Course Description:
Most of what we do in the scholarly/teaching/learning environment involves reading, writing, and criticizing. There are many technical aspects to reading, writing, and criticizing and, by now, you are likely well-versed in what these technical aspects are and how to deploy them (pose a research question or thesis statement, deploy data and evidence to support your position, develop coherent and comprehensive arguments to ‘prove’ your answer, and conclude in a strong, sure voice). You also know what you cannot do in the scholarly setting, namely, admit you do not have any answers, use the word ‘I’ in your essays, or express feelings like hope, fear, or anger. This course asks you to embrace the uncertainties, silences, and personal aspects of what being ‘political’ can mean. It asks you to embrace a certain ethos of speaking, writing, and listening in a way that allows the cultivation of an ongoing conversation about the things that are important to us about global politics.

It is very difficult to try and move away from the academic voice that the university has cultivated in you and to try and embrace your own, personal voice as a reliable guide to experiencing the world. It is also difficult to teach these things. This course is therefore an experiment in that it is designed to allow students to pursue their own specific and personal interests in a guided way in an intensive, year-long format. The first semester is devoted to reading a selection of contemporary critical materials that are designed to introduce students to the different ways in which they might reclaim their own voices as meaningful interlocutors of and in global politics. The second semester is designed so that students might cultivate, share, and workshop their own voices and the conditions from which those voices emerge. In a word, the colloquium is designed to retrieve students’ own voices from the restrictive ‘academic’ international politics literatures and to allow them to explore their own place in the world and contribution to enunciating its triumphs and tragedies. Take note, however, that this does not mean that your opinion is unassailable or intrinsically valid. Aristotle believed that an opinion could only be valid if its bearer had carefully considered the positions and experiences of all members of the polis. We live in a shared yet unequal world. Valid opinions must take this shared space and its inequality into account.

Overview and Objectives:
This course asks students to consider their own investment in global politics, and to pursue their own passions and desires in that context. It asks students to ‘forget IR’ as an academic endeavor and instead think about their own stories, pasts, and
possible futures as a new starting point for engaging and expressing what is global about politics, and what is political about global interrelations. The course will provide opportunity for students to locate themselves as meaningful political actors and to produce a piece of researched writing that articulates that location.

**Assignments and Grading:**
Each graded assignment is designed to allow students to receive critical feedback so that they can pursue the next assignment, which is simply a refining, expansion, or rearticulation of the first assignment. In this way, students begin by submitting short papers outlining their research topic and situating themselves as authors in the context of that topic (i.e., answering the question *why is this topic important to me?). Students will receive feedback on the first paper to help them refine the second paper, and so on, until they complete the final process of producing an essay. These essays must be submitted on the due dates in order to receive feedback. I will grade these essays as a way of providing students with a sense of how they are performing in the course. **However, only the final essay will be formally graded.**

Participation: 20% (ongoing)
Writing Piece: 20% (due in class November 3)
Workshop 1: 10% (alternating dates in the Winter term)
Workshop 2: 10% (alternating dates in the Winter term)
Final Essay: 40% (due in class on March 30)

**Participation:**
All students are expected to read the selections for the week and to come to the seminar prepared to ask questions and discuss the literatures and the themes that the literatures raise for them. Simply attending the seminar is not sufficient to earn full participation marks. You have to participate actively in discussion.

**Writing Piece:**
The writing piece is designed for you to identify yourself with a theme, idea, an exposition – or a silence or omission – in the reading of your choice. I am mainly concerned with your ability to locate yourself – to care in some way – about one of the readings or about something that reading/s evoke in you – your experience, your history, your past study of global politics. I am looking for a synthesis of you as a writer and thinker with ‘global politics’ broadly understood.

**Essays and Selecting Essay Topics:**
You will spend the year pursuing one research project. You may write your essay on any topic you think is important (note that this is different from saying ‘you can write about anything you want’). You will submit multiple drafts to the professor for feedback and you will workshop your essays with your classmates in an intensive, critical environment. The goal of the essay is to reveal something about your investment in your research topic. In picking a topic for your essay, consider the following three elements:
A worthy topic emerges out of the synthesis of two seemingly conflicting impulses: engaged passion and balanced deliberation. A good topic needs to move, push, motivate, and perhaps even infuriate the author. It can only seem important to the reader if it is significant to the writer. So the first step is to uncover what is important to you. While this is difficult enough, there is more. An important topic is also necessarily controversial and debatable. There is little point in deliberating on issues about which we are already absolutely certain. Therefore, the second step is to recognize that when we feel strongly about a subject, we do so exactly because it is controversial. Isn’t it our sense of the “invalidity” or “irrationality” of a certain debate that infuriates us? The third and most difficult step is recognizing that we cannot allow either of these two qualities (passion or deliberation) to gain the advantage. A good essay maintains both passion and deliberation simultaneously. Acknowledging and crediting the views we oppose does not mean we ultimately favor those positions. Indeed, the strongest argument for a favored position anticipates, respects, and speaks to the best points from others. In sum, select a topic that you find important; recognize that importance signifies controversy; and, respect both your passion and the deliberative aspect of thinking about politics.

The role of the class in your research project:
Your research topic will be refined over the course of many weeks. You will consider your research topic in the context of the course readings and discussions, and also in the context of intensive workshops in which your research topic will be closely critiqued and evaluated by your classmates. Every student’s research topic will be workshopped by the other students with the goal of improving the essay’s insights, refining the author’s position, and locating the author more powerfully and authentically within the writing. Therefore, all elements of the course are designed to assist you in developing your own research topic in an intensive and long-term way. No matter the topic you pursue, your essay will benefit from the class discussions and course texts. This is because you will learn from others’ research projects, and because the assigned readings will raise overarching questions on how to write, research, and critique in a more general sense. Therefore, your essay will ultimately reflect and incorporate the readings and class discussions, even if you do not formally quote or cite these. By the same token, you must avoid an alienated or disengaged cataloging of quotes or arguments from our texts and discussions. A good essay conveys, either implicitly or explicitly, a confident grounding in our texts and discussions. The best case is one in which you constructed your essay upon a secure integration of texts and discussions - even if you do not mention them. I understand this sets a high standard. I do not necessarily expect you to reach this level. I would, however, like you to aim for it. I also understand that I might make mistakes and misinterpretations as I assess your work. This is why my assessment of your essays is always open for discussion – even once the class has ended.

The voice of doubt:
Academic writing does not allow for doubt. You have learned from your first introductory course in international politics that you should make a dispassionate argument in support of a favored or ‘provable’ claim. You learned to eradicate,
cleanse, purify, and eliminate both your personal voice and your doubt. This posture, while understandable, is what I am challenging you to surrender. Instead of defeating or assimilating your doubt, I’d rather that you take your doubt seriously by giving it a chance to speak.

In our class discussions and in your writing, I believe that these two themes - confirmation of our positions and engagement with doubt/fear - occur simultaneously. We usually only recognize the first even though the second is more important. When we converse well we use the voices of others to both corroborate and critique our positions. We can make this process explicit and transparent by employing the various voices in our discussions and readings to both confirm and create doubt about your favored positions. As I said, we are quite good at confirming our predisposition but quite ill prepared to acknowledge and give a voice to our doubt and fear. The course readings will help to clarify what I mean by this throughout the first semester.

You might ask: Why is it necessary to treat doubt and fear in this way? What will I gain by this method? I am not really sure. Maybe you can help me figure this out. I do think it has something to with becoming free. I suspect that we do not become free human beings/societies/ cultures until we begin to understand how our doubts/fears form and control us. These doubts might be the unquestioned ground upon which we stand.

Second, while the conclusions to your arguments are sometimes stimulating, what is more important is to reveal the thought process by which you arrive at your conclusions. In my view, too much of that process remains either outside your essays or hidden from my view. Try to slow down so that your thinking process seems transparent rather than hidden. Only by allowing others to observe your thinking process can we learn from your work. This requires you to jettison the traditional academic writing style that forbids writing ‘I’ or ‘don’t know’ or ‘feel’ or ‘fear’.

In this sense, the course asks you to unlearn the last three years of academic international relations and critically scrutinize yourself, your relation to the global, your fear, your anger, your love, and your ability to critically analyze the relationship between yourself and your research topic.

Workshops:
In the winter term, the course will be made up entirely of workshops. Students will be assigned a workshop day in which their essay draft will be discussed intensively. Essay drafts will be circulated one week before the class in which they are to be discussed. Students are required to read all drafts and to come to class prepared to engage in discussion and debate, and to provide feedback and suggestions to the authors of the drafts. Since students will have already read your draft, you should not come and present it. Instead, you are asked to come to your workshop session with a set of questions about your topic to which **you do not know the answers**, or
**about which you have doubts.** In other words, you are asked to come to this class and to reveal your uncertainty in the research and writing process. Only in admitting our uncertainty is there a possibility of arriving at a valid position. Please note that there is no expectation of 'winning' or 'losing' a debate. What happens in these sessions is that different views and ideas are explored with the goal of assisting the author in refining his or her essay. The analytical quality and importance of the questions and concerns brought to the workshop by the author will form the basis of the workshop grade. The feedback of the rest of the class will count toward their participation grades. I will try to assign workshop days in a way that maintains a coherent theme. For example, I will try to schedule all students working on issues of development on the same day.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:**

**September 8: Introduction to the Course**

**September 15: Speech and Speaking in the Academy**


**September 22: Thinking about Writing in/about International Politics**

*The Disorder of Things*: Forum on Autoethnography and Narrative Voice in International Relations: 2012/2013:


Selections:

Anthony Burke, ‘Narrative, Politics, and Fictocriticism: Hopes and Dangers’
Elizabeth Dauphinee, ‘Critical Methodological and Narrative Developments in IR’
Richard Jackson, ‘Narrative, Self, Agency: Reflections on a Workshop’
Jennifer Riggan, ‘In Praise of Question Marks’
Noelani Ka'opua, ‘Indigenous Narrative Methods: A Hawaiian Perspective’
Annick T. R. Wibben, ‘The Personal is Political, But Is It IR?’
Naeem Inayatullah, ‘Across Oceans to Hear’
Himadeep Muppidi, ‘Reflections on Narrative Voice’
September 29 and October 6: Historical Conquest


October 13: Thanksgiving

October 20 and 27: Contemporary Colonialism


November 3 and 10: The Research Encounter I

**Writing Piece Due in Class**


November 17 and 24: The Research Encounter II


*** Please submit a short outline of your research topic in class on November 24 so I can arrange the workshops for the Winter term and provide you with this information next week in the last class of the semester.

December 1: The War Encounter


**WINTER TERM:**

January 5: Writing Workshops – each student should come to this class with a preliminary set of ideas on his or her essay topic. What are the questions you wish to pursue? What is your personal investment in the topic? How will you pursue the research?
January 12: Writing Workshops
January 19: Writing Workshops
January 26: Writing Workshops
February 2: Writing Workshops
February 9: Writing Workshops
February 16: Statutory Holiday and Reading Week – No Class
**Please note that I am attending the International Studies Annual Convention in New Orleans this week and will be unavailable for consultation.

February 23: Writing Workshops
March 2: Writing Workshops
March 9: Writing Workshops
March 16: Writing Workshops
March 23: Writing Workshops
March 30: Final Essay due in Class