

# United Nations Seminar

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POLS 313 (CRN#13398),  
Fall 2009, MW 3:00-4:15pm, [BAL 3058](#)  
Prerequisite: POLS 100 - Intro to Int'l Politics  
Office Contact: 757-683- 5936

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**Description and Goal:** The United Nations Seminar is an intensive examination of contemporary international issues at UN Headquarters in New York. It includes on-campus orientation and preparation sessions and a series of topical sessions at the UN that are led by UN Secretariat officials and diplomats, and observation of the international organization's major organs in operation.

The goal of the course is to provide students with a firsthand experience with the political, economic, social, and security issues that comprise the annual agenda of the United Nations by interacting with Secretariat officials and diplomats representing member governments.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

Students will become familiar with the structure of the United Nations, its areas of responsibility, the process for decision-making, and the major issues on its annual agenda.

**University Procedures:**

- Students are required to use their official university email address for correspondence about grades and academic standing.
- Students with disabilities and special needs should discuss these with the instructor at the start of the term.
- This course conforms to all university policies concerning class conduct, disabilities, harassment and the student honor code. If in doubt about any aspect of university rules of services, please review the ODU university catalogue.
- **Plagiarism and academic misconduct are not tolerated. Class policies follow the student honor code and procedures found in the university catalogue.**
- Student evaluations provide important feedback and are essential for evaluating teaching effectiveness. Please complete the online course evaluation when prompted at the end of the semester.

**Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to participate fully in the learning process through attendance at all scheduled course meetings during the semester. Of particular importance for this course is active engagement with the UN representatives, who will make presentations during the sessions at UN Headquarters in New York. Please inform the instructor, in advance, if you plan to be absent from a scheduled class meeting. If the instructor is not informed about the absence in advance, the participation portion of the final grade for the course will be significantly downgraded.

**Readings:** The required readings for the course are as follows.

1. Selected sections of the *UN Chronicle* (<http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle>) that are of interest to you and are related to the topics discussed at the UN.
2. *One UN Pilots: Aligning UN Capabilities in Support of National Development* Report of the 39<sup>th</sup> United Nations Issues Conference, March 14-16, 2008

**Other Information Sources:** Students should consult the UN's web site [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) and review the pages on *UN Historical Background, Main Organs, Issues on the UN Agenda*, and the *Daily Briefing*. Read about current activities at the UN in a national newspaper such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* or a weekly news magazine such as *Newsweek* or the *Economist*.

**Requirements:**

1. **Attendance and active participation** in all scheduled on-campus class sessions and all Seminar sessions at the UN. You are expected to take notes, ask questions, and interact with the speakers who are presenting on the topic.
2. A **journal summary record** of the notes, including personal impressions, taken during each of the topical sessions at the UN.
3. An **assessment essay that evaluates your personal learning experience** as a result of the UN Seminar. The paper must respond to the following question, and not to exceed five (5) double-spaced pages in length.

**What was the most important thing I learned during the 2009 United Nations Seminar that contributed most to my understanding of how the UN really works?**

The assessment essay must focus on how the Seminar experience contributed to better understanding of how the UN really operates and what it does. It is intended to be a reflective self-appraisal of your personal learning experience during the UN Seminar, not a recitation of facts. The goal is to focus your assessment on the one thing or a few closely-related things that resulted in an "aha experience" about the UN.

The essay must be typed and follow the style guidelines in either the *APA Publication Manual*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. or *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.

**Assignment Deadline:** The deadline for submitting the summary record of topical session notes and assessment essay, either electronically or in hard copy is no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, December 9. The journal summary record and paper may be submitted earlier.

**Grading:** POLS 313 is a one-credit course, which may be taken for either normal grading or on a pass/fail basis. The final grade will be determined by the quality of the student's participation during the on-campus classes and the topical sessions at the UN, the journal summary record, and the assessment paper.

Grades for assignments not submitted on time, without an extension approved by the instructor, will automatically be downgraded one full letter grade per day. Assignments not received by the fifth day after the due date will automatically receive a grade of "F." Grades will be assigned using the following values and scale.

<u>Activity/Assignment</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Participation (on campus)	20 points
Participation (UN sessions)	30 points
Journal Summary Record	20 points
Assessment Essay	30 points

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
A	90-100
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	60-69
F	Below 60

**Course Outline:**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READING</b>
31-Aug	UN Seminar Introduction and Overview	
2-Sep	Basic Theory: What is the UN?	UN Charter, Mingst Ch. 1
7-Sep	Labor Day	
9-Sep	History: League of Nations	Mingst Ch. 1
14-Sep	History: Cold War and Beyond	Mingst Ch. 2
23-Sep	Structure of the United Nations	Mingst Ch. 3
28-Sep	Structure of the United Nations	Mingst Ch. 3
5-Oct	UN Seminar (New York Trip – 4-6 Oct)	No reading
7-Oct	UN Seminar Debriefing	No Reading, elective session
9-Dec	Journal Summary Record and Assessment Paper Due	No Reading