



Syllabus
CORE 2560 America Through Foreign Eyes
(Core Theme: Self and Identities)
Fall 2008

Mon./Weds. 2 – 3:50 p.m.
Mass Communications Building, Rm. 121

Instructor: Christof Demont-Heinrich

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Office Hours: Mon. & Weds. 12:45 p.m.-1:45 p.m. and by appointment

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Class Web Site: We will be using Blackboard

- *E-copies of essays and articles are available on Blackboard under the “readings” link. There may also be in-class handouts. Additionally, you will be asked to read articles on web sites, bulletin boards, and other WWW sources.*

Course Objectives

The United States, and Americans, occupy a unique, privileged and powerful position in the contemporary world order. Indeed, according to many scholarly and public accounts, the U.S. has achieved unprecedented status as *the* preeminent world power. Yet despite, or, paradoxically, perhaps because of its status as what some have called a world "hyperpower," large numbers of Americans are mostly, if not totally, unaware of what U.S. global preeminence means to them, and to other people around the world. This course aims to inspire critical reflection on your part about the role of the United States -- its political and economic system and practices, its culture, and, most fundamentally, its social actors, meaning its people(s) -- in a globalizing world. It does so primarily, though not exclusively, by asking a simple, yet crucial question:

- How does the rest of the world view the United States, Americans and the "U.S./American situation" with respect to globalization?

Course Methods & Approach

The course will use a variety of methods and approaches to inspire interesting and, quite possibly, troubling reflection on your part about the complex American "situation" in a globalizing world. Assigned readings will draw from the work of scholars and writers from a variety of fields and disciplines, including American studies, anthropology, communication, cultural studies, history, international studies, linguistics and language studies, media studies, political science and international relations, political economy, and sociology. These will be written by scholars and writers from around the world.

The course will begin by providing the larger context you will need in order to address, and respond to, how other people from around the world view the U.S. and Americans. First, you will be exposed to diverse analytical, theoretical and political perspectives on globalization and its complex political, economic and cultural dimensions.

Next, we will read a number of different, and often competing, "self" analyses of American foreign policy ("self" means these are written by Americans), with foreign policy here broadly defined to include military, political, economic, cultural and social policy.

The final 3/4 of the course will focus on foreign views of the U.S., Americans, and American foreign policy (with foreign policy broadly defined to include politics, economics, culture, and social policy). We will read selected accounts analyzing the U.S., Americans, and political, economic, social and cultural dimensions of American foreign policy, grouped according five major regions of the world: Africa, Asia & Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. These assigned readings will provide only a limited view on the U.S. from these regions. They will therefore be supplemented and bolstered by readings that you, yourself, discover, and by research that you, yourself, conduct.

The course will also bring in guest speakers and use audio-visual materials in order to expose you to different ideas and perspectives, increase awareness and understanding, and, most fundamentally, to stimulate critical reflection and thought.

The Internet as a global learning resource

The primary mode of research will be the Internet. There, you will be able to find diverse representations of the U.S. and its perceived role in the world in a variety of forms. These might include, but are not necessarily limited to:

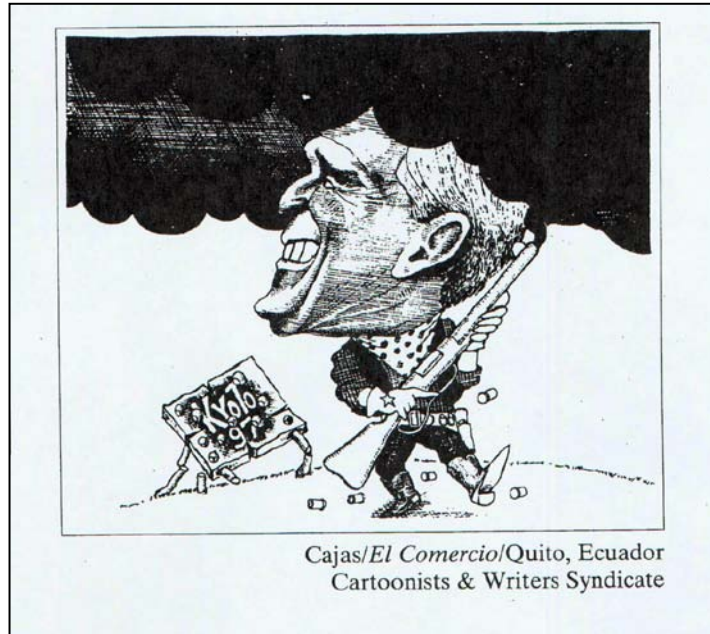
- traditional media with an online presence, among them online newspapers, and television and radio station web sites;
- foreign political web sites constructed by foreign government sources;
- web sites for global and foreign public opinion polling organizations such as the Pew Research Center and the Eurobarometer web site;
- web sites for foreign companies, international organizations (the UN, WTO, etc.) non-governmental organizations, etc.;
- web sites for foreign educational institutions such as colleges and universities;
- weblogs;
- discussion boards & newsgroups
- listservs
- e-mail



Current Events

You will be expected to keep abreast of contemporary international events by way of television, radio, print and, especially, web-based news sources. Be aware that current international events will be considered “fair game” for questions on the four pop quizzes that will be administered during the quarter. You may read and watch as many different sources of news as you wish. The more the better. However, in order that we can have informed discussion and debate based on the same basic informational foundation, you **must** regularly consume at least **two** of the following news sources:

- ✓ The NYT.com (<http://www.nyt.com>)
- ✓ The World Press Review (<http://www.worldpress.org>)
- ✓ BBC online (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/?ok>)
- ✓ Deutsche Welle (English -- or German, if you know it) (<http://www.dw-world.de/>)
- ✓ Al Jazeera (English -- or Arabic, if you know Arabic) (<http://english.aljazeera.net/HomePage>)
- ✓ Watchingamerica.com



Assignments & Grading

Overview:

- Three formal individual writing assignments = 40% (400 points)
 - personal reflection paper 10% (100 points)
 - study abroad student interview paper 12.5% (125 points)
 - analysis paper 17.5% (175 points)
- Group project (in-class presentation & 10-12 page paper) = 20% (200 points)
- Lead class discussion assignment = 7.5% (75 points)
- Class blog assignment = 7.5% (75 points)
- Discussion board posts = 7.5% (75 points)
- Pop quizzes (best 3 of 4) = 7.5% (75 points)
- Participation = 10% (100 points)

Formal Individual Writing Assignments (three): There are three formal individual writing assignments. Assignment sheets for these will be posted on Blackboard.

Deadlines: Barring extreme circumstances, you will be expected to turn in papers by deadline, or you will receive a zero (F) on that assignment.

Revision. If you wish, you may revise all three of your formal writing assignments. You are strongly urged to come in and talk to me before revising. *I will average the first grade you with the second grade you earned for your final grade. If you received an 75 on the first story and a 90 on the second, your final story grade would be a an 83.*

Anonymous critique: You may occasionally see your work in class. If you do see your work on the computer projection screen or in photocopied form, do NOT take it as a form of negative or personal criticism. We will be critiquing each another's writing in order to learn from each other and to become better writers.

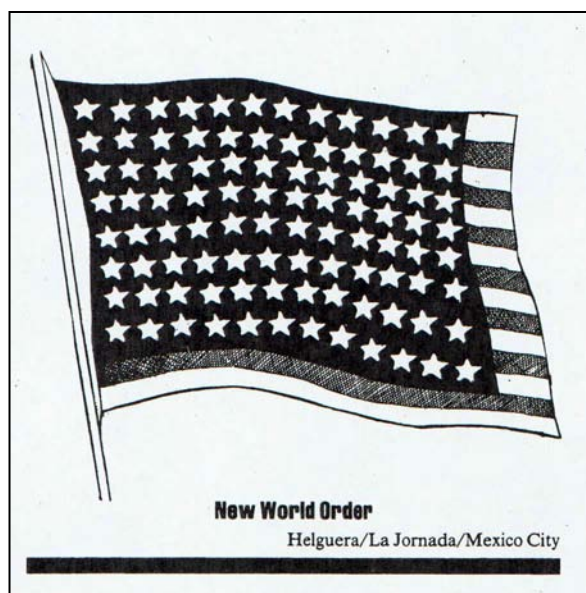
Group Project & Regional Experts: You will build a regional expertise on views of the U.S. from a specific world region through three interlocking writing assignments: 1) An informal assignment that asks you to lead class discussion (7.5% of quarter grade) 2) an individual writing assignment (the analysis paper = 17.5% of quarter grade) 3) a formal group project (20% of quarter grade). The group project will include a collectively authored paper (10-12 pages) and a 30-minute, in-class group presentation (each group will have three members).

I will circulate a sign-up sheet early in the quarter on which you may sign up to work with two other students in becoming an expert for one of five class-designated world regions -- *Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East*. Ideally, those of you with fluency in, for example, Spanish will gravitate toward investigating views of the U.S. from Latin America, etc.

Class Blog: Blogging affords a good opportunity to practice and hone your writing and thinking skills relatively informally. For this assignment, you will use Blackboard's "blog tool" to blog as a *class*. This means you won't have your own blog per se. Instead, you will each post individual entries to a class blog that everyone – including your Slovenian and Australian counterparts -- can post to, read, and post responses to. Every other week (deadlines will be posted in the day-by-day schedule), you will need to track down one online photo, video, news story, blog entry, advertisement, political cartoon, etc. from an online source that you found interesting, thought-provoking, troubling, etc. Each of the total of four pictures, cartoons, etc. you analyze must come from and/or have something to do with the world region for which you have signed up to be an expert (for the *Lead Class Discussion* and *Group Project* assignments). The five regions are: Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and The Middle East.

International discussion board posts & writing assignments: I will use in- and out-of-class writing prompts and require that you do some short written homework assignments in order to keep you writing and thinking about a variety of important critical social and cultural issues and considerations relevant to the course. I will also use some of these short writing assignments as building blocks for some of the longer formal assignments.

We will also be exchanging ideas online about globalization and the American role in the world with students in Slovenia (at the University of Maribor) and Australia (at the University of Queensland).



Either I, or instructors in Slovenia (Marko Ivanisin) and Australia (Zala Volcic, Nicholas Carah), and/or students in those other countries will be creating discussion threads on contemporary globalization issues which involve the U.S., and in some cases, the U.S., Australia and Slovenia.

I will require that you respond to 5 threads established by me *and* that you post thoughtful, intelligent and respectful responses to 5 responses and/or new discussion threads posted by Slovenian and/or Australian students.

If you wish, you also have the opportunity to electronically chat with students in Australia and Slovenia.

You are strongly encouraged to go beyond the minimum posting requirements to create discussion threads, and exchanges, of your own, as well as set up times to chat online with students from Australia and Slovenia. You will receive **extra credit** (how much will be determined later) if you go beyond the minimum requirements in participating in this international online forum. Going beyond the minimum requirements might include creating new discussion threads, responding to more than 5 online replies, setting up chat sessions with students in Australia and or Slovenia, or exchanging e-mails with the students in Australia and/or Slovenia.

Finally, please read the bios posted by the students from the University of Maribor, the University of Queensland, and your fellow DU students. This will humanize the electronic exchanges, make these exchanges more interesting, and, it is hoped, ensure that they are reasonable, civil exchanges. You are encouraged to return to the bios to (re)familiarize yourself with some of your international interlocutors when you read and/or respond to some of their discussion board posts.

Pop Quizzes: There will be four pop quizzes. Your best three quiz grades will count. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class. I will not re-administer quizzes for those who arrive to class late! The questions on these quizzes will relate to the readings, lecture, current international events, and the readings that your fellow classmates select the class to read as part of the lead-class discussion assignment!

Participation & Attendance: In-class participation and discussion are vital to a healthy and effective learning environment. This is especially crucial in a small class (15 students) such as this one. Therefore, I will take attendance regularly. Additionally, you may be periodically called upon to ask/answer questions. You will also be called upon to participate in short in-class group activities and subsequent group presentations. Student names must be affixed to any group work (overheads, etc.) and will be used as a partial basis upon which to determine individual participation grades. More than two unexcused absences will result in a substantial reduction in your participation grade!

Part of your participation grade will hinge on your participation in a very small assignment which each student will be asked to do individually. Each student will be asked to do a short 2-3 minute world events update one time during the quarter.

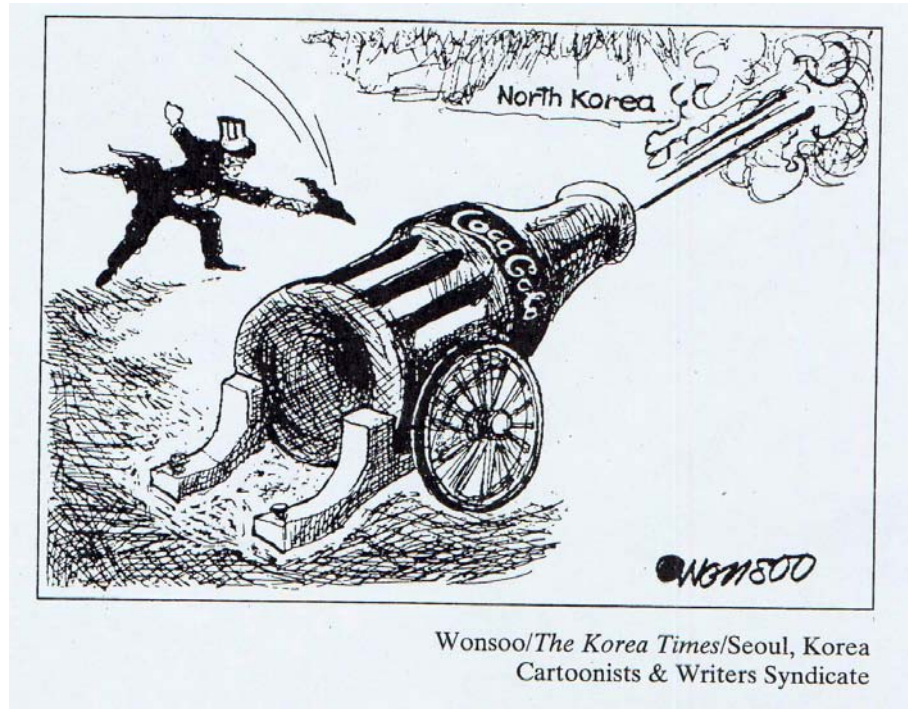
Grading Scale:

93%+ A

| | |
|---------|----|
| 90%-92% | A- |
| 87%-89% | B+ |
| 83%-86% | B |
| 80%-82% | B- |
| 77%-79% | C+ |
| 73-76% | C |
| 70-72% | C- |
| 67%-69% | D+ |
| 63%-66% | D |
| 60%-62% | D- |
| 59% - | F |

If you attend class, do the required work and have a reasonable grasp of the information, you should have no trouble earning at least a "C," which indicates satisfactory work.

With the exception of documented absences [official doctor's note, etc.] you will NOT be allowed to make up an exam, paper, presentation, etc. if you miss class. If you have a legitimate, documented reason for missing an upcoming class [official DU athletic/extracurricular event, etc.], it is your responsibility to inform the instructor beforehand. Lecture notes will be posted to the class web site. However, It is your responsibility to contact other class members for in-class notes, assignment sheets, etc. if you miss class.



Gradebook:

I will be using the Gradebook program in Blackboard. This will allow you to generally keep track of how you're doing. Be aware that a large percentage of your grade will still be in the balance until after the last day of class. In short, just because you're carrying a 90% average into the last day of class doesn't mean that you will end up with a 90% for the quarter. Basically, use Gradebook as a rough estimate of how you're doing during the quarter -- and to make sure I am entering the correct grades on your assignments.

Policies

1. Rude or abusive behavior such as talking excessively while the instructor or fellow students are addressing the class and/or personal verbal attacks on another student, groups of

students, or the instructor will not be tolerated. This type of behavior will have an extremely negative impact on your participation grade!

2. TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES/PAGERS etc. before coming to class. I will NOT tolerate text messaging/IM'ing etc. in class. Students who violate this policy will receive a 0% on their participation grade (worth 10% of their total quarter grade!).
3. NO LAPTOPS except for specific in-class exercises in which I ask you to use your laptops! For the rationale behind this policy, please see No. 2 above!
4. Sleeping during class is rude and disrespectful to me, and to other students who are contributing to class. If you are too tired to come to class, don't come at all. I will mark you absent if you sleep during class.
5. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic "F" for that assignment. Additionally, university policy permits harsher actions. If you have any questions about what constitutes (or does not constitute) plagiarism, ask me before you turn something in.
6. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please let me know as soon as possible.
7. If you are involved in DU athletics or some other form of extra-curricular activity that will interfere with your attendance, you are required to let me know far ahead of time so that we can make any accommodations that are allowed according to official DU policies.
8. If you have any questions or concerns during the course of the quarter about anything, please feel free to contact me. E-mail (cdemonth@du.edu) is far and away the best way to reach me!

*** *All political cartoons are from issues of The World Press Review.*