

**Eve of Destruction:  
Global Crises and World Organization in the 20th Century**

History 300 / CRN 14253 / Fall 2020

MWF 10:30 – 11:20 pm in KRAN 140

This is a course in international history. It is not about any particular country or region; rather, it traces an emerging global conversation about the most urgent world problems and their possible solutions. The emergence of such institutions as the World Health Organization, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, non-governmental organizations, and global media outlets created new venues for identifying and communicating about issues that affected international life.

Although the course explores a wide range of case studies, it does not claim to present a comprehensive “world” history. Coverage is topical, resembling in many respects the potpourri of issues that have barraged the League of Nations and the United Nations over the past century. What matters ultimately is the *form* of cooperation. Why was the UN to prove reasonably effective in addressing some problems, while NATO or informal groupings like the G-7 prevailed in other circumstances? How did ideas about the use of force for conflict resolution change over time?

For students with a serious interest in international affairs – whether in history, the social sciences, or any other major – this course aims to provide an orientation to some of the most contentious decisions of the past century.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Completing this course will enhance your ability to:

- comprehend, recall, and synthesize key interpretations presented in lectures
- read, analyze, and discuss government documents as well as academic journal articles
- respond to complex paper assignments and exam questions with clearly written essays
- think historically about international problem-solving

### **Course Readings**

The following books should be purchased at Follett’s, the University Bookstore, or on Amazon.

Meisler, Stanley. *United Nations: A History*, revised ed. New York: Grove Press, 2011. (Please do not buy the 1996 edition; the 2011 version is very different.) ISBN-13: 978-0-871-13656-5.

Unger, Corinna. *International Development: A Postwar History*, paperback ed. London: Bloomsbury, 2018. ISBN-13: 978-1-472-57629-3.

Please note that several **historical documents** and **article-length readings** will be distributed to the class in PDF format. These readings **do** constitute course material and are subject to coverage on the midterm and final.

## Course Policies

Attendance. This semester is very much an experiment. In some ways, the relative lack of distractions makes for a uniquely intensive learning environment. So I urge you to attend every class session – unless you are sick. (If you're sick, please stay home, regardless of the nature of the ailment!)

Each session of the course will be broadcast in real time and recorded on BoilerCast. If you can't attend in person, please watch the proceedings "live" in real time, or watch the recording later.

Please come to class on time so that we are not disrupted by your entrance. This is all the more important because of the seat configuration in Krannert Auditorium!

Please do not use electronic devices during class. No iPhones, iPads, or laptops. Srsly. Otherwise your casual meanderings around the World Wide Web will distract everyone around you. If you want to take notes, use pen/pencil and paper. Old school is real school. So that you can follow my lectures more readily, I'll post the lecture outlines in advance so you can print them out. (For health reasons, I won't be sending any paper around the room, typically).

Remember your Protect Purdue Pledge and cover your nose/mouth with a mask for all our sakes. It's a small price to pay as the condition for being on campus.

On seven Fridays this semester, there will be designated discussion sessions. To prepare you for them, I'll be distributing discussion questions, and also require you to submit a brief response paper (400 words) for five of the seven discussions (you get two breaks of your choosing). The response paper will be due by class time that day.

Academic integrity: The assignments in this course require you to formulate complex thoughts in your own words. Attempts to pass off another's words as your own – be it on an exam or in your primary source exercise – will carry harsh penalties. Plagiarized papers will earn a "zero" for the assignment and may lead to further consequences, including notification of the Dean of Students Office. The "University Regulations" handbook contains further information on dishonesty.

Disclaimer: In the event of a major emergency (like, you know, a pandemic), the requirements, deadlines and grading policies in this syllabus are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email or phone.

## Course Requirements

Final course grades will be calculated as follows:

On-line quizzes	10%
Discussion & response papers	20%
First formal paper (due Oct. 4)	20%
Second formal paper (due Nov. 1)	20%
Take-home final exam (due Dec. 10)	30%

More details on the assignments will be provided in due time. For now:

- The on-line quizzes will be handled on an occasional basis. The goal is to keep you up to speed with the material from the Meisler readings and lecture; they replace the kind of factual questions that would otherwise have appeared on in-class exams.
- The two formal papers will both involve primary source analysis, relying on published Canadian and U.S. sources that are available on-line.
- The take-home final will feature two synthetic essays.

### **Contact Information**

Prof. William G. Gray (wggray@purdue.edu)  
Student Hours (live or virtual) in UNIV 328:  
MW 1:00 – 2:15 or by appointment

## Class and Reading Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Associated Readings</b>
Aug. 24	Introduction: the threat of destruction	
Aug. 26	The 19th-Century international system	
Aug. 28	Discussion: a decline in violence?	Pinker, Jervis, Snyder essays
Aug. 31	The Great War and international society	
Sept. 2	The League at its best, 1919-1929	Gray essay; <b>League Covenant</b>
Sept. 4	Discussion: laws of war	<b>Dunant; Geneva Convention; Brussels Conference; Fourteen Points</b>
Sept. 7	The League at its worst, 1929-1936	<b>Lytton Report</b> (excerpts)
Sept. 9	The Axis challenge	
Sept. 11	Discussion: Development and Empire	Unger, 1-48
Sept. 14	Planning for victory – the United Nations	Meisler, 1-35; <b>Atlantic Charter; UN Charter</b>
Sept. 16	The Bretton Woods system	
Sept. 18	Discussion: The New Development Infrastructure	Unger, 49-78; <b>Point Four speech</b>
Sept. 21	The human rights revolution	<b>UNHCR; Genocide Convention</b>
Sept. 23	Partitioning Palestine	Meisler, 36-54
Sept. 25	“Uniting for Peace”: Korea and the Cold War	Meisler, 55-74; <b>Uniting for Peace</b>
Sept. 28	The Suez Crisis	Meisler, 75-114
Sept. 30	The UN and African decolonization	Meisler, 115-152
Oct. 2	On the brink: The Cuban Missile Crisis	
[Oct. 4	FIRST FORMAL PAPER DUE @ 11:59 pm]	
Oct. 5	Cyprus and Nigeria: (mis)managing civil wars	
Oct. 7	The Non-Proliferation Treaty	<b>NPT</b>
Oct. 9	Discussion: <i>The Ugly American</i>	Unger, 79-101; Burdick/Lederer excerpts

Oct. 12	The Vietnam War in international politics	Meisler, 153-168
Oct. 14	Polarization & terrorism: 1967 and its aftermath	Meisler, 169-184
Oct. 16	Discussion: the “Green Revolution”	Unger, 103-125; Cullather article
Oct. 19	Détente and reversal	
Oct. 21	“Limits to Growth” and the Oil Shock	Meisler, 185-221; <b>Limits to Growth</b>
Oct. 23	Discussion: The radical 1970s	Unger, 127-42; <b>NIEO</b>
Oct. 26	The IMF and the rise of austerity economics	Unger, 143-151
Oct. 28	NGOs and international civil society	Iriye chapter
Oct. 30	The democratic wave	Meisler, 222-256
[Nov. 1	SECOND FORMAL PAPER DUE @ 11:59 pm]	
Nov. 2	The Gulf War, 1990-91	Meisler, 257-277
Nov. 4	Debate in Somalia	Meisler, 278-311
Nov. 6	Civil wars and foreign interventions in Yugoslavia	Meisler, 312-333
Nov. 9	Genocide in Rwanda	Meisler, 334-344; Power article
Nov. 11	Transitional Justice: The Hague & beyond	Wald <u>or</u> Koomen article (choose)
Nov. 13	Clinton’s interventions in Iraq and Kosovo	Webber article
Nov. 16	Globalization: the world flattens	
Nov. 18	Selective multilateralism: the Bush years, Part I	Meisler, 345-370
Nov. 20	Selective multilateralism: the Bush years, Part II	
Nov. 23	The Millennium Goals	Meisler, 371-390; <b>Millennium Goals</b>
Nov. 25-27	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
Nov. 30	America retreats (I): The Obama Years (Zoom)	
Dec. 1	America retreats (II): The Trump Years (Zoom)	
Dec. 3	Wrap-Up Discussion (Zoom)	