The structure and goals of the course:

The United Nations is a key focus of contemporary international and transnational cooperation, one that is often as much a source of frustration as an indicator of progress. This course examines the UN as an institution and the politics of its key agencies, with a view to helping students understand the forces shaping cooperation at the global level. International peace and security is the primary focus of the UN Security Council and therefore also of media coverage of the UN, but most of the UN’s work addresses issues that transcend national borders (at least in some senses) and are better characterized as trans-national or global rather than inter-national. Thus, while we discuss the Security Council’s roles in relation to inter-state conflict, much of the course focuses on the transnational and global issues which have become more salient due to processes of globalization.

Section I introduces key themes in the study of the United Nations, reviews the historical context in which the UN was created in 1945, and examines the UN Charter and the structure of the institutions it created.

Section II reviews theoretical approaches to international and global cooperation that can help us understand how the UN addresses (or fails to address) global issues. I expect all students to be familiar with these approaches from Poli 103 or 240. Students who are not familiar with these theories should read the theory chapters in Smith, Baylis, and Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (the text used in Poli 240). In Section II we also look more closely at constructivist arguments that are particularly useful, in conjunction with other theories, for understanding the UN.

The UN is a sprawling system of agencies and bureaucracies with diverse mandates, institutional structures, and decision-making procedures. Section III examines the General Assembly, the Secretariat, and the Secretary-General; other bodies such as the Security Council will be discussed in the relevant part of Section IV. Section III also deals with key actors and how they interact. As the UN is an inter-governmental organization created by sovereign states, its member states are the key players, acting individually and as members of groups. Non-state actors have become increasingly important in recent decades, in part because of encouragement from the UN, so we also examine the roles of NGOs, TNCs, and business groups.

Section IV examines the UN’s efforts to address selected global issues. This section of the course is organized in part around students’ own work in groups. Each student will be assigned to a group based on her or his expressed interests, and each group will prepare and present a report on some aspect of the UN’s work in one of the listed issue areas.

Section V concludes the course by assessing the UN’s effectiveness in tackling global issues, based in part on student reports in Section IV, and by considering the UN’s future and prospects for reform.
Learning objectives:
The course is intended to help students develop knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- the structures and processes of the United Nations
- forces that encourage and impede cooperation to address global problems
- the practice of diplomacy by state and non-state actors
- in-depth knowledge of at least one global issue
- critical analysis, especially in empirical analysis of the practice of world politics – this complements rather than duplicates more theory-focused courses in the field of international politics
- collaborating with a diverse group of peers

Administrative and logistic details:
Lectures: Mondays and Thursdays, 10:00-11:30am, Cornett A225
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 and Wednesdays 11:00-12:00, or by appointment
Contact Info: office DTB A342, phone 250 721 7492, email mwebb@uvic.ca
Readings:
All readings listed are required. The textbook (available in the bookstore) is:
All other required readings are available on CourseSpaces.

Course requirements and expectations:
Mid-term exam – 15% of course grade – Monday February 11
Group project on the UN’s work on a global issue – 20% of course grade – the first group presentations will be on February 28; the schedule will be distributed February 14 - see pp. 7-9 (below) for details of the planning process and schedule
Individual contribution to group project – 25% of course grade – a written report on some aspect of the UN’s work on a specific global issue – due Monday March 11 - late reports will be penalized three percentage points per day
Participation – 10% (includes participation in group project)
Final exam – 30% of course grade – scheduled as part of exam period; do not make travel plans until the final exam schedule is announced.

Assignments are graded using the standard UVic grading scale, available at
https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-01/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html#.

Students must complete all assignments in order to get credit for the course. I use the qualitative criteria and numerical scale in the University of Victoria Calendar when grading.

As stated in the UVic Calendar, “Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled”. Attendance will be taken, and any student who attends fewer than 70 percent of scheduled class sessions will not be permitted to write the final exam or get
credit for the course, and will be assigned a grade of N (the percent grade, to a maximum of 49%, depends on the grades on assignments that were completed).

I strictly enforce University Policy on Academic Integrity. This may include using a plagiarism detection software program intended to assist in the detection of plagiarism. The UVic Library has useful information on the appropriate use of sources and avoiding plagiarism.

If you find yourself facing mental or physical health issues or other life challenges that interfere with your ability to successfully complete the requirements for this course, it is important to deal with them in a timely fashion. UVic offers many services to support students, including learning supports and resources for health and wellness. Information about academic concessions is available from the Registrar’s Office. Feel free to contact me regarding issues related to this course and guidance regarding other supports available at UVic.

The Learning Environment:

As stated in the UVic Calendar, “The University of Victoria is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and productive learning environment. All members of the university community have the right to experience, and the responsibility to help create, such an environment”. Students have diverse views on the issues discussed in this course, and I seek to create an environment in which all perspectives – including my own – can be analyzed critically in a respectful fashion.

The proliferation of wireless communications technologies increases the potential for distractions that undermine the learning environment for all students. The use of phones for talk or text is prohibited while this class is in session. Mobile devices and personal computers are to be used only for course-related purposes.

Course Experience Survey (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete a confidential survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. When it is time for you to complete the survey you will receive an email inviting you to do so. Please ensure that your current email address is listed in MyPage (http://uvic.ca/mypage). If you do not receive an email invitation, you can go directly to http://ces.uvic.ca. You will need to use your UVic netlink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.
I INTRODUCTION: THE CHARACTER, HISTORICAL ORIGINS, AND STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Week 1 (January 7, 10)

Introduction to the course (January 7)

a) Overview, key dilemmas (January 10):

Required Readings:

- MKL, Chapter 1, “The United Nations in World Politics”

Week 2 (January 14, 17)

b) Historical origins, the Charter, and the structure of the UN system (January 14, 17):

Required Readings:

- MKL, Ch 2.

Week 3 (January 21, 24)

II Theoretical Approaches to Understanding the United Nations

Required Readings:

- Review MKL, Ch 1, pp. 9-12.
Week 4 (January 28, 31)

** Planning Session for Group Projects: Monday January 28 **

III KEY INSTITUTIONS AND ACTORS

a) The UN General Assembly

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 2, pp. 31-34

b) The UN Secretary-General and Secretariat

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 3, pp. 94-99

Week 5 (February 4, 7)

c) States and groups

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 3, pp. 71-93
- Reading on major powers and the UN to be assigned.

Week 6 (February 11, 14)

** Mid-term exam Monday February 11 **

d) Non-state actors: NGOs, philanthropists, and private businesses

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 3, pp. 99-107

Week 7 (February 18, 21): Reading Break, No Classes

IV Global Issues Addressed by the United Nations

Classes after reading break will be a mix of lectures and student presentations. In each broad issue area, we will begin with a couple of lectures followed by student presentations on related topics. I will distribute a schedule of dates and readings on February 14, after groups decide which specific issues to address. The following schedule indicates how Weeks 8-12 could be organized, depending on which topics groups decide to address.
Week 8 (February 25, 28)

a) *Maintaining International Peace and Security (February 25, 28)*

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 4
- Additional reading to be assigned.

Week 9 (March 4, 7)

b) *Economic Development and Sustainability*

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 5
- Additional reading to be assigned

Week 10 (March 11, 14)

c) *Human Rights*

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 6
- Additional reading to be assigned

Week 11 (March 18, 21)

d) *Protection of the Environment*

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 7, 291-315
- Additional Reading to be assigned

Week 12 (March 25, 28)

e) *Migration and Refugees*

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 7, 321-30
- Additional reading to be assigned

Week 13 (April 1, 4)

V ASSESSING UN EFFORTS ON GLOBAL ISSUES, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Required Readings:
- MKL, Ch 8
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP ASSIGNMENTS: UNITED NATIONS EFFORTS ON A GLOBAL ISSUE

Students will work together in groups to study United Nations work on a selected global issue and make a presentation to the class on what the group thinks the UN should be doing to address that issue more effectively, taking into account the politics and feasibility of the proposed actions.

**Step 1:** Students identify issues of interest, and I assign students to groups based on shared interests. Using the attached form, please identify the three general areas of UN work that most interest you, in ranked order, choosing from:

1. Development
2. Environment
3. Gender
4. Health
5. Human rights
6. Migration and refugees
7. Peace and security

Within each of the three general areas, identify the aspect(s) of each issue of greatest interest to you (eg, a student could rank “health” as her top interest, and identify “tropical diseases” and “access to health care in developing countries” as the aspects of that issue in which she is most interested).

Before completing the attached form, review Chapters 4-7 in the textbook, which provide a good overview of the UN’s work in these areas. Another useful source is Weiss and Daws, *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, available as an e-book in the UVic library (link to: http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199560103.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199560103) (this link works best on campus).

Students participating in a Model UN conference can identify an issue they will be debating at that conference.

Please return the form to me in class on Thursday January 24.

**Step 2:** I will use the preferences expressed on the form to assign students to groups, which will meet in class on Monday January 28. Groups will use that class time to begin planning the group presentation. Each group needs to decide which aspect of the issue to address, to identify the key actors involved in that issue (including groups of states, branches of the UN bureaucracy, NGOs, other IGOs, and private businesses or business groups), and to assign each group member responsibility for researching the perspectives and policies of a particular actor or type of actor. Each group also needs to ensure that it can find enough information about the politics of the issue for a viable presentation.
Willingness to compromise in the interests of the group’s collective success will be essential at this stage. I will consult with each group to ensure that their choices are appropriate.

Groups must finalize their choice of issue and assign responsibility for researching the key actors by **Thursday February 7**. Groups will need to meet outside class time after the initial in-class meeting on January 28 to complete this work, especially since you will need to do preliminary research on the specific issue your group selects to identify the key actors and to ensure sufficient information is available.

I will provide feedback on each group’s plans and announce the schedule of lectures and presentations after reading break on **Thursday February 14**.

**Step 3.** Each student will prepare a report on the UN’s activities on the selected issue and the policies of the key actor(s) assigned to them. These individual reports should be approximately 2000 words in length, and are due in class on **Monday March 11**. For some of you, this will be after your presentation; others will present after the report due date. A full description of the individual-report assignment will be distributed before reading break.

**Step 4.** Each group prepares a presentation for the class on its selected issue, and identifies a reading for me to assign to the class.
POLITICAL SCIENCE 341, THE UNITED NATIONS AND GLOBAL ISSUES

Student Name: ______________________ Email address: ________________

Contemporary Global Issues for Group Work

1. Development
2. Environment
3. Gender
4. Health
5. Human rights
6. Migration and refugees
7. Peace and security

From the above list, please rank three categories of issues on which you would like to do an individual report and group project. Within each issue area, please identify any specific aspects of the UN’s work in which you are especially interested so I can best assign students to groups with shared interests. If you have a special interest in any of these issues (eg, you worked with an NGO on an issue, or you are participating in a Model UN Conference addressing that issue), please identify that as well.

Bring the completed form to class on **Thursday January 24**.

1. 

2. 

3. 