

Introduction to Global Affairs

CFR Education Sample Syllabus



NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS: An editable version of this syllabus can be found [here](#). To edit this sample syllabus, please use the file menu to download the document or to make a copy to your personal drive. From there, you can make edits to that copy.

Today's interdependent global economy and geopolitical landscape connect our actions and interests more than ever to the actions and interests of others. This course, "Introduction to Global Affairs," is designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and perspective required to understand and engage effectively with their interconnected world. Drawing on the Council on Foreign Relations' vast catalog of expert-informed, accurate, and accessible resources, the course introduces students to the main decision-makers and policy considerations that shape the world today, ending with a broad survey of the major issues facing the twenty-first-century world.

Course Learning Outcomes:

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify key actors, policies, and issues in global affairs and explain their relevance.
- Identify and communicate some of the diverse perspectives that populate today's world.
- Recognize and predict the local and global effects of their own, individual actions.
- Recognize and explain the global contexts that inform their own, individual actions.
- Explain and assess the historical, cultural, geographical, and political contexts behind global events and issues.
- Collaborate with peers to develop practical responses to contemporary global issues.

General Education Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Engage meaningfully and responsibly with global affairs.
- Communicate effectively and appropriately across diverse cultural contexts.
- Draw on perspectives beyond their own when discussing global challenges.
- Connect personal decision-making to local, global, and international contexts.

Readings

This course relies heavily on readings from [CFR Education](#), the education arm of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Founded in 1921, CFR is a nonpartisan, independent national membership organization, think tank, educator, and publisher. Its core mission is to inform U.S. engagement with the world. With over 700 free, nonpartisan, multimedia teaching and learning resources, CFR Education's vast, student-focused library offers supplemental materials to help high school and higher education students gain the knowledge, skills, and perspective needed to navigate today's interconnected world.

This syllabus divides readings into three categories:

- *CFR Education Resources* - readings, timelines, and videos designed for students to gain a foundational understanding of global affairs.
- *CFR Supplementary Resources* - CFR backgrounders, In Briefs, timelines, podcasts, videos, articles, and reports designed for a deeper dive into policy analysis.
- *CFR Education Classroom Activities* - teaching materials, including simulations, designed to engage students in the college classroom through active learning.

Class Policies and Procedures

Conduct

The higher education classroom is a space to engage with challenging ideas and material. This may not always be comfortable; however, conversations informed by diverse viewpoints contribute to valuable critical thinking and higher-level learning skills. Even if you do not agree with every outlook expressed, listening to different points of view may give you greater insight into your own perspective. Please remember that any claims made during class discussions must be based on verifiable evidence.

As a learning community, we will use the semester to practice civil discourse, or "robust, honest, frank and constructive dialogue and deliberation that seeks to advance the public interest." If you feel uncomfortable with how content in the course is presented or discussed, please contact me for further conversation or, if you feel comfortable doing so, you may say so in class in a manner that aligns with class behavioral expectations.

Assessment

This course assesses your knowledge of and engagement with course material. Students may exhibit higher-order engagement by: asking thought-provoking questions, displaying persuasive written and oral communication, using evidence to construct reasoned and logical arguments, improving over the course of the semester, and providing respectful and informed contributions to class discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE: TOPICS & READINGS

Unit One: The Fundamentals

Week One: Introduction

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, "[What is Global Literacy and What Comprises a Global Affairs Education?](#)" Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, "[The World: A Brief Introduction](#)" Educators Webinar (1:02:58)

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, "[Convene the Council](#)" Online Game

Week Two: Key Words & Themes in Global Affairs

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, "[The UN System](#)" Reading
- CFR Education, "[What Is the Liberal World Order?](#)" Video (7:56)
- CFR Education, "[Six Essential Organizations You Need to Know](#)" Reading
- CFR Education, "[Unilateralism Versus Multilateralism](#)" Reading
- CFR Education, "[How Self-Determination Shaped the Modern World](#)" Reading
- CFR Education, "[What Is Soft Power?](#)" Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, "[What Is the UN General Assembly?](#)" Backgrounder
- CFR, "[The Role of the UN Secretary-General](#)" Backgrounder
- CFR, "[Funding the United Nations: How Much Does the U.S. Pay](#)" Backgrounder

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, "[U.S. Foreign Policy: Multilateralism or Unilateralism?](#)" (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, "[Soft Power](#)" (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Three: History of the Globalized World

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, ["Essential Events Before 1900"](#) Timeline
- CFR Education, ["Essential Events Between 1900 and 1945"](#) Timeline
- CFR Education, ["Essential Events Since 1945"](#) Timeline
- CFR Education, ["What Are the Causes and Consequences of Industrialization?"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["What Is Colonialism and How Did It Arise?"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["Why Did World War I Happen?"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["Why Did World War II Happen?"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["How Did Decolonization Reshape the World?"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["How Did the Cold War Stay Cold?"](#) Video (6:56)
- CFR Education, ["Eight "Hot Wars" During the Cold War"](#) Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, ["As Nuclear Tensions Rise, Should the World Be Worried?"](#) Video (1:56)
- CFR, ["The Uncertain Future of the British Commonwealth"](#) Video (2:04)
- CFR, ["What's Behind Africa's Democratic Downturn?"](#) Video (2:58)

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, ["Sovereignty and Neutrality in 1807"](#) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, ["Explosion of the USS Maine in 1898"](#) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, ["The Zimmerman Telegram in 1917"](#) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, ["Opposing Communism in 1947"](#) Mini Simulation

Week Four: Putting it Together (Extended Simulation)

- CFR Education, ["Korean War in 1950"](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, ["NATO Enlargement in 1994"](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, ["Russia and NATO in the Baltics in 2016"](#) (NSC) Simulation

Unit Two: Global Governance

Week Five: International Organizations and Actors Today

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, ["The UN System"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["What Is the UN Security Council?"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["NATO: The World's Largest Alliance"](#) Timeline
- CFR Education, ["Six Essential Organizations You Need to Know"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["What Are the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund?"](#) Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, [“What Is the UN General Assembly?”](#) Backgrounder
- CFR, [“The Role of the UN Secretary-General”](#) Backgrounder

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, [“Dispute in Kashmir”](#) (UNSC) Mini Simulation

Week Six: Global Law and Politics

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, [“What Is International Law?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Laws, Norms, and Democratic Backsliding”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“How Do Treaties Get Made?”](#) Video (4:52)

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, [“The Role of the ICC”](#) Reading
- CFR, [“Leaders Facing Justice”](#) Timeline

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, [“Should the United States Ratify the Law of the Sea?”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Seven: Global Economics and Trade Policy

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, [“What Is Trade?”](#) Video (6:42)
- CFR Education, [“What Is Trade Policy?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Trade as Foreign Policy”](#) Video (4:29)
- CFR Education, [“What Gets in the Way of Free Trade?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“How Trade Rules are Written”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Is the World Trade Organization?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Globe-Trotting Journey of a Sneaker”](#) Video (3:41)
- CFR Education, [“What a Trade Deficit Means”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Is Monetary Policy?”](#) Video (7:22)
- CFR Education, [“The Global Role of the U.S. Dollar”](#) Video (5:36)
- CFR Education, [“Understanding Currencies and Exchange Rates”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Happened When China Joined the WTO?”](#)

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, [“What Does the G20 Do?”](#) Reading
- CFR, [“What Are Tariffs?”](#) Reading
- CFR, [“Global Trade Tracker”](#) Interactive Site
- CFR, [“The Contentious U.S.-China Trade Relationship”](#) Reading
- CFR, [“Cryptocurrencies and the Future of Money”](#) Video (2:35)

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, [“Trade Policy”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Economic Sanctions”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Eight: Global Security

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, [“How Do Countries Decide Whether to Go to War?”](#) video (5:54)
- CFR Education, [“What Is Interstate Conflict”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Understanding Intrastate Conflict”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Resource Conflicts, Explained”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“The Rise and Fall of the Responsibility to Protect”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Is Arms Control?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Is Peacekeeping?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Humanitarian Corridors, Cease-Fires, and Pauses”](#) Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, [“Global Conflict Tracker”](#) Interactive
- CFR, [“Conflicts to Watch in 2025”](#) Report
- CFR, [“Eastern Congo: A Legacy of Intervention”](#) Timeline

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, [“Armed Force”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Trusting Security Assurances”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“UN Security Council Reform”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Negotiating Ukrainian Security in 1993”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“A Red Line in Syria in 2013”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Ukrainian NATO Membership”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Nuclear Negotiations with Iran”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“A Threat to Taiwan”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Nine: Putting it Together (Case Study)

- CFR Education, [“Drones in Pakistan in 2011”](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Humanitarian Intervention in South Sudan in 2014”](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Humanitarian Intervention in South Sudan in 2014”](#) (UNSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“North Korean Nuclear Threat”](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“North Korean Nuclear Threat”](#) (UNSC) Simulation

Unit Three: Twenty-First Century Challenges

Week Ten: Global Health

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, [“What Is the World Health Organization?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Noncommunicable Diseases and How They Are Measured”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Why Noncommunicable Diseases Are Threatening More Lives Than Ever”](#) Video (0:38)
- CFR Education, [“The Changing Response to AIDS”](#) Timeline
- CFR Education, [“Diabetes: One of Mexico’s Top Killers”](#) (3:24)
- CFR Education, [“The Race to Develop COVID-19 Vaccines”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What a Zombie Apocalypse Can Teach Us About Pandemics \(Full Version\)”](#) Video (4:51)

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, [“Major Pandemics of the Modern Era”](#) Timeline
- CFR, [“How Vaccines Changed the World”](#) Backgrounder
- CFR, [Negotiating Global Health Security](#) Report

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, [“Preparing for and Managing the Next Pandemic”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Eleven: Migration

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, [“What Is Migration”](#) Video (4:12)
- CFR Education, [“Migration Today”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“For Migrants, Labels Matter”](#) Reading

- CFR Education, ["Internally Displaced Persons"](#) Reading
- CFR Education, ["The Lasting Effects of Emigration"](#) Video (3:31)

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, ["Why are People Fleeing the Northern Triangle?"](#) Video (2:01)
- CFR, ["U.S. Postwar Immigration Policy"](#) Timeline
- CFR, ["How Does the U.S. Refugee System Work?"](#) Reading
- CFR, ["How Has the U.S. Refugee System Changed Over Time?"](#) Video (1:45)

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, ["Cuban Immigration in 1980"](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Twelve: Environment and Climate

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, ["What Is Climate Change?"](#) Video (4:26)
- CFR Education, ["Understanding the Causes of Climate Change"](#) Learning Journey
- CFR Education, ["How to Mitigate Climate Change"](#) Learning Journey
- CFR Education, ["How the World Can Adapt to Climate Impacts"](#) Learning Journey
- CFR Education, ["Energy Challenges in the Face of Climate Change"](#) Learning Journey
- CFR Education, ["Climate Policy: Opportunities and Obstacles"](#) Learning Journey
- CFR Education, ["What Is Geoengineering?"](#) Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, ["Ecological Disasters"](#) Timeline
- CFR, ["Global Climate Agreements: Successes and Failures"](#) Backgrounder
- CFR, ["How the Caribbean is Building Climate Resilience"](#) Backgrounder
- CFR, ["The Earth Experienced Another Year of Record Warming. The Climate Fallout Was Intense"](#) Article

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, ["Climate Prompts: Fact or Fiction?"](#) Activity
- CFR Education, ["Create a Mitigation Awareness Video"](#) Activity
- CFR Education, ["Combating Climate Change: EN-ROADS Climate Solutions Simulator"](#) Activity
- CFR Education, ["Navigating the Green Transition"](#) Activity
- CFR Education, ["Hurricane in the Caribbean"](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, ["U.S. Arctic Policy"](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, ["Stopping Deforestation in the Amazon"](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

- CFR Education, [“Solar Geoengineering”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Thirteen: Development and Inequality

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, [“What Is Development?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Global Development Explained”](#) Video (5:15)
- CFR Education, [“Understanding the Last Fifty Years of Global Development”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Are the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Is U.S. Foreign Aid?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“A Brief History of U.S. Foreign Aid”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“The Sustainable Development Goals”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“What Is Economic Inequality?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“Climate Change Inequality”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“COVID-19’s Unequal Consequences”](#) Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, [“The World Bank Group’s Role in Global Development”](#) Backgrounder
- CFR, [“The History and Future of U.S. Foreign Aid,”](#) Virtual Event (59:43)
- CFR, [“Women’s Power Index”](#) Interactive Site

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, [“Economic Statecraft: Foreign Assistance”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Fourteen: New Challenges - Technology and Cybersecurity

CFR Education Resources

- CFR Education, [“What are Cyberspace and Cybersecurity?”](#) Video (7:15)
- CFR Education, [“The Growing Threat of Cyberattacks”](#) Video (4:24)
- CFR Education, [“How Does AI Influence Government?”](#) Reading
- CFR Education, [“How Does AI Influence Conflict?”](#) Reading

CFR Supplementary Resources

- CFR, [“How Artificial Intelligence Could Change the World”](#) Video (2:28)

CFR Education Classroom Activities

- CFR Education, [“Foreign Cyberattacks and Election Security”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Should the United States Ban TikTok to Preserve National Security?”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Regulating AI”](#) (NSC) Mini Simulation

Week Fifteen: Putting It Together (Extended Simulations)

- CFR Education, [“Asylum Seekers at the U.S. Southern Border in 2019”](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Global Climate Change Policy”](#) (UNSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Global Climate Change Policy”](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Cyber Clash with China”](#) (NSC) Simulation
- CFR Education, [“Cyber Clash with China”](#) (UNSC) Simulation