

The Global Politics of Pandemics

POL466/2207

Spring 2021

Prof. Seva Gunitsky

Thursdays 12-2pm (online, synchronous)

This seminar examines the impact of pandemics on international politics, focusing on issues such as conflict, trade, state capacity, and the global order. We use COVID-19 as the motivating case study, but will occasionally look at the impact of pandemics in a broader historical context. Previous experience with international relations or comparative politics courses is helpful but not required.

Requirements

There are two requirements for this course: 1) weekly responses and 2) a final project.

Weekly Responses

The weekly responses consist of three components – a 300-word reflection, a 150-word response to another person's reflection, and two discussion questions for the entire class:

- A reflection on the readings, about 300 words offering your comments and critiques. Posted as plaintext on Quercus, by Wednesday 5pm.
- A weekly written response to another student's comment. About 200 words; try not to respond to the same person each week. Posted as plaintext on Quercus (as a reply to the original comment) by midnight on Wednesday.
- Two weekly discussion questions based on the readings. To be posted on Quercus by midnight on Wednesday. These should not be simple yes/no or open-ended "so what do you think?" questions.

Each week's responses are worth 5% of the final mark, for a total of 50%. Please post them on time – note that your reflections are due at 5pm on Wed. to give your colleagues time to write responses. The weekly response, based on all three components, will be marked as "Check-plus" (87), "Check-plus/Check" (85), "Check" (82), and "Check-minus" (70; note the big dropoff). Late responses will automatically be marked down five points, so if you receive a "Check" but turn it in late your mark will be 82 minus 5, or 77. Responses not posted by 10am on Thursdays will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Please refer to the marking scale below for more information.

As with most small classes, your involvement is key for the course – and that's especially true here, where there is no well-established "literature" on Covid-19 and many of the events are still ongoing. So I would encourage you to think of our meetings as a small reading circle where we

can exchange thoughts on the topic in a fluid way. Doing the readings and being ready to discuss them will be crucial for this.

Final Project

A final project is typically a research paper based on the themes of the course. In this course I will treat the idea of a final project in a more expansive way – it can take the form of a podcast, a Youtube video, a visual essay, or anything else you can think of that deals with the subject of pandemics and global politics. Of course, research papers are welcome too, and should be about 15-20 pages. Final projects need to be approved fairly early, before Week 5, so start thinking about them now. Approval requires sending me a 1-page proposal that includes the specific question of puzzle you plan to answer. The final project is worth 50% of the final mark and will be due on the last day of class.

Reading Response Guidelines

Check-Plus – Exceptional Response

- shows an excellent understanding of the readings and is able to draw salient parallels or highlight contrasts among them
- focuses on making strong and specific arguments in a precise, well-constructed, and substantiated way
- avoids summarizing, or integrates summaries seamlessly into the analysis
- is well-written, polished, and clearly structured
- displays original thinking and careful analysis
- carefully considers the implications and implicit assumptions of theories, and is able to evaluate competing explanations

Check – Good Response

- shows a clear understanding of the arguments and their relationship to each other
- provides well-constructed and substantiated arguments, although some of the arguments may lack clarity and precision
- for the most part, avoids summarizing in favor of original critiques
- is generally well-written, though may contain a few grammar or spelling mistakes, or some unclear wording
- uses the available evidence to substantiate or challenge the argument(s)

Check-Minus – Inadequate Response (rarely given out; let's try to avoid those!)

- misunderstands or misrepresents the arguments made in the readings
- omits important material in structuring the response
- employs weak arguments that are poorly constructed or trivial
- does not use the available evidence to substantiate or challenge the argument(s)
- is unable to evaluate theoretical assumptions made in the readings
- shows an inability or unwillingness to integrate feedback from earlier drafts
- generally lacks a clear and sustained line of thought

Arts and Sciences – Marking Scheme

Percentage	Grade	GPA Value	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	4.0	Excellent
85-89	A	4.0	
80-84	A-	3.7	
77-79	B+	3.3	Good
73-76	B	3.0	
70-72	B-	2.7	
67-69	C+	2.3	Adequate
63-66	C	2.0	
60-62	C-	1.7	
57-59	D+	1.3	Marginal
53-56	D	1.0	
50-52	D-	0.7	
0-49	F	0.0	Inadequate

Plagiarism

Please don't use other people's ideas or arguments without attribution. See www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize. It's better to turn in something late rather than plagiarize – if you are running late on a response or the final project, email me (seva1000@gmail.com) and we can figure it out.

Readings

Readings are available online through the links provided, via Quercus, or through a Google Scholar search. I would encourage you to do the readings early, over the weekend if possible, so you have time to think about your response, which should address the readings as a whole. Please download article PDFs where available, so we can refer to page numbers during discussion.

Readings #1 – The Initial Response to Covid-19 – January 21

- Branko Milanovic – The Real Pandemic Danger Is Social Collapse [Quercus]
- Kurt Campbell and Rush Doshi – The Coronavirus Could Reshape Global Order, March 18, 2020 [Quercus]
- Paul Poast’s Twitter thread from April 11, 2020 [[LINK](#)]
- Joshua Busby – What International Relations Tells Us About Covid-19 [[LINK](#)]

Readings #2 – The Big Picture – January 28

- Andrew Price-Smith, “Epidemic Disease, History, and the State”, Chapter 2 in Contagion and Chaos [Quercus]
- Daniel Drezner - The Song Remains the Same: International Relations After COVID-19 [[LINK](#)]
- Kevin Rudd, The Coming Post-Covid Anarchy [Quercus]
- Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Surveillance, Security, and Democracy in the Post-Covid World [[LINK](#)]

Readings #3 – The Global Order – February 4

- Michael Barnett – Covid-19 and the Sacrificial International Order [[LINK](#)]
- Kahl, Colin and Berengaut, Ariana. “Aftershocks: The Coronavirus Pandemic and the New World Disorder.” War on the Rocks, April 10, 2020. [[LINK](#)]
- Feigenbaum, Evan A. “Why the United States and China Forgot How to Cooperate.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. April 28, 2020. [[LINK](#)]
- Mariana Mazzucato, Capitalism After the Pandemic [Quercus]

Readings #4 – State Capacity – February 11

- Andrew Price-Smith, “Pandemic Influenza: On Sclerosis in Governance”, Chapter 3 in Contagion and Chaos [Quercus]

- Francis Fukuyama, The Pandemic and Political Order [Quercus]
- Bollyky et al, Fighting a Pandemic Requires Trust [Quercus]
- Victor Cha, Asia's COVID-19 Lessons for the West: Public Goods, Privacy, and Social Tagging, The Washington Quarterly [[LINK](#)]
- Joshua Keating, The Decline of the Nation-State, Slate [[LINK](#)]

Readings #5 – International Institutions – February 25

- Mearsheimer, John J. 1994/95. "The False Promise of International Institutions." International Security 19(3): 5-49. [Google Scholar]
- Keohane, Robert O. and Martin, Lisa L. 1995. "The Promise of Institutional Theory." International Security 20(1): 39-51. [Google Scholar]
- Valeska Huber, The Unification of the Globe by Disease? [[LINK](#)]
- Hinnerk Feldwisch-Drentrup, "How WHO Became China's Coronavirus Accomplice." [[LINK](#)]
- Fidler, David. "The World Health Organization and Pandemic Politics." Think Global Health, April 10, 2020. [[LINK](#)]
- Pickering, Thomas and Trivedi, Atman. "The International Order Didn't Fail the Pandemic Alone." Foreign Affairs, May 14, 2020. [[LINK](#)]
- Stewart Patrick, "When the System Fails" [[LINK](#)]

Readings #6 – Domestic Politics of Covid I – March 4

- Nadia Urbinati, The Pandemic Hasn't Killed Populism [Quercus]
- David Art, The Myth of Global Populism [[LINK](#)]
- Rebecca Weiner, The Growing White Supremacist Menace [Quercus]
- Minxin Pei, China's Coming Upheaval [Quercus]

Readings #7 – Domestic Politics of Covid II – March 11

- Guido Alfani, Plague in seventeenth-century Europe and the decline of Italy: an epidemiological hypothesis, *European Review of Economic History*, Volume 17, Issue 4, November 2013, Pages 408–430. [[LINK](#)]
- Julian Gerwitz, ‘Loving Capitalism Disease’: Aids and Ideology in the People’s Republic of China, 1984–2000 [[LINK](#)]
- Malley, Stephen and Pomper, Robert. “The Perils of Hying Pandemic Response as a National Security Issue.” *Just Security*, May 4, 2020 [[LINK](#)]
- Melinda Gates, The Pandemic’s Toll on Women [Quercus]
- Jacob Leibenluft – The Pandemic Hurts Countries That Don’t Value Workers [Quercus]

Readings #8 – Democracy and Autocracy – March 18

- David Stasavage, Democracy, Autocracy, and Emergency Threats: Lessons for COVID-19 from the Last Thousand Years [[LINK](#)]
- Rachel Kleinfeld, Do Authoritarian or Democratic Countries Handle Pandemics Better? [[LINK](#)]
- Lurhmann, et al. “Pandemic Backsliding: Does Covid-19 Put Democracy at Risk?” V-Dem Institute, 2020. [[LINK](#)]
- Joshua Keating, “The Pandemic Threatened Global Democracy. Instead, It’s Strengthened It. Slate [[LINK](#)]
- Larry Diamond, Democracy Versus the Pandemic [Quercus]

Readings #9 – Trade and the Global Economy – March 25

- Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman (2019) “Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion.” *International Security* 44(1):42-79. [[LINK](#)]
- Kathleen R. McNamara and Abraham L. Newman. - “The Big Reveal: COVID-19 and Globalization’s Great Transformations” [[LINK](#)]
- Farrell, Henry and Newman, Abraham. “Will the Coronavirus End Globalization as we Know It?” [Quercus]
- Ranney, et al. “Critical Supply Shortages – the Need for Ventilators and Personal Protective Equipment during the Covid-19 Pandemic.” *New England Journal of Medicine*, April 30, 2020. [[LINK](#)]

- Zeynep Tufekci – Why Telling People They Don’t Need Masks Backfired, March 17, 2020 [[LINK](#)]

Readings #10 – War and Conflict – April 1

- Andrew Price-Smith, “War as a Disease Amplifier”, Chapter 7 in Contagion and Chaos [Quercus]
- Wise, Paul and Barry, Michelle. 2017. “Civil War & the Global Threat of Pandemics.” Daedalus, 146(4): 71-84. [[LINK](#)]
- Chris Layne, Coming Storms [Quercus]
- Posen, Barry. “Do Pandemics Promote Peace?” [Quercus]
- Rachel Brown, Heather Hurlburt, and Alexandra Stark, How the Coronavirus Sows Civil Conflict [Quercus]
- Tahsin Saadi Sedik and Rui Xu, A Vicious Cycle: How Pandemics Lead to Economic Despair and Social Unrest [[LINK](#)]