

Critical Global Issues

Lecturer	Philip Wang
Institution	Kent State University
Email	pwang@kent.edu

Course Description:

Life is an adventure. Insights into global events and calculated responses to them are the basis of developing a successful career and living an extraordinary life. This course is an investigation of key world affairs. Students will learn about cultural diversity, contemporary economic and social concerns, environmental issues, international and intercultural relations, humanity, and self-exploration. The course subjects include the following: adventure, exploration, exchange of technology and ideas, economic development, global trade, immigration, inequality, universal human values, empathy, tolerance, political instability, terrorism, disease epidemic and public health, science and religion, conservation, environmental diversity, climate change, natural disasters, aesthetics, and ethics.

Materials/Text:

No required textbooks.

Requirements:

1. Regular attendance and participation in class discussion are required.
2. Exercises, homework and assignments must be submitted on time.
3. Mobile phone and electronic devices are prohibited in the classroom.

Schedule:

- A. Of the physical world and human sphere
 - 1 The five dimensions of being, culture, and the humanities
 - 2 Exploration, discovery, adventure, resolution, case study: Charles Lindbergh, moon landing
 - 3 Exchange of technology and ideas, technology, innovation, global trade, case study: Marco Polo, Henry Hudson, Christopher Columbus, Jules Verne
- B. Economic, social and political interests
 - 4 Migration and immigration, collaboration and unity, liberty, poverty, oppression, exploitation, revolution, case study: the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, Che Guevara
 - 5 Political instability, terrorism, personal safety, public health, disease epidemic
 - 6 Economic powerhouses of the world, case study: the New Seven Wonders of the World, prominent landmarks
- C. Cultural understanding
 - 7 Cultural heritage, universal human values, pilgrimage, tolerance, crime against humanity, case study: UNESCO World Heritage
 - 8 Architecture as understanding of space, case study: I.M. Pei, Antoni Gaudi
 - 9 Inequality, empathy, volunteering, the American character, case study: Alexis de Tocqueville
- D. Environmental challenges
 - 10 Tension between science and religion, case study: Charles Darwin
 - 11 Natural history, biodiversity, climate change, conservation, public land management and transfer, case study: Edwin Way Teals, national parks, ecotourism

- 12 Natural disasters
- E. Final reflections
 - 13 Aesthetics of the physical world, case study: Ando Hiroshige, Vincent van Gogh
 - 14 Mortality and eternity, case study: Mishima Yukio
 - 15 Ethics, goodwill, spending money as an act of kindness, case study: Ben E. King stand by me, Suntory One Love

Important Dates

- Thursday, July 22, assignment 1 My Seven Places presentations
- Wednesday, August 4, assignment 2 In Search of a Legend presentations

Assignments:**Assignment 1: My Seven Places**

Travel is an exploration of one's own identity and an affirmation of his/her place in the world. This assignment consists of a personal wish list of global destinations and a self-reflection. The presentation must include the following sections.

1. Select seven places you must visit in your lifetime (what and where—city/country).
2. Give a PowerPoint presentation to connect the places to you, i.e., how the seven places show who you are. The presentation must demonstrate your personal identity through the places. Explore your life experiences, heritage, personality, interest, passion, worldview, value, and social/cultural belief. These are the reasons why you choose to visit the seven places. The goal of this assignment is to express yourself as a special person.

Assignment 2: In Search of a Legend

Global issues are the products of human intervention; thus, humanity is critical to understanding our world. The lives of legendary persons highlight contemporary humanity issues. To apply this notion, students will select a famous person in history, research his/her contributions to a field of humanity (art, music, literature or science), and demonstrate his/her impacts. The assignment consists of four parts: an introduction to the person and his/her unique contributions, a journey in search of the legend, information resources for further understanding of the subject, and a presentation. A proposal is required.

1. A biography: Introduce the person—who, what happened, where. Describe his/her contributions and the essence of humanity. Discuss the inspiration or legacy of the person to the world, i.e., why this person is significant.
2. A tour program: design a trip to best experience the legacy. Include key attractions to visit, unique events to attend, and important activities to do. Think of the program as an itinerary and as if you were to guide the tour.
3. Resources: identify further learning opportunities to advance understanding or appreciation of the legendary person, the places, and the humanity issue. Suggest books, films, Web sites.
4. PowerPoint presentation: quality of the work will be judged on the contents, design, and visual appeal.

Evaluation:

Attendance, class discussion, exercise, homework	60%	
My Seven Places	20%	
In Search of a Legend	20%	100% total

Final grades will be determined by tallying the scores according to their designated weights.