

AEM 2000: Contemporary Controversies in the Global Economy

Fall 2008 Syllabus

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Lecture: T/R 10:10-11:00, Malott 253
Sections: R: 12:20-1:10, Warren 232
R 1:25-2:15, Warren 232
F: 12:20-1:10, Warren 232
F: 1:25-2:15, Warren 261

TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

Graduate TAs: Kevin McAvey (kcm59@cornell.edu) and Kira Villa (kmj34@cornell.edu)
Undergraduate TAs: Kate Girolamo (keg45@cornell.edu), Maya Grinberg (mg329@cornell.edu), Laura Johnson (ldj3@cornell.edu), Yash Mathur (ym87@cornell.edu) and Rebecca Ross (rlr45@cornell.edu).

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

This course aims to stimulate critical thinking and cogent writing and speaking about contemporary controversies that attract regular attention in the international press and among key private and public sector decision-makers. Students read and discuss competing arguments about current issues such as on commercial and humanitarian distribution of genetically modified foods, morally objectionable market exchange among willing buyers and sellers and sovereign debt forgiveness. Students write short briefing papers and give regular oral briefs, which will be evaluated for quality of communication as well as subject matter content. Priority given to AEM majors, in particular sophomores and juniors.

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

Required: ECON 101 (introductory microeconomics) and Freshman Writing Seminars completed.
Recommended: COMM 201 (oral communications) and intermediate microeconomics (ECON 301, ECON 313 or PAM 200).

READINGS:

The course relies mainly on my lecture notes, available on the course website, handouts provided in class, and on papers and media clips posted on the course web site. A packet of key readings is available from the Campus Store. You are not required to purchase the course packet. It is provided solely for the convenience of those who want hard copies of all the key readings. All of the materials in that packet - and much more - are available on the course web site.

HOME PAGE:

The course home page is on Blackboard. The page provides you with announcements, information about the course, links to the syllabus, lecture notes, useful web sites, a customized search engine, current grades, and all the usual, good things available on Blackboard sites. I strongly recommend that you check the course web site frequently during the semester, especially for announcements prior to class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

I strictly enforce Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity. I strongly encourage you to discuss course material with your classmates outside of class. However, the written work you turn in and the oral presentations you make must be entirely your own. At the minimum, a violation of the code of academic integrity will result in a failing course grade.

GRADES AND POINT ALLOCATION:

There is no "curve" in this class; you are not competing against your classmates. Grades will be based on total points earned, with 98-100% an A+, 93-97% an A, 90-92% an A-, 88-89% a B+, etc. Points will be allocated as follows:

<u>Exercise</u>	<u>Points</u>
Executive briefing papers: first drafts (4)	20%
Executive briefing papers: final drafts (4)	36%
Executive briefing papers: editorial contributions (4)	12%
Impromptu position notes (4)	16%
Oral presentation	8%
Course participation	8%

There are no examinations or long term papers in this course.

No extensions are granted. All briefing papers, peer edits and impromptu position notes must be turned in at the start of lecture on the due date. Late or missed assignments will receive a grade of zero.

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING PAPERS:

Executive briefing papers of 500-1000 words are the principal means by which I evaluate your learning and performance. In the first week of class you will get a detailed handout on what constitutes a good executive briefing paper: how to present a logical and well-supported argument and how to do so clearly and concisely. Papers will be evaluated for both content and composition. We will occasionally discuss writing styles in class, especially in sections.

Because one learns not only by writing, but also by attentive reading and thoughtful editing, you will each edit/comment on classmates' briefs as well. You will be evaluated on both your own briefs and your editorial contributions to others' briefs. We grade both first and final drafts as well as your editorial contributions to your classmates' briefs.

I hand out the next briefing paper assignment on the first day of each new module. Your first draft is due one week later (see the schedule below). Turn in **two copies** (one for a classmate to edit, one for the TA or me to edit and grade). Those who do not turn in two copies will automatically lose 3 points on the first draft grade. A few days (usually one week) later you need to turn in **two copies** of your edits of your classmate's draft brief (one for the author, one for grading). Again, failure to turn in two copies will cost you 3 points on the peer edit grade. One copy of the final draft of your briefing paper is due at the start of class on the first day of the next module (for the last module, on the first day after classes end), accompanied by the two edited copies of your first draft (one from a TA, one from a peer). The schedule of briefing paper assignments will be as follows:

Briefing Paper Number	Handed out	Due dates:		
		1st draft	Peer edits	Final draft
1: Obnoxious Markets	Sep 9	Sep 18	Sep 23	Sep 30
2: Genetically Modified Foods	Sep 30	Oct 9	Oct 16	Oct 23
3: Sovereign Debt	Oct 23	Oct 30	Nov 6	Nov 13
4: Immigration Policy	Nov 13	Nov 20	Nov 25	Dec 4

I post especially good student briefing papers on the course web site and on the bulletin to the left of my office door (Warren 315) throughout the semester so that others can read your thoughts on big issues!

ORAL PRESENTATION:

Oral communications are as important written communications. Each student will give one 7-12 minute oral presentation on his or her briefing paper on the last day of one assigned module, in section or in lecture. A presentation schedule will be established in week two. Presentations will make use of professional presentations software (e.g., Powerpoint). The second section meeting of the semester will focus on oral presentations and effective use of Powerpoint. Students need to bring their presentations on their own laptop, a USB stick or a CD (formatted to be readable on any Windows machine). A LCD projector will be available in the classroom. Students presenting in the first module or in lecture for any module receive a 5 point bonus for the oral presentation assignment.

IMPROMPTU POSITION NOTES:

One routinely needs to formulate a position on an issue quickly. Clear and convincing articulation of a position in a matter of minutes is a learned skill. Toward that end, the last lecture meeting of each module will begin with a ten minute short writing assignment. You will be given a brief question and asked to write your position on the issue at hand. Three students will then be asked to read their position note verbatim (i.e., no extemporizing) so as to initiate a class discussion. Each student's written impromptu position note will be turned in and graded for clarity, logic and quality of exposition. A set of candidate questions will be handed out at the start of each new module.

OFFICE HOURS:

Prof. Barrett's regular office hours are Tuesdays 11:15 AM - 12:45 PM and Fridays 8:30-9:45 AM. During office hours, I always drop whatever I am doing to address your concerns. Outside those times, please feel free to email questions to me at any time or to call for an appointment. Please also feel free to drop by my office any time, but please understand that I am often out of the office or busy and unable to visit with you right away outside of office hours. So I may have to ask you to come back later.

TA Office hours will be held in Warren 47. The exact days and times will be determined by the end of the first full week of classes and will be posted on the course web site.

COURSE OUTLINE:

The course is comprised of four modules, each comprised of six lecture periods and three sections. Three modules are set. The class will decide the fourth from among several options by written secret ballot the second week of class (i.e., once add/drop changes have settled down a bit).

The general pattern within each module runs as follows. In the first two lectures I offer a two-part overview, presenting the economic logic and ethical principles underpinning various perspectives on the question(s) under consideration. In the next two lecture periods, we hear from one or two guest lecturers and/or watch a video on the topic. In these lectures and videos, we try to expose you to a range of conflicting arguments on the topic under discussion. At the fifth lecture meeting, students will be presented with an issue other than the one covered in the executive briefing paper assignment

and given an impromptu position note writing assignment. Three such notes will be read verbatim and we will discuss the issue as a class. At the final lecture meeting of the module, three or four students will make oral presentations of their executive briefing paper, with class discussion.

Weekly sections are run by the TAs. The first two weeks will focus on basic writing and oral presentation skills, on which exercises in the course depend. After the first two weeks, sections are focused on the current module, with three meetings per module. The first section of each module involves in-class drafting and peer edits in response to the executive briefing paper assignment for the module. The second section focuses on review and discussion of readings related to the impromptu position note assignment for the module. The final section meeting of each module features 7-12 minute oral presentations by 3-4 students. Although section attendance is not mandatory, history suggests that course grades are strongly correlated with participation in section, both directly through the course participation grade and indirectly through improved performance on written and oral exercises.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week #:Dates	Tuesday	Thursday	Section
1: Aug 25-29	No class	Introduction - Part I	Writing skills
2: Sep 1-5	Introduction - Part II	Introduction - Part III	Presentation skills
<u>Module 1: Obnoxious Markets</u>			
3: Sep 8-12	Intro lecture I	Intro lecture II	In-class peer edits
4: Sep 15-19	GL: George Hay	Film on modern slavery	IPN topics
5: Sep 22-26	IPN and discussion	Presentations	Presentations
<u>Module 2: Genetically Modified Foods</u>			
6: Sep 29-Oct 3	Intro lecture I	Intro lecture II	In-class peer edits
7: Oct 6-10	Film: Harvest of Fear	GL: Margaret Smith	IPN topics
8: Oct 13-17	No class (fall break)	IPN and discussion	Presentations
9: Oct 20-24	Presentations		
<u>Module 3: Sovereign Debt</u>			
9: Oct 20-24		Intro lecture I	In-class peer edits
10: Oct 27-31	Intro lecture II	Film: Debt of Dictators	IPN topics
11: Nov 3-7	GL: Bob Hockett	IPN and discussion	Presentations
12: Nov 10-14	Presentations		
<u>Module 4: Immigration Policy</u>			
12: Nov 10-14		Intro lecture I	In-class peer edits
13: Nov 17-21	Intro lecture II	GL: Vernon Briggs	IPN topics
14: Nov 24-28	GL: Tom Maloney	No class (Thanksgiving)	No class
15: Dec 1-5	IPN and discussion	Presentations	Presentations

GL = Guest lecturer