a 10-15 page evaluation paper on the topic of the debate. In that paper, with reference to the readings, lectures and the game, they will discuss alternative approaches as well as their position on that particular issue. After receiving the first draft, the instructor will meet with students individually to

provide feedback and comments that students must address and accommodate in successive drafts. The final draft is worth 30% of the grade.

Sample Readings:

Daniel Yergin, *The Prize*, Simon and Schuster, 1991

Terry Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty*, University of California Press, 1997.

Valerie Marcel, *Oil Titans: National Oil Companies in the Middle East*, Brookings, 2005

Kate Gillespie and Clement M. Henry (eds.) *Oil in the New World Order*, University Press of Florida, 1995.

Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia*, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003.