

The College of Charleston  
Department of Political Science

**POLS 405: Capstone Seminar-  
The Politics of Global Human Welfare:  
Malaria, Corn, T-Shirts and Power**

Spring Semester, 2008

Syllabus

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Office Hours:  
M,W,F 1-2:00 p.m.  
or by appointment

**Overview.** The Capstone Seminar is taken at the end of the major to emphasize the application of skills of critical analysis, written and oral communication and independent research introduced at the beginning of the major and developed as you moved through the major requirements. The Capstone Seminar is designed to serve as a culminating experience in the major and should enable you to put into practice the knowledge of the discipline, values and skills you have developed as a political science major.

The subject of capstone seminars varies each semester and with each professor. The present capstone revolves around the general topic of the Politics of Global Human Welfare. The general topic encompasses virtually all aspects of human life on the planet. Since we cannot possibly deal comprehensively and in detail with such a topic, we will be selective beginning with an overview of world-systems theory and then taking up four very specific and, I would argue, basic aspects of global human welfare: health, food, clothing and power.

The common reading we will all be prepared to discuss is contained in five books available in the bookstore and detailed here:

1. Immanuel Wallerstein, World-Systems Theory: An Introduction;
2. Fiamtta Rocco, Quinine: Malaria and the Quest for a Cure that Changed the World;
3. James C. McCann, Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter With a New World Crop 1500-2000;
4. Pietra Rivoli, The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade, and;
5. Stephen Kinzer, Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change From Hawaii to Iraq.

In addition, selections from Paul Farmer's Pathologies of Power (related to health), Mushita and Thompson's Biopiracy of Biodiversity (related to food), Ferguson's Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order (related to

globalization) and Klein's The Shock Doctrine are on reserve in the library. The password for reserve is "Liberation."

Our reading and discussion of world-system theory and the four specifics will be the foundation for the development of an individual research project resulting in a research paper and presentation in class at the end of the semester.

The outline following this introduction, and the timetable in a spreadsheet at the end of the syllabus, will provide detail on the common reading we will all discuss and also on the formation and execution of the research project.

### **I. A Frame of Reference**

We begin with Wallerstein's overview of world-systems theory, a perspective that challenges a narrow view of disciplines and introduces an historical approach to understanding contemporary realities. A four-page paper, topic TBA, based on Wallerstein's work will be due on January 28.

### **II. Malaria**

Rocco's book on quinine and malaria relates the story of the discovery of quinine and the development of synthetic prophylactics over a long period of time. This perspective allows us to test some of the propositions Wallerstein puts forward about the lengthy history of the current world system and the necessity of developing an interdisciplinary perspective. The supplementary reading from Paul Farmer's book broadens the discussion to encompass aspects of the global inequality of access to health care more generally at the current time. A four page paper, topic TBA, based on Rocco and Farmer's books in relation to world-system theory will be due on February 11.

### **III. Corn**

Jim McCann's history of the global expansion of maize production adds to the evidence for the development of the world system and its current effects on food as well as disease particularly on the African continent. Mushita and Thompson introduce the most salient current issue in that regard with reference to the drive to patent seeds. A four-page paper based on this work in relation to world systems theory and global health will be due on February 25.

### **IV. Clothing and Globalization**

Rivoli analyzes the current process of economic globalization by following the process of producing and distributing clothing, T-shirts in particular, and how national and global manufacturing and markets characterize the current period. Ferguson introduces some of the impact of the general process of globalization on African countries. A four-page paper based on Rivoli and Ferguson's work in relation to world systems theory, and the politics of food and health will be due on March 17.

### **V. Power**

Kinzer explores the specific use of American foreign policy to effect regime change in the international system over the last century allowing us to explore some

aspects of continuity and change in the system of international relations over time. Klein adds breadth and context to the current era and should be read against the background of Wallerstein's book and the "crisis" of the world-system. A four-page paper based on Kinzer and Klein's work in relation to world-systems theory, the politics of food and health, and the politics of globalization will be due on March 31.

## **VI. Research Project**

Our exploration of these aspects of global human welfare will cover the period from the beginning of the semester to approximately March 28. However, beginning with January 25 you will identify an aspect of the politics of global human welfare that is particularly important or interesting and that can form the basis for research and analysis. We will discuss this process regularly but in general the topic may be directly related to some part of our common reading or may be related to an aspect of human welfare and global politics that we have not touched on. A first draft of a research proposal will be due on February 15, we will have individual meetings discussing the proposals the week of February 18 and reports on progress will be due on March 10 and March 24. The last section of the course, from March 31 to April 21 will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of research results in class.

I would emphasize that the four aspects chosen do not reflect the range of possibilities, interconnections or the order of importance of all of the elements of human welfare. For instance, three areas of global human welfare not directly addressed in our reading could relate to gender, human rights and environmental welfare. And each or a combination of those can be related to malaria, corn, t-shirts and power. Your specialized research design will need to be very focused on answering a specific question involving elements and relationships related to the politics of global welfare.

In so far as it is possible to do so, the research topics should be compatible with the specific interest you have in one or more subfields of the discipline. In addition, it will be allowable for research projects to be collaborative, i.e. two or at most three students may work on a single project. This will have to be approved by the professor and the group must understand that the grade given to the research paper/presentation will be a group grade. Therefore, each group, should you chose to conduct research in that way, will have to deal internally with the "free rider" problem.

From March 31 to the end of the semester class meetings will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of the research projects. Two projects will be presented and discussed each period. Draft research papers will be circulated in advance via email in order to facilitate both the presentation and discussion. Participation grades will depend in part on your preparation and participation in the discussion of your colleagues' work. The final paper will be due on Monday, April 28.

The course will conclude with a discussion of our accomplishment in creating a framework for understanding the global politics of human welfare reflecting back on our beginning in world-system theory and the four areas of welfare with which we began.

## **Additional Course Information**

**Attendance.** Students must attend and actively participate in class. Fifteen percent of the grade will be dependent on attendance and active participation.

**Required Reading.** Students will be held responsible for the content of all readings listed in the syllabus. Meeting this responsibility will be evident in the forms of class participation, in papers and in the research projects.

**Timetable.** The last page of the syllabus is a daily plan for the semester. It is subject to change depending upon our progress but indicates when reading should be done and also the due dates for written work.

**Conduct of Class.** Assuming that members of the class read material to be discussed before the class meets, we will conduct the class as a seminar where I will guide the topics but members of the seminar will develop the discussion. However, I am a realist and when and if necessary, a lecture/discussion format will be used.

**Outside Consultation.** I am available via email most of the time, during posted office hours, by appointment and on a drop-in basis. I try to maintain an open door (virtual and physical) policy whenever possible to answer questions and discuss issues arising in the course.

**Course Assessment.**

The assignments to be graded and the proportion of the final grade attributable to each one are as follows:

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| 1. World Systems Theory paper          | = 10% |
| 2. Politics of Global Health paper     | = 10% |
| 3. Politics of Food paper              | = 15% |
| 4. Politics of Globalization paper     | = 15% |
| 5. Politics of Power paper             | = 10% |
| 6. Individual participation            | = 15% |
| 7. Research project/paper/presentation | = 25% |

The numerical/letter grade equivalency used is the following:

- 94 - 100 = A
- 90 - 93 = A-
- 87 - 89 = B+
- 83 - 86 = B
- 80 - 82 = B-
- 77 - 79 = C+
- 73 - 76 = C
- 70 - 72 = C-
- 67 - 69 = D+
- 63 - 66 = D
- 60 - 62 = D-
- 0 - 59 = F

**Special Circumstances.** If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should be aware of, please let me know at your earliest opportunity. If you have SNAP accommodations of any kind, please make appropriate notifications and arrangements with the Center for Students with Disabilities within the first week of class. Alternatively, if you have any sort of undiagnosed learning disability, a physical impairment of any kind that will require special arrangements for exams or papers, if you are an athlete or member of any club or organization that will travel, let me know. I will keep the information you share with me strictly confidential, but in order to create the best environment for your academic success, I need to know if there are circumstances that may interfere with your performance in the course.

**Academic Dishonesty.** When you enrolled in the College of Charleston, you signed an Honor Code. I expect you to abide by that code and it is the only way for you to maintain the integrity and value of your degree. If you are found to have cheated on an exam or plagiarized any portion of any paper, you will fail my course and I will turn over the case to the Honor Board and vigorously pursue further disciplinary action. If you have any questions or are unsure what constitutes cheating or plagiarism – ask. Ignorance is not a valid defense.

This course outline, reading list, requirements, and course contents are subject to change, within reason, at the discretion of the professor.

<b>POLS 405: The Politics of Global Human Welfare, Spring 2008</b>				
Day of Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assessment
Wednesday	9-Jan	Intro/Syllabus		
Friday	11-Jan	World Systems Theory	Immanuel Wallerstein, World-Systems	
Monday	14-Jan	World Systems Theory	Theory: An Introduction	
Wednesday	16-Jan	World Systems Theory		
Friday	18-Jan	World Systems Theory		
Monday	21-Jan	MLK Day Observance		
Wednesday	23-Jan	World Systems Theory & Malaria	Rocco, Quinine: Malaria and the Quest	
Friday	25-Jan	Developing a Research Project	for a Cure that Changed the World	
Monday	28-Jan	Health: Malaria		WS Theory and Pols, 10%
Wednesday	30-Jan	Health: Malaria		
Friday	1-Feb	Health: Malaria		
Monday	4-Feb	Issues in Global Health: Wealth & Health	Paul Farmer, Pathologies of Power, pp.	
Wednesday	6-Feb	Issues in Global Health: Wealth & Health	139-159, 213-246	
Friday	8-Feb	Food: A World of Corn	James McCann, Maize and Grace: Africa's	
Monday	11-Feb	Food: A World of Corn	Encounter With A New World Crop, 1500-200	Pols of Global Health, 10%
Wednesday	13-Feb	Food: A World of Corn		
Friday	15-Feb	The Politics of Food: Patents	Mushita and Thompson, Biopiracy, pp. 61-79	Research Proposal: First Draft
Monday	18-Feb	The Politics of Food: Patents		2/18-2/22: Individual Mtgs.
Wednesday	20-Feb	Clothing: Globalization	Pietra Rivoli, The Travels of a T-Shirt in	
Friday	22-Feb	Clothing: Globalization	the Global Economy	
Monday	25-Feb	Clothing: Globalization		Pols of Food, 15%
Wednesday	27-Feb	MAU-no class, Independent Research		
Friday	29-Feb	MAU-no class, Independent Research		
Monday	3-Mar	Spring Break		
Wednesday	5-Mar	Spring Break		
Friday	7-Mar	Spring Break		
Monday	10-Mar	Regional Impacts: Africa	James Ferguson, Global Shadows: Africa in	Research Prop/Progress
Wednesday	12-Mar	Regional Impacts: Africa	the Neoliberal World Order, pp. 1-49	
Friday	14-Mar	Regional Impacts: Africa		
Monday	17-Mar	Politics of Power	Stephen Kinzer, Overthrow: America's Century	Pols of Globalization, 15%
Wednesday	19-Mar	Politics of Power	of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq	
Friday	21-Mar	Politics of Power	Naomi Klein, The Shock Doctrine,	
Monday	24-Mar	Politics of Power	pp. 443-466	Research Prop/Progress
Wednesday	26-Mar	From Exploring to Constructing Global Politics		
Friday	28-Mar	From Exploring to Constructing Global Politics		
Monday	31-Mar	research presentations		Pols of Power, 10%
Wednesday	2-Apr	research presentations		
Friday	4-Apr	research presentations		
Monday	7-Apr	research presentations		
Wednesday	9-Apr	research presentations		
Friday	11-Apr	research presentations		
Monday	14-Apr	research presentations		
Wednesday	16-Apr	research presentations		
Friday	18-Apr	research presentations		
Monday	21-Apr	research presentations		
Wednesday	23-Apr	Last Class		
Monday	28-Apr	Last Day to submit research papers		Class Participation, 15% research paper/presentation, 25%