



Language Centre
Faculty of Social Studies
MASARYK UNIVERSITY
Joštova 10, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic

CJVA302

Current Political Events in English Speaking Countries

Syllabus

Course Information

Class day/time	Fall semester, Thursday, 13:30–15:00, U36
Number of credits	2
Class type	Lectures and class discussions
Lecturers	Colin Kimbrell
Contact	442840@mail.muni.cz
Office Hours	Tuesday, 15:30–16:30 (or by appointment)

Course Description

This is a course for students of international relations and related fields. The main focus of the seminar is on discussing current issues in world politics, based on watching videos concerning these issues and reading newspaper and/or journal articles. Great attention is also paid to building vocabulary both from the field of international relations and Academic English as such. The content of the course will be formed and adjusted to students' needs and preferences discussed in the first seminar.

Course Requirements

- 1) Given the seminar structure of the course, students are expected to attend all sessions (up to 3 unexcused absences), with exceptions stated by the Masaryk University Study and Examination Regulations.
 - 2) Students are expected to read required readings for each lecture. The readings serve to initiate discussion but also to expand students' vocabulary and exposure to authentic English. Links to required readings can be found in the syllabus or under the Study Materials → Learning Materials folder in the Information System.
 - 3) Throughout the semester, students will be required to give "leads" (short introductions) to additional topics of their interest but relevant to the given weekly topic or region of interest.
 - 4) In the final week of the semester, students will give short group presentations on a relevant topic (to be approved by the teacher).
 - 5) Each student will also be required to write a final position paper relating to a topic of interest (for example, one of the "leads").
- 3) PowerPoint presentations from lectures will also be provided in the Study Materials.

Grading

The final grade will be calculated as the sum of the four assignments. The maximum is **40** points; the minimum to complete the course is **28** points (70%). Each student will be required to give two leads worth 5 points each (10 points in total). The final presentation and position paper are worth **15** points each (30 in total).

Further Information on the Assignments

In addition to required readings and other possible homework, the course includes 3 graded assignments: leads, group presentation, and final position paper.

Leads: Each student will give two leads during the semester relating to the respective weekly topic or other suggested topics (see course schedule below). The leads will take place in weeks 4–11. With 16 students, that means 4 leads per week. The idea is to give a brief presentation (up to 5 minutes) introducing an additional or related issue based on a relevant reading from a reputable source. In addition to presenting the issue, the student should also present one new word or phrase together with its meaning and context. The spaces are first come, first served.

Group presentations: It is up to the students to form groups of up to 3 students. As regards the topic, it is up to you to choose a relevant topic but it must be approved by me.

Therefore, a topic proposal must be submitted by week 8. The presentation should be well researched and provide a more in-depth analysis of a key issue.

Position paper: Instructions regarding the writing of position papers have already been uploaded into the IS. The required length of the final position paper is **3 standard pages**. The paper should present the arguments of two opposing positions on a key issue and the student's own position/reflection on said issue and must include proper citing of references.

Course Schedule

1) 21. 9. 2017

Introduction and content negotiation

- Defining "English speaking countries"
- Narrowing the topic and negotiating the course content

Required reading/viewing:

- <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/09/19/world/trump-un-north-korea-iran.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

First assignment:

Write a position paper about the above reading and Trump's speech at the U.N. Due 29 November.

2) 28. 9. 2017

→ First assignment (see Week 1) due 29 November.

National holiday – St. Wenceslaus Day (Czech Statehood Day)

Required readings:

- https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/09/donald-trump-and-the-politicization-of-everything/540915/?utm_source=atfb

USA and Canada

3) 5. 10. 2017

The Trump administration – the twitter presidency

- Immigration – travel ban, "bad hombres" vs. dreamers
- The deepening political divide in the U.S.

Required reading/viewing:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/04/donald-trump-what-is-daca-dreamers>
- https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/09/donald-trump-and-the-politicization-of-everything/540915/?utm_source=atfb
- <https://www.ted.com/talks/robb-willer-how-to-have-better-political-conversations>

Recommended reading/viewing:

- Fukunaga, Cary: "Sin Nombre," Scion Films, 2009.
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1127715/>
- <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/10/08/us/politics/white-house-daca.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

4) 12. 10. 2017

Health care reform & race relations

- Obamacare vs. Repeal & Replace
- Black Lives Matter, Trump vs. the NFL

Required reading/viewing:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2017/09/26/us/politics/26reuters-usa-healthcare.html>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed>

Recommended reading/viewing:

- Marx, Anthony: "Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil," Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998.
- DuVernay, Ava: "13th," Kandoo Films, 2016.
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5895028/?ref=fn_al_tt_1
- Peck, Raoul: "I Am Not Your Negro," Velvet Film, 2017.
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5804038/?ref=nv_sr_1
- Kaye, Rony: "American History X," New Line Cinema, 1998.
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120586/?ref=nv_sr_1

5) 19. 10. 2017

Climate policy in N. America

- Canada vs. the U.S.
- The Cult of Trudeau
- U.S. Withdrawal from Paris Agreement

Required reading/viewing:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2017/jun/12/justin-trudeau-deploys-the-politics-of-hype-jeremy-corbyn-offers-politics-of-hope>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/17/stop-swooning-justin-trudeau-man-disaster-planet>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/17/trump-tillerson-mcmaster-paris-climate-agreement-stay-in>

Recommended literature:

- Klein, Naomi: "This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate," Penguin Random House: London, 2015.

Additional suggested topics for USA/Canada:

- Gun violence and the Second Amendment
- Net neutrality
- Tax reform
- Gerrymandering
- Indigenous peoples' rights
- Russia investigation

Additional recommended reading/viewing for US/Canada:

- https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm
- http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/10/06/555861898/gun-violence-how-the-u-s-compares-to-other-countries?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=202706
- <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/ginsburg-slaps-gorsuch>
- <http://blacklivesmatter.com/who-we-are/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECYMvjU52E>

United Kingdom and Ireland

6) 26. 10. 2017

Brexit and the current political climate

- Hard or soft?
- Where have all the Brexiteers gone?
- May vs. Corbyn

Required reading/viewing:

- <http://bruegel.org/2016/10/beyond-hard-soft-and-no-brexit/>

- <https://www.economist.com/news/britain/21719529-conservative-voters-are-most-split-trade-between-market-access-and-migration-what>
- <https://www.economist.com/news/britain/21730123-embattled-tory-prime-minister-faces-make-or-break-european-union-talks-sounds>

Recommended reading/viewing:

- [https://www.global-counsel.co.uk/sites/default/files/special-reports/downloads/Global%20Counsel Impact of Brexit.pdf](https://www.global-counsel.co.uk/sites/default/files/special-reports/downloads/Global%20Counsel%20Impact%20of%20Brexit.pdf)
- <http://bruegel.org/tag/brexit/>
- <https://openeurope.org.uk/today/blog/the-mechanics-of-leaving-the-eu-explaining-article-50/>

7) 2. 11. 2017

Other issues

- Defunding of the NHS
- Terrorist attacks

Required reading/viewing:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2015/oct/02/nhs-one-way-road-privatisation>
- <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/10016/britain-terrorism>
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/terrorism-isis-muslim-islam-jihadi-britain-theresa-may-prevent-strategies-manchester-london-failing-a7780081.html>

Recommended reading/viewing:

- Morris, Christopher: "Four Lions," Film4, 2010.
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1341167/>

Additional topics for the UK:

- University reforms and student protests
- Potential impacts of Brexit on N. Ireland & Scotland
- Sectarianism in N. Ireland

Australia and New Zealand

Presentation proposals due by week 8 (i.e. midnight on 8. 11. 2017)

8) 9. 11. 2017

Immigration, Aboriginal issues

Required reading/viewing:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/12/how-europes-far-right-fell-in-love-with-australias-immigration-policy>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/may/25/constitutional-recognition-and-why-the-uluru-talks-matter-explainer>

Recommended reading/viewing:

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28189608>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jun/30/indigenous-constitutional-recognition-faces-tough-battle-post-uluru>
- Noyce, Phillip: "Rabbit-Proof Fence," Rumbalara Films, 2002. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0252444/?ref=mv_sr_1
- de Heer, Rolf: "The Tracker," SBS Independent, 2002. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0212132/?ref=mv_sr_1
- Roeg, Nicolas: "Walkabout," MaxL. Raab Productions, 1971. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0067959/?ref=mv_sr_1

Additional topics:

- Gay rights
- Environmental policy

South Africa

9) 16. 11. 2017

Race relations, economic and social development

- Poverty, health, education, women's rights, migration

Required reading/viewing:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/24/business/south-africa-economy-apartheid.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=photo-spot-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news>

Recommended reading/viewing:

- Marx, Anthony W. "Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil," Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998.
- Hood, Gavin: "Tsotsi," The UK Film & TV Production Company PLC, 2005. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0468565/?ref=mv_sr_1

India

10) 23. 11. 2017

Relations with Pakistan, economic and social development

- The Partition of India and its legacy

Required reading/viewing:

- <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/remembering-partition-slaughter-house-170810050649347.html>

Recommended reading/viewing:

- Attenborough, Richard: "Gandhi," International Film Investors, 1982.
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083987/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

Additional topics:

- Currency switch
- Migration issues, overpopulation, corruption

11) 30. 11. 2017

Open week for special topics or unforeseen events

Required reading/viewing:

- *TBD*

12) 7. 12. 2017

Reading week – no class

13) 14. 12. 2017

Final project presentations

Cheating and plagiarism

Cheating in any other part or aspect of the course will result in failure of the course. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will also result in a final grade of an F. The Disciplinary Commission will be notified about any cases of plagiarism.