



Is the World Falling Apart?

POL486/POL2205

Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes.

It's the end of the world as we know it. Or is it? Are we facing the four horsemen of the apocalypse, or are the doomsayers crying out 'the sky is falling' just a bunch of Chicken Littles? In this time of growing collective angst it is useful to step back and explore these important and potentially existential questions. This conversation is precisely what this seminar seeks to foster. Are the events we see around us signifiers of deeper (and perhaps alarming) change? How can we know? What policy areas should most concern us? Is there anything we can learn from history? What role do we play in determining the future? Through engagement with texts from various perspectives and intellectual traditions we will try to reflect on these questions and more.

Double, double toil and trouble; Something wicked this way comes.



Time & Place

Monday 14:00-16:00

Prof. Lilach Gilady

University College UC67

Lilach.gilady@utoronto.ca

Office Hours:

Online, by appointment



Course Meetings

At the moment we are back to conducting seminar meetings in person, huzzah! It is unclear how long this will last, and we may have to be flexible and adjust if conditions change. As we attempt to re-emerge back to some semblance of normality, please be respectful of fellow students' choices and needs.

This seminar meets for 2 hour class discussions every Monday during our designated course time. Attendance and participation in these discussions is obligatory. Office hours will be held online by appointment. We will rely on Zoom as our platform of choice. We will also rely on the Quercus message boards for some assignments later on in the course. You will need a computer (preferably one equipped with a microphone and camera) & internet connection in order to participate in office hours and in order to be able to submit your class assignments.

Some minor adjustments to this format may occur as the course progresses.

Course Readings

This is an intensive seminar which involves a significant amount of reading. Useful discussion is impossible in the absence of such preparation. Should you choose to enroll in this course, please be prepared to do the work. If you fail to keep us with this basic

responsibility you are affecting the overall value of the seminar for everyone.

Almost all of the readings are available electronically through the library's online resources or freely on the internet. Most of the books are available as E-books through the library. Less academic books are readily available at most public libraries. The online archive project also offers free access to a few of our course readings. Google books often offers a free preview of the introduction and first chapter of many books. In short, you are not expected to purchase anything in order to complete this seminar.

The readings for this seminar rely mainly on academic articles and books, but also include magazine articles and book reviews. Some of the readings can be technical but, hopefully over time you will find it easier to identify the core argument of these works as well as the different ways in which researches introduce empirical evidence in support of their arguments.

Lastly, I maintain the right to make minor changes to the attached reading list throughout the term, especially if any new articles appear

or related controversies flare up. Any such changes are not likely to affect the overall weekly workload.



Course Requirements

The seminar meets for two hours each week. Attendance is, obviously, a pre-requisite for active participation. Poor attendance record may lead to a final participation grade of zero. Generally, no accommodation will be offered for missed attendance.

Research or Take-Home Exam Options

Traditionally, courses like this one were offered as a research-focused seminar in which students are expected to complete an original research paper. Since the current iteration of this seminar is still taking place in the middle of a pandemic and at a time of increased uncertainty, you will be able to choose between writing a research paper (15% for your research proposal and 35% for the final paper, see below) or completing two take-home exams (each worth 25% of your grade).

Participation

This is a seminar –not a lecture course! Most of the learning is done through collective discussion and analysis. Active participation is therefore crucial for the success of the seminar. Accordingly, participation accounts for a significant portion of your final grade. Crucially, familiarity with the readings is an essential pre-requisite for productive participation. In addition to participation during class, you can also participate by posting messages on the seminar's message board.

Option I: Research Proposal and Final Paper

As part of this research seminar, students are expected to develop an independent research project. In order to facilitate this process, each student is expected to schedule at least one office hours meeting with me before the proposal's due date to discuss ideas for a research project. Following these meetings each student will submit a 1-2 pages of research proposal. Students are expected to post the proposals on Quercus and to provide comments and constructive feedback to fellow students. This proposal will then be developed into a 15-20pp research paper to be submitted at the end of the term.

Option II: Take-Home Exams

If you prefer not to follow the research track, you will be expected to complete two take-home exams, one around the middle of the term and one at the end. Each exam will cover 25% of your grade. In each case you will have 24 hours to complete the exam.

Discussant Week

Each week, a student will serve as class discussant. The discussant will start the class with a short presentation (5-10 minutes) synthesizing the readings and setting the stage for our discussion. The presentation should not summarize the readings but rather find core themes, debates or questions that cut across the assigned readings. In addition, each discussant will create a power-point presentation or a short (2-3 page) document offering critical engagement with that meeting's readings. These files should be uploaded to Quercus by 10:00AM on the day of the presentation.

Pet Case

Throughout the seminar, students will make short (5 minute) presentations of 'pet cases' that cover other global dangers and risks that are not fully covered by our course readings. This is your chance to prepare a presentation on your favorite super-volcanic or tectonic threats, explore historical examples of apocalyptic sects, discuss the record of previous mass extinctions or introduce us to your treasured

dystopian work of fiction. In short, anything that can enrich our conversation and is related to the seminar's theme. Pet case presentations will add breadth to the number of case studies and topics that we can otherwise cover through our weekly readings.

Grade Breakup

Option I (research track):

Research proposal 15%

Discussant week 15%

Pet case 10%

Participation 25%

Research paper 35%

Option II (exams):

Discussant week 15%

Pet case 10%

Participation 25%

Take home exam I 25%

Take home exam II 25%



Important Dates

September 12

First seminar meeting

September 19

Discussant list sign-up

October 10

Thanksgiving Monday- no class

October 31

Take home exam questions are distributed after class (17:00)

November 1

Research Proposals and take home exams are due (17:00)

November 7

Fall reading week- no class

December 8

Last seminar meeting

Take home exam questions are distributed (17:00)

December 9

Papers and take home exams are due (17:00)



Rules and Regulations

If you are unable to submit papers or exams at the appointed time, you must request permission for an extension. In almost all cases, requests for extensions and deferrals should be submitted ahead of time. All requests for extensions or deferrals should be submitted in writing. In general, extensions will not be granted unless it is a case of unavoidable and unforeseeable extenuating circumstances. In

most cases, supporting documentation is required before any extension is granted.

Appropriate documentation must be submitted within one week of the late assignment. Please note: Assignments in other courses are NOT grounds for an extension.

Late submission penalty is 4% per each late day or fraction of a day, weekends included. As noted above, discussant commentary should be posted by 10:00am on the morning of the presentation.

Thereafter, the cut off time for the determination of a late day is 5pm. All assignments should be uploaded to Quercus.

All papers should be double spaced, 12 font, with proper margins and page numbers. Papers that go beyond the stated page limit for the assignment, or papers that do not conform to the directions above, may be penalized.



IT WASN'T MY IDEA !

Academic Integrity

All written assignments must follow academic citation rules. All words and ideas of other individuals should be properly acknowledged. For further clarification and information please consult the University of Toronto's policy on plagiarism. Failure to understand what constitutes plagiarism will not be accepted as an excuse.



Quercus

Important course information will be distributed electronically through Quercus. Students are encouraged to use Quercus in order to add constructive criticism of each other's work, to continue in-class discussions, or to engage with current events or course readings. Online activity will count as course participation. Feel free to use the electronic forums and message boards for any course related topics.

Please respect basic netiquette conventions when posting messages.



How Many Minutes to Midnight?

September 12

Introduction



The Times They Are A- Changin'

September 19

Gaddis, John Lewis. "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War." *International Security* 17, no. 3 (1992): 5–58.

Nassim Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007), prologue and chapter one.

Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: how little things can make a big difference* (1st ed.). Little, Brown. Introduction and chapter one.

Wendt, Alexander. (1998). On constitution and causation in International Relations. *Review of International Studies*, 24(5), 101-118.

Gilady, Lilach, and Matthew J. Hoffmann. "Darwin's Finches or Lamarck's Giraffe, Does International Relations Get Evolution Wrong?." *International Studies Review* 15.3 (2013): 307-327



Apocalypse Now?

September 26

Jonathan Wiener, “The Tragedy of the Uncommons: On the Politics of Apocalypse,” *Global Policy* 7 (May 2016): 67–80.

Daniel W. Drezner, “Metaphor of the Living Dead: Or, the Effect of the Zombie Apocalypse on Public Policy Discourse.” *Social Research* 81 (Winter 2014): 825–849.

McArthur, Benjamin. “Millennial Fevers.” *Reviews in American History* 24, no. 3 (1996): 369–82.

Tinder, Glenn. “Eschatology and Politics.” *The Review of Politics* 27, no. 3 (1965): 311–33.

Charli Carpenter and Kevin Young, “Does Science Fiction Affect Political Fact? Yes and No: A Survey Experiment on ‘Killer Robots,’” *International Studies Quarterly* 62 (September 2018): 562–576.



Systems & Orders I

October 3

Goldin, I., & Mariathan, M. (2014). The butterfly defect: how globalization creates systemic risks, and what to do about it. Princeton University Press. Introduction and Chapter one.

Gunitsky, Seva. "Complexity and theories of change in international politics." *International Theory* 5.1 (2013): 35-63.

Dirk Helbing, "Globally networked risks and how to respond," *Nature* 497 (2 May 2013): 51–59.

Sergey Buldyrev et al, "Catastrophic cascade of failures in interdependent networks," *Nature* 464 (April 2010): 1025–1028.

Miguel Centeno et al, "The Emergence of Global Systemic Risk," *Annual Review of Sociology* 41 (2015): 65–85.

Richardson J. Book Review: *Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder*, by Nassim Nicholas Taleb. *World Futures Review*. 2013;5(2):219-221.

October 10- Thanksgiving break!





Systems & Orders II

October 17

Glenda Sluga. 2017. The Beginning(s) and End(s) of International Order

Osiander, A. (2001). Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth. *International Organization*, 55(2), 251-287.

John G. Ruggie. 1993. "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations." *International Organization* 47(1) (1993), 139–74.

Barnett, M., 2020. COVID-19 and the Sacrificial International Order. *International Organization*, 74(S1), pp.E128-E147.

Glaser, Charles. "Will China's Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): 80–91.

Brooks, S.G. and Wohlforth, W.C., 2016. The rise and fall of the great powers in the twenty-first century: China's rise and the fate of America's global position. *International Security*, 40(3), pp.7-53.



Whither the Liberal International Order?

October 24

G. John Ikenberry. 2018. "The End of the Liberal International Order?"
International Affairs 94/1: 7-23.

Gopnik, Adam. 2022. How to Build a 21st Century Tyrant. The New Yorker. May 16

Urithika Varagur. Francis Fukuyama Plays Defense. The New Yorker. May 25.

John J. Mearsheimer; Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order. International Security 2019; 43 (4): 7–50.

Drezner, Daniel. 2022. The Perils of Pessimism: Why Anxious Nations Are Dangerous Nations. Foreign Affairs, July/August.

Pankaj Mishra. 2016. "The Globalization of Rage: Why Today's Extremism Looks Familiar." Foreign Affairs 95/6



War!

October 31

Scott Sagan. "The perils of proliferation: Organization theory, deterrence theory, and the spread of nuclear weapons," *International Security* 18 (Spring 1994): 66–107.

John Mueller, "War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment," *Political Science Quarterly* 124 (Summer 2009): 297–321.

Andrew Krepinevich, "The Eroding Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs* 98 (January/February 2019): 62–74.

McNamara, Robert S. "Apocalypse Soon." *Foreign Policy*, no. 148, 2005, pp. 29–35.

Schlosser, Eric. 2016. *World War Three, by Mistake*. *The New Yorker*, December 23

Erik Gartzke and Jon Lindsay, "Thermonuclear Cyberwar," *Journal of Cybersecurity* 3 (March 2017): 37–48.



November 7- Fall Reading Week!



Spaceship Earth I

November 14

Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, chapters 1, 7, 18.

Hardin, Garrett. 1968. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, 162/3859, pp. 1243-1248.

Meadows, Donella H. et al. 1972. The Limits to growth: a report for the Club of Rome's project on the predicament of mankind. pp. 25-87

Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1999). *Environment, scarcity, and violence*. Princeton University Press. Chapters two and three.

Simon, J. L. (1998). *The Ultimate Resource 2* (Rev. ed. / with an appreciation by Milton Friedman.). Princeton University Press. Introduction and chapter one.

Ugo Bardi, "Peak oil, 20 years later: Failed prediction or useful insight?" *Energy Research & Social Science* 48 (February 2019): 257–261.



Spaceship Earth II

November 21

Methmann, Chris, and Delf Rothe. "Politics for the Day after Tomorrow: The Logic of Apocalypse in Global Climate Politics." *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 4 (2012): 323–44.

Bernstein, Steven, 2019. The absence of great power responsibility in global environmental politics. *European Journal of International Relations*.

Malcolm Weiner, “The Collapse of Civilizations,” Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs paper, September 2018.

Jared Diamond, “Twilight at Easter,” *New York Review of Books*. March 25, 2004.

Scott Page, “Are We Collapsing? A Review of Jared Diamond’s *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 43 (December 2005): 1049–1062.

Moll, Rachel F. “The Collapse of Complex Societies.” *Complicity* 5, no. 1 (2008): 169–78.

Kyle Harper, “The Environmental Fall of the Roman Empire,” *Daedalus* 145 (April 2016): 101–111.



Economic Collapse?

November 28

Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World* (New York: Viking), introduction.

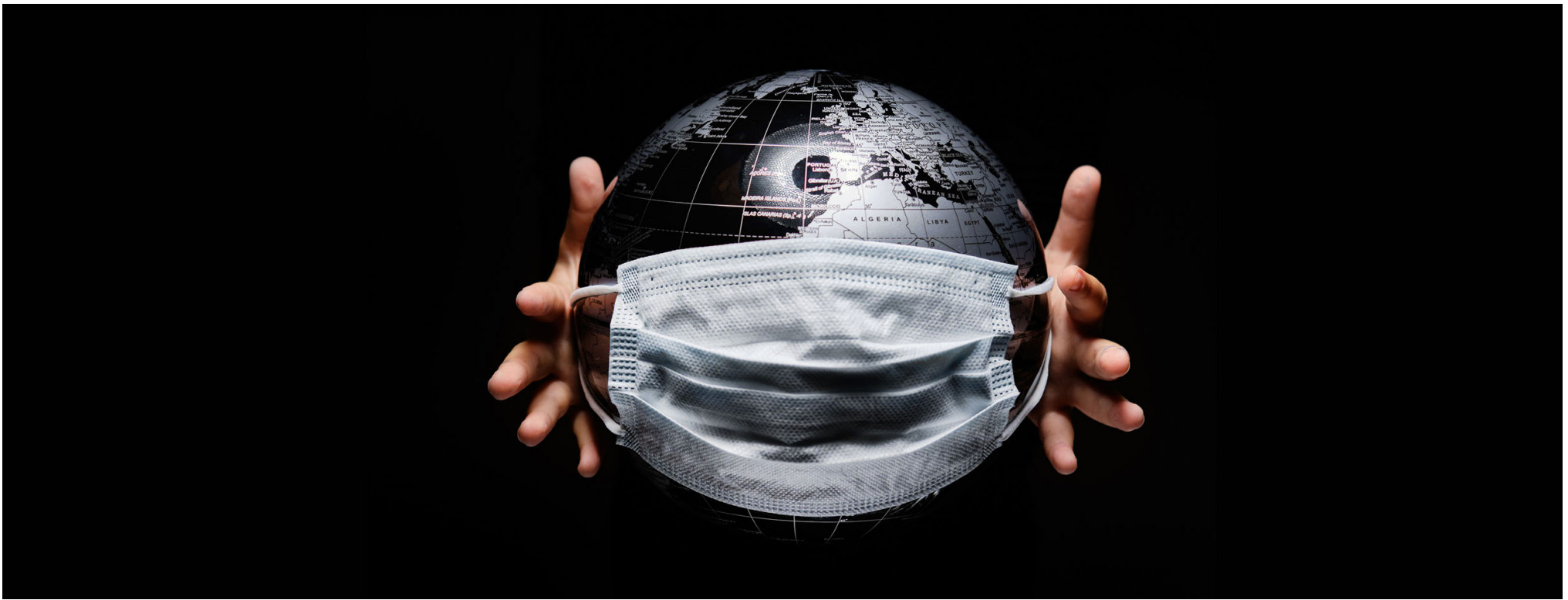
Katzenstein, Peter J. and Stephen C. Nelson. 2013. "Reading the Right Signals and Reading the Signals Right: IPE and the Financial Crisis of 2008". *Review of International Political Economy*. 20(5). 1101-1131.

Hirsch, F. (1995). *Social limits to growth* (2nd ed.). Routledge. Chapter one.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. "After Developmentalism and Globalization, What?" *Social Forces* 83, no. 3 (2005): 1263–78.

Mason, Paul. 2015. [The End of Capitalism Has Begun](#). *The Guardian*.

Sarah Bauerle Danzman, Thomas Oatley, and William Winecoff, "All Crises are Global: Capital Cycles in an Imbalanced International Political Economy," *International Studies Quarterly* 61 (December 2017): 907–923.



Germs!

December 5

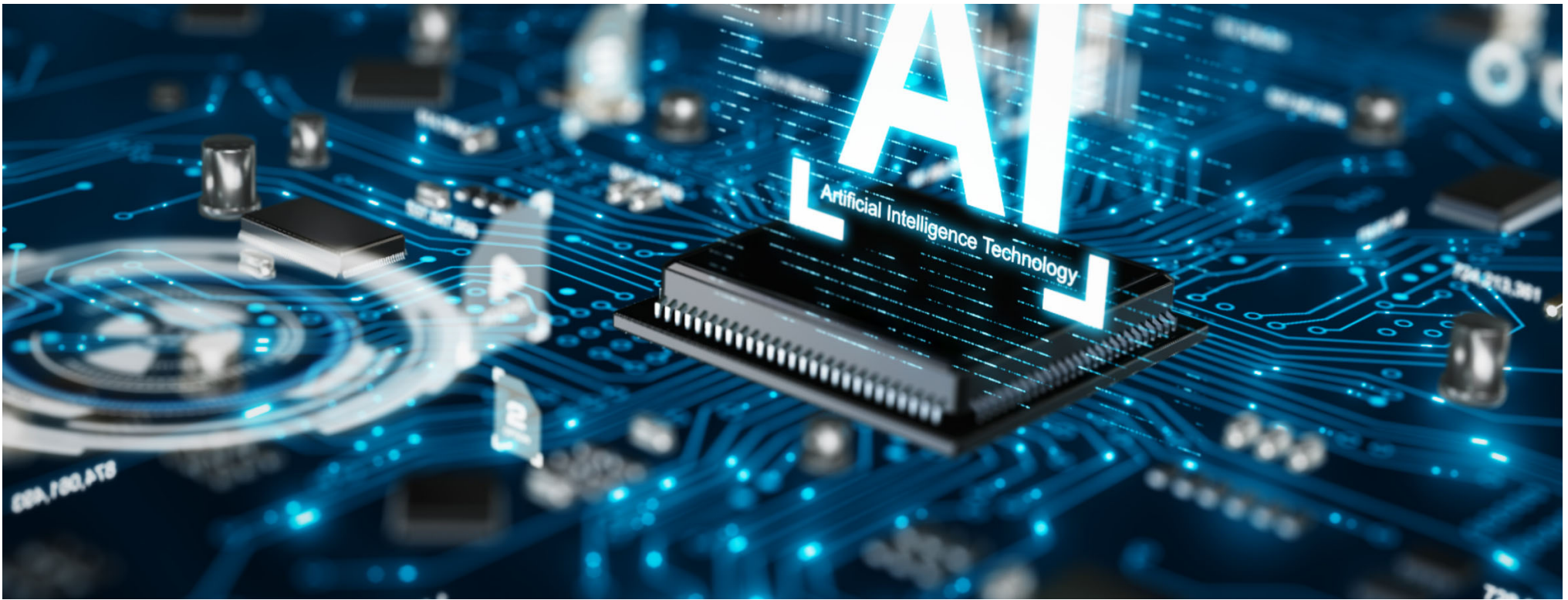
Snowden, F. M. (2019). Epidemics and society from the Black Death to the present. Yale University Press. Introduction and chapter 22.

Gregory Koblentz, “Biosecurity Reconsidered: Calibrating Biological Threats and Responses.” *International Security* 34 (Spring 2010): 96–132.

Cevat Giray Aksoy, Barry Eichengreen, and Orkun Saka, “The Political Scar of Epidemics,” NBER Working Paper No. 27401, June 2020.

Carla Norrlöf (2020) Is covid-19 a liberal democratic curse? Risks for liberal international order, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 33:5, 799-813

Garrett M. Graff, “Experts Knew a Pandemic Was Coming. Here’s What They’re Worried About Next,” *Politico*, May 7, 2020.



The Robots Are Coming!

December 8

Stephen Hawking's Warning

Miles Brundage et al, 2018. "The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence: Forecasting, Prevention, and Mitigation"

Anderson, Michael, and Susan Leigh Anderson. "ROBOT BE GOOD."
Scientific American 303, no. 4 (2010): 72–77.

Rubin, Charles T. "Robotic Souls." The New Atlantis, no. 57 (2019):
75–82.

Johnson, James S. "Artificial Intelligence: A Threat to Strategic
Stability." Strategic Studies Quarterly, vol. 14, no. 1, 2020, pp. 16–39.

Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, "Sovereignty and the UFO."
Political Theory 36 (August 2008): 607–633.

*Papers and final take home exams are
due on December 9*





CREATED BY
Lilach Gilady

Credits:

Created with images by robert - "earth" • Geraldas - "At the end of time" • tino - "large library in living room in large abandoned house" • 1StunningART - "breaking the rules" • JavierArtPhotography - "Hourglass and Holy Bible" • jassada watt - "the road to storm" • Wirestock Creators - "Selective focus shot of a black "It Wasn't My Idea" inscription on a yellow tape" • Liudmyla - "'Keep calm and carry on' words on a lightbox on a white wooden background, top view. Overhead, from above, flat lay." • he68 - "Doomsday Clock" • gustavofrazao - "Change Just Ahead sign on desert road" • jryan10 - "Abandoned Detroit Packard automotive factory now turned zombie apocalypse" • Maria Vonotna - "Road sign with words chaos and order. White two street signs with arrow on metal pole on blue sky background." • Konstantyn - "Autumn pumpkin on wooden table; thanksgiving holiday party background," • Worawut - "Hand of businessman on background holding connections system and global data exchanges. Business network connection concept." • Oleksii - "Global network concept. World map point. Global network planet Earth. 3D rendering." • zef art - "War Concept. Military silhouettes fighting scene on war fog sky background, World War Soldiers Silhouette Below Cloudy Skyline At night." • Lilya - "Beautiful autumn landscape with. Colorful foliage in the park. Falling leaves natural background" • alonesdj - "Amazing blue planet Earth with night yellow lights of megacities in space with stars. Deep space with a planet. Civilization concept. Cities of Central Europe" • Panumas - "Climate change, Two Asian boys walking and searching for water on dry cracked land and sunset. Environment conservation and stop global warming concept" • Who is Danny - "Business chart with glowing arrows and world map" • Alex Tihonov - "Kid holding globe map sphere isolated on black horizontal background. Ecological problems disasters. COVID-19 pandemic infection disease concept image, copy space for text" • Kaikoro - "3D render AI artificial intelligence technology CPU central processor unit chipset on the printed circuit board for electronic and technology concept select focus shallow depth of field" • gustavofrazao - "The End written on rural road"

LG

