

## **POLS303033 Environment, Human Security, and Conflict**

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### **WEEK 4 WORKSHOP**

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#### **Logistical notes**

##### **Reducing spam emails**

During last week's workshop I found out that students were being buried by other students' workshop responses. This was due to me not setting the correct notification options. I have now corrected the settings for past and future workshop posts.

If you have any similar issues, challenges, or complaints about the way the class's Wattle page is set up, definitely let me know via email.

##### **Topic questions**

I have received a bunch of emails about potential literature review topics. I have tried to be honest about whether a topic is relevant to the class or not. If you have any questions about it, do let me know.

##### **Grading participation**

I have now read through all students lecture and workshop questions for weeks 1 and 2. I will start marking week 3 on Tuesday 18 August. I think I have settled on a marking system that is easy to understand and gives direct feedback on your written participation.

Each week there are going to be three lecture questions and a group of workshop questions. Each lecture question is worth up to two points and the workshop questions as a whole are worth four points. This means that each week's mark is out of 10 possible points. It also means that most points are directly determined by your own work (lecture answers).

Regarding expectations for grades, I came across three recent examples that may help a bit. I am always leery of posting sample answers, but I want to show the range of responses I am getting.

0 points out of 2

Which of these class' topics has the most meaning or reality (as Wallace describes) to you?

## 1 point out of 2

Which of these class' topics has the most meaning or reality (as Wallace describes) to you?

Human security

## 2 points out of 2

Which of these class' topics has the most meaning or reality (as Wallace describes) to you?

I think that this classes focus on the environment, more specifically climate change and resource scarcity (and how it will affect security, conflict and peace) ties in most appropriately with the Wallace video. This is because Wallace's video in my opinion highlighted two important things:

1. utilising your mind in a way that wont leave you feeling pessimistic, but rather activating your mind consciously and directing your focus into something productive,
2. acknowledging the "capital T truth with a whole lot of rhetorical niceties striped away".

I think that whilst it is easy to become pessimistic when learning about climate change, resource scarcity and its connection with conflict (etc), it is easy to become pessimistic, however the environment and its effects on living is more important than ever considering climate change and its potential impacts. It is important that the younger generation and climate ambassadors continue to direct their focus in this space in a productive manner and aim to create real change.

Secondly, within doing so it is clear that one aim within the reality of many is to have climate change properly understood, acknowledged and taken seriously within policy. This ties into Wallace's point about the stripping away of niceties and facing the facts, or as he puts it the "capital T truth".

Two things worth stressing.

First, you do not need to post these many words to get full credit. Often 2-3 great sentences are enough. This is just one 2pt posting I came across as I was thinking about the rubric. The goals are the same as in the course guide's participation description (p. 4): "Participation marks will be based upon evidence of having done the assigned readings, evidence of having thought about the issues, contribution and participation in class and consideration and respect for other class members. Given the unique situation we are faced with this semester, it is not necessary to actually participate in person."

Second, because this semester is a learning process for all of us, I want to be clear that the lectures and workshop exercises are ways to give you practice (1) reading and thinking about the assigned articles and book excerpts (2) determining the strengths and weaknesses of existing work, (3) connecting this literature to your own life and your own interests. Participation marks represent 10% of your final mark, but regularly participating will have spill over effects in the quality of your written work (and your life hopefully).

Since it is a learning process, in calculating final marks I will discount your responses to the first three weeks of class. Thus Week 1's mark will be worth 25% of what it would normally be, Week 2 is worth 50%, and Week 3 is worth 75%. From now on, however, with clear and written expectations and instructions, I expect students to complete their answers on time and reflecting actually reading the assigned readings, watching the lecture videos, and thinking about the workshop questions.

Let me know if you have any remaining questions.

## Workshop questions—how to answer

Zoom: Use hand raise function to let me know you have a question and I will call on you. If you do not feel comfortable asking a question, put the question in Zoom chat and I will try and respond during the breakout time. Post your answers on Wattle. If you are acting as a group, I only want one person to post on Wattle the groups' answers along with the names of people in their group.

*Student-organized Zoom/on your own*: Post your answers on Wattle as described above.

Let's get started!

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### Zoom breakout group activity #1 (~35 minutes total)

Open up your copy of Buhaug and Thiessen (2012). Take a look at their only explicit hypothesis (p. 47). This gives us a clear idea of their main causal link. Now imagine if they took the same approach as Homer-Dixon (1994) by only looking at cases with the outcome in question and the main explanatory factor included

**Question #1**: What types of cases would they then look at?

**Question #2**: What types of cases would they then exclude?

**Question #3**: Can you create a simple 2x2 table like I did in the lecture to demonstrate the four types of cases actually included in their paper?

Now find the following article online (hint: use Google Scholar's search function). It is currently free to download on the publisher's website.

Detges, Adrien. 2016. "Local Conditions of Drought-related Violence in sub-Saharan Africa: The Role of Road and Water Infrastructures." *Journal of Peace Research* 53(5): 696-710.

Read the abstract (at minimum) and take a look at the main substantive conclusions graph (page 706).

**Question #4**: After reading the article abstract and looking at the results figure, do you think Buhaug and Thiessen (2012) omitted an important explanatory factor for conflict? What is it, and why is it important?

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### Zoom breakout group activity #2 (~15 minutes total)

Hopefully, by now you are starting to (or already have) decide on a literature review topic. This is an opportunity to discuss your efforts and remaining questions with others faced with the same writing task (and likely the same questions).

**Question #5**: What topics are your group considering/studying?

**Question #6:** How would you define the literature's themes in your topic area?

**Question #7:** What remaining questions do you have about this assignment that I can answer?

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**Bringing the group together (~10 minutes)**