MA Program in Political Science – United Nations and Global Policy Studies

Capstone Seminar
Syllabus
Spring 2020  Wednesday 6-8.40pm

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Course Rationale

The Capstone Seminar is the final stage of the Rutgers MA Program in Political Science – United Nations and Global Policy Studies. It brings together the various strands of the program providing students with a rounded and in-depth understanding of the curriculum concentrations dealt with in the MA program: democracy, participation and community; human rights, gender and international law; development, environment and public health; conflict resolution, counter-terrorism and cyber security; and entrepreneurship and socially responsible investment. Capstone seminars often reflect the research interest of the professor overseeing the course and the theme of this capstone seminar is Does Democracy Matter? The theme is sufficiently broad to encompass issues of rights, development, conflict and socially responsible business and students will be expected to work on several of these issues.

The Rutgers MA is based on the scholarly literature and engages with relevant theories but it nevertheless has a bias towards applied knowledge and preparation for professional life. This balance between the theoretical and the applied will be reflected in the capstone seminar and in the assignments undertaken by the students.

Course Objectives

Students who complete the course will:

- Deepen the knowledge they have already acquired
- Extend it to other scholarly fields within the MA program
- Understand the methods of shaping theory to practical outcomes
- Strengthen their ideas on policy development
- Be better prepared for academic or professional life
Assignments

The course contains a mix of participative post-graduate lectures, class discussions, student presentations and group work. The lectures will be delivered by the professor overseeing it with the occasional participation of Rutgers faculty and guests.

Apart from class participation, students will be required to produce two major papers, present an academic lecture and work on a group project:

The Policy Brief

Students will write a policy brief similar to those produced by think tanks in Washington and elsewhere. The policy brief will identify an issue relevant to the course and touching on the theme Does Democracy Matter, as well as a specific “real world” problem within that issue. It will analyze the problem, discuss whether any academic theories can be of assistance in understanding it and recommend policy changes that will help address it. The student will provide a brief outline of the policy brief in class at an early stage of the research to obtain feedback and guidance. The policy brief should be around 6,000-7,500 words (around 20 line and a half spacing pages with a 10% allowance in each direction), with full citations and will comprise 30% of the final grading. The policy brief is due on Monday 9 March.

A good example of a recent policy brief:


The Review Essay

Students will write a review essay similar to those published in scholarly journals tracing the history and argumentation concerned with a specific theory or issue. The review essay borrows some forms from the literature review written by students for their PhD theses and some from scholarly criticism allowing the student to demonstrate mastery over the theory or issue. It is a difficult art commensurate with the requirements and expectations of those undertaking the capstone seminar. Students are encouraged to consult various review essays

The topic of the review essay will be agreed by the professor. Students are encouraged to consult members of the Rutgers faculty who will assist in identifying an appropriate topic and guiding them to the relevant literature. Good examples of review essays in

The review essay should be around 6,000-7,500 words (around 20 line and a half spacing pages with a 10% allowance in each direction) and be publishable in form and style (indeed several have been published in the Rutgers UNMA Occasional Papers series as winners of the annual essay competition). It will comprise 30% of the final grading. **The review essay is due on Monday 20 April.**

**The Academic Lecture**

Each student will deliver an academic lecture. The aim is to develop both scholarly skills and presentation skills. The lecture will be of about 30-40 minutes duration including 10 minutes for questions. The topic of the lecture will be agreed by the professor overseeing the course. This assignment will test knowledge of the subject and also require the student to grapple with the logic of how to present it to an audience. It will build up the student’s confidence in presentation skills – use of PowerPoint is discouraged though students may place preliminary supporting materials on Sakai. The academic lecture will comprise 20% of the final grading. Timing of the lectures will depend on the size of the class.

**The Campaign – a group exercise**

While the terminology of “campaigns” is usually linked with election to political office, it has broadened to include civil society campaigns in favor of a particular cause, commercial campaigns in favor of a particular socially responsible product or professional group campaigns in favor of workers or business issues. Groups, ideally of 4-5 students, will identify a campaign proponent and issue, design a campaign and present their work in class together with props if appropriate. The campaign will include strategies for fund raising, lobbying, and for their social media offerings to go viral! This requirement will be further discussed in class. The campaign exercise will comprise 10% of the final grading.

**Additional aspects**

The final 10% grading will be based on class participation.
The three individual assignments need to be spread across three of the five curriculum concentrations. The group exercise need not concern itself with fitting into the concentrations given the diversity of participants.

**Key Dates**

The first policy brief is due on 9 March; the review essay is due on 20 April; the group exercise will be held during the final class on 29 April.

**Course Outline**

**Week 1**

Introduction and Overview  
Student expectations and goals  
Discussion of themes linking the various curriculum concentrations  
Explanation of assignments and exhortation to plan semester workload and begin early

As the capstone seminar and in particular the assignments will largely follow the topics selected by students, students need to review readings from previous courses and deepen their reading on issues of particular interest.

The seminar will nevertheless pursue various themes in a structured program. Part of that structure will be the lectures delivered by students which will be woven into the program according to theme and timing.

**Week 2: Democracy**

Does Democracy Matter? This is the question running through the capstone seminar, though it may be more prominent on some issues than on others. The discussion will look at the relationship of democracy to issues such as human rights, gender, development and peace. Most students will be familiar with some of the literature. Those needing to refresh their understanding should consult:


For a deeper appreciation of some of the theoretical refinements, students will consult:

Week 3 Civil Society

Among the contributions of the United States to democracy are the concepts of secularism and civil society. Tocqueville first drew attention to the voluntary associative energy of the American people cooperating on issues without the imprimatur of a monarch or a state religion. The seminar will examine whether the vibrancy of civil society is the key factor in the success of democracy.

Civil society is under attack around the world and this will be reviewed by reference to the Defending Civil Society Report (2012) Co-authored by International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and the World Movement for Democracy Secretariat at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)


http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/11/02/closing-space-challenge-how-are-funders-responding/il6s

The Journal of Democracy, Volume 26, Number 4, October 2015 has a section devoted to the attack on civil society:
Christopher Walker “Authoritarianism Goes Global (II)” 20
Anne Applebaum “The Leninist Roots of Civil Society Repression” 21-27
Douglas Rutzen “Civil Society Under Assault” 28-39
Peter Pomerantsev “The Kremlin’s Information War” 40-50
Anne-Marie Brady “China’s Foreign Propaganda Machine” 51-59

Week 4 Human Rights

What is the relationship between human rights and democracy? There is a strong argument for symbiosis or that they are linked even more closely by being mutually constitutive. Yet tensions remain in theory and practice. In theory, there is the problem of majoritarianism. There is also the mediating role democracy plays in human rights
limitations. In practice, the proponents often squabble over resources and priorities. Both concepts require a third leg – the rule of law.


**Week 5 Gender**

The focus on gender will be from the perspective of how civil society, activists and feminists influence the global normative architecture. The UN has been a central player in norm entrepreneurship in relation to women’s equality and empowerment but the leadership has come primarily from outside actors with Member States ultimately ratifying the results. It can also be argued that parliaments have been more influential in this field than governments.


Additional reading for those wishing to concentrate on this issue:


**Week 6 International Law**

International law is the law of nations. We live in an age where the nation-state, while remaining dominant, is under pressure from a range of influences including globalization, global civil society and global corporations. It is also undergoing change through regional integration processes and provincial autonomy demands. Perhaps the greatest long-term challenge is from a gathering cosmopolitanism with individuals
claiming rights from the international community rather than their governments. Because democracy and sovereignty have been said to be “joined at the hip”, the issues are significant.


See also:


**Week 7 Development**

Among democracy’s reputed instrumental values is its role in enhancing economic development. The empirical evidence in this regard is open to interpretation but there is little doubt that a relationship exists though it may be subtle. One view is that the relationship can be discerned through the quality of both development and democracy. Both issues can also be seen from the perspective of globalization.


**Week 8 Sustainable Development Goals**
In 2015, the international community adopted a new set of goals for 2030, called the Sustainable Development Goals to replace the Millennium Development Goals which focused on the period 2000-2015. The MDGs were surprisingly successful in prioritizing the efforts of the international community. The term “democracy” appears in neither set of goals but the SDGs have nevertheless evolved and refers to human rights. Can the SDGs have their intended effect?


Week 9 International Environmental Policy

The issue of sustainability is at the heart of the new development goals. This fundamental question began its journey with a publication by the Club of Rome in 1972 on *The Limits of Growth* a theme taken up by the UN Stockholm conference the same year. It is now at the heart of the global development goals and has been recognized in the climate change struggle as the existential issue of our times.


Week 10 Democratic Peace Theory

Emanuel Kant theorized that peace would come with the replacement of monarchies by republics and Michael Doyle updated the theory by explaining that Kant’s “republics” meant democracies. Since that breakthrough, Democratic Peace Theory has been
bolstered by significant empirical evidence and lionized in foreign policy pronouncements but also put under a cloud by the finding that transition democracies are more war-like than other typologies.


Draw on (the late) Professor R. J. Rummel’s comprehensive compilation of papers on https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/MIRACLE.HTM


Week 11  Conflict and Human Security

The dilemma posed by Mansfield and Snyder is that to achieve democratic peace one has to pass through periods of greater violence to which emerging democracies are prone. Yet the work of the Human Security Project belies this analysis arguing that there has been a global decline in violence, generally coinciding with the period of post-Cold War democratic transitions.


Week 12  The Corporation as Culprit or Savior?

The World Bank defines a public-private partnerships as "a long-term contract between a private party and a government entity, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility, and remuneration is linked to performance.” The corporation has come full circle from the early days of the UN when it was vilified to the current situation when it is seen by some as the savior of economic development. Should corporations be seen as amoral profit seeking entities or as socially responsible members of the community?


Week 13 Does Democracy Matter?

Drawing on the readings throughout the course, the issue under discussion will be whether democracy matters. Democracy has been studied from the perspective of rights, gender, development and peace. Are the perceived links those of causation or correlation? Can democracy be promoted or must it grow organically?

Week 14 Group Exercise

Students will also present their group activity, the campaign.

**Academic Integrity Policy**

Academic integrity means, among other things that you as a student must:

- Develop and write all of your own assignments.
- Show in detail where the materials you use in your papers come from. Create citations whether you are paraphrasing authors or quoting them directly. Be sure always to show source and page number within the assignment and include a bibliography in the back.
- Do not fabricate information or citations in your work.
- Do not facilitate academic dishonesty for another student by allowing your own work to be submitted by others.

The consequences of scholastic dishonesty are very serious. If you are in doubt about any issue related to plagiarism or scholastic dishonesty, please discuss it with the instructor. Students are also advised to consult the following links that provide more information and plagiarism tutorials:
Other Academic Support Services

Rutgers has a variety of resources for academic support. For more information, check http://www.rutgers.edu/academics/academic-support

Rutgers has Learning Centers on each campus where any student can obtain tutoring and other help. For information, check http://lrc.rutgers.edu/

Rutgers also has a Writing Center where students can obtain help with writing skills and assignments. Learn more here: http://wp.rutgers.edu/tutoring/writingcenters