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JRNL 105X.80: Global Current Events - Honors

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Office Hours: Tues 1:30-3:30 p.m.
Thurs 9:30-11:30 a.m.
and by appointment

Course description

If you're not already a news junkie, this class aims to turn you into one. By the end of the semester, you'll be confident that when you point to Nigeria on a map you won't hit Niger by accident; be able to tell the difference between autonomy and independence; recognize acronyms like ISIS and IMF, and know why the world is watching Laos.

The skills and information you learn in Global Current Events will inform how you understand the world around you for the rest of your life. You will connect dots between seemingly unrelated events; track stories that will let you chime in if talk turns to politics over Thanksgiving Dinner, and explore how journalists think when they cover international developments. Your knowledge of other cultures will expand, as you learn about the historical, social, economic and geostrategic forces behind today's news.

The Economist magazine will be our required textbook. I will distribute a fresh copy each week in class and assign a dozen or more articles to read from each issue.

The readings will be the focus of weekly quizzes and class discussion. They require a substantial commitment of time and attention on your part, but will get easier as you become familiar with the issues and the writing style.

On Wednesday, Sep 3, please bring to class a personal check or money order for \$36 made out to UM Foundation/Journalism. This will buy you (at a student discount) one Economist magazine each week for the semester. They come to me in a box and I will hand them out in class. If you already subscribe and thus don't need a subscription, please let me know by the end of Class 1.

Course Structure

On Mondays, class will typically begin with a 10-question quiz on that week's reading and the presentation from the previous week. The quiz will be followed by a brief discussion of the quiz questions and a review of information from the week before. Time will also be set aside for presentation team meetings and dress rehearsals.

On Wednesdays, a class presentation will examine an event or trend in the news. It will consider the historical and cultural forces behind the issue and a vocabulary for discussing it. It will introduce the current cast of characters and provide a sense of what may happen in the near future. There will be time after each presentation for discussion.

At first, I will give the presentations. But by the fifth week of class, you will take over. Topics will be assigned to teams of students on Sep. 8. Around the same time, you will also receive detailed guidelines on how to succeed as a team.

Teams of students will make 45-minute presentations on a predetermined topic. Each team will consist of one or two researchers, a scriptwriter, a PowerPoint builder and a presenter. You will meet with me individually as you are developing your part of the presentation. You will be graded on the work presented during those meetings as well as on the final product, with additional evaluation based on class and team feedback.

It is essential that you meet all deadlines associated with your presentation. Your teammates depend on you getting your work to them on time. Your classmates in the audience – and you – deserve a top-notch presentation each week. Once deadlines are established, for each day a deadline is missed your grade will be reduced by one letter grade increment. For example, a B will become a B-, then a C+, C, C-.

Student presentations are a major emphasis of this class. Focused and thorough, they should demonstrate the ability of each individual to be a responsible and responsive team member. Some students find doing their share of the work for the presentation the most challenging – and some say rewarding – assignment they've ever done.

Learning outcomes

Successful students in this class will:

- Understand a wide range of contemporary global news stories that break in the course of the semester.
- Be able to discuss global geography and how it affects regional conflicts.
- Know the names and background of global leaders who appear in the news.
- Be able to articulate common factors linking otherwise disparate global conflicts.
- Recognize how geostrategic forces affect minorities, women and the poor.
- Improve their ability to work as part of a team.
- Report, produce or present an in-depth study of a current global issue.

Assessment

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Weekly quizzes, two exams and a team presentation help determine whether students have achieved the learning goals. All quizzes and exams are closed book.

- A 10-question quiz will be given each week. It will mostly cover the reading, with vocabulary drawn from the previous week's presentation. Quiz grades will be averaged; the lowest quiz score will be dropped.
- The midterm exam will be administered Oct. 13, during regular class time. It will cover material in presentations to that date.
- The final exam will be administered Thursday, Dec. 11, from 1:10 - 3:10 p.m. It will cover all presentations, with an emphasis on those given after the midterm.

Grading

Quizzes: 25 percent

Class Presentation: 25 percent

Midterm: 15 percent

Final: 25 percent

Discussion: 10 percent

The grading scale is:

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	0-59
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72		
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-69		

Professionalism

Journalism is competitive; you must act professionally at all times to succeed. What's true for the newsroom is true for this classroom:

- Don't be late. Class doesn't start at 3:11 p.m. It starts at 3:10 p.m.
- Mute your mobile devices during class and abstain from surfing or texting.
- Notify me in advance if you are ill or need to miss a class for other valid reasons.
- To act professionally at all times will positively affect your final grade.
- Unexcused absences and late shows will negatively affect your grade.
- Missing one third of classes will automatically result in failing the course.

Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

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This course is accessible to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process. For more information, visit <http://life.umt.edu/dss>.

Topics

- 1 Battling Addiction: Germany's Green Economy
- 2 Information Wars: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- 3 Changing Maps: Scotland's Independence Vote
- 4 Going Broke: Argentina's Debt Crisis
- 5 Torn by Violence: The Plight of Women in Nigeria
- 6 Machos Rule: Putin and the Crisis in Ukraine
- 7 Justice and Global Health: The Ebola Epidemic
- 8 The Perils of Instant Gratification: ISIS in Iraq
- 9 Graying Nations: Social Security in China and Japan
- 10 Children of the Drug Wars: Immigration from Central America
- 11 The World's Most Wanted Criminal: Wildlife Smuggling in Asia