Annotated ‘World Government Week’ Syllabus / Reading List

(Presuming two course lectures during the week)

1) First Lecture: Security World Government

This session could focus on the tradition of world government arguments, dating from the 1940s, which see global political and especially security integration as needed to ensure human survival in an age of nuclear weapons.

Suggested required readings:


This review article by one of the leading historians of the Cold War focuses on security concerns, in particular around nuclear weapons, addressed in the recent world government literature.


Here, Alex Wendt offers a fundamentally forward-looking constructivist analysis, arguing that the global system will inevitably move toward a world-state endpoint. Wendt, whose *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge UP, 1999) was voted ‘Best Book of the Decade’ by the International Studies Association, focuses on a struggle for recognition between states. This struggle, he argues, mirrors one that Hegel identified between individuals, where demands for recognition eventually lead to the formation of a collective identity and the development of the nation-state. While Hegel saw states as the developmental end point, Wendt argues that it cannot be in an age of nuclear weapons, where none are fully self-sufficient entities. He speculates the full integration process could take perhaps 200 years. *(NB: for undergraduate classes especially, it may be advisable to instruct students to skim or skip the first 15 pages or so on teleological method and focus on last 30 pages of the article, where the world state argument is presented.)*

Suggested recommended reading:


In this highly influential book, which won major prizes from both the International Studies Association and American Political Science Association, Deudney offers a
detailed and sophisticated reading of the Republican security tradition, where rule by the people creates forms of mutual restraint which help polities to avoid the extremes of both anarchy and strong hierarchy. World government, he argues in the final chapter, would not be so novel an institutional development as is often thought. Rather, it would simply be another effort to abridge dangerous anarchy, this time in an international system marked by intense ‘violence interdependence’ in the nuclear age. To avoid dangerous hierarchy, however, he also argues that the form a world government takes should be that of a highly limited ‘mutual restraint union,’ rather than some fully empowered federal world state. Such a union would be focused solely on controlling the most extreme security threats to humankind.


The great physicist prescribes a strong world government as the one means of controlling the terrible new threat from nuclear weapons.

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British author and social commentator Orwell, writing in response to H.G. Wells and before the advent of nuclear weapons, dismisses world government as a non-starter in the face of likely opposition from powerful states.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING IS LISTED BELOW

2) Second Lecture: Global Government to Promote Justice and Democracy

This session could focus on arguments which see world government as required to ensure global justice, or to enable individuals to have appropriate input into policy decisions in age of still-intensifying globalization.

Suggested required readings:


Caney argues that there are clear reasons of global justice and democracy to advocate global
political integration. The piece makes an excellent teaching tools for its careful presentation of the salient literature and Caney’s clear, systematic argumentation.


Scheuerman, a prominent scholar of mid-20th Century Realist thought in International Relations, takes Caney and other cosmopolitans to task for what he sees as failings in their institutional models, particularly in terms of how much security power global institutions would control. At minimum, Scheuerman says, a world government would have to have power sufficient to enforce its laws and rulings, and to defeat possible rivals for power.

Suggested recommended reading:


This article surveys work in the recent resurgence in academic thought on world government. It divides the literature into Security, Democracy and Justice arguments. It offers critical assessments of works in each area, and thus may provide a good classroom discussion starter.


The ‘deans’ of cosmopolitan democracy detail a range of possible paths toward, and agents who could promote, the realization of democratic governance at the global level.


Prominent political philosopher Goodin turns his attention here to world government, arguing that it has in fact already emerged, in a form quite similar to, for example, the United States in its early years.

FURTHER READING: General and Historical Sources


Luis Cabrera (2014) “All for One: World Government is Back, in Geopolitics and in the


**FURTHER READING: World Government Critics**


**FURTHER READING: Security World Government**

On Wendt’s ‘inevitability’ thesis:


On security and world government more generally:


These are some key publications from a major global initiative, the World Order Models Project, which sought to provide and promote models of more sustainable global governance, and some of whose principals advocated full world government.


Bertrand Russell, Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1959)


**FURTHER READING: Non-Western Sources**


**FURTHER READING: World Government to Promote Justice and Democracy**


