

WINTER QUARTER 2016 TRANSNATIONAL TASK FORCE THE ARCTIC – A NEW PLAYER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Co-Instructors: N. Fabbi & V. Gallucci, Canadian Studies Center/Arctic & International Affairs,
Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies



Photos are from the 2013 Task Force to Québec City and Ottawa.

Introduction

The Arctic is one of the most dynamic and interesting regions of the world to study today! It is the world's air conditioner, yet it is warming at twice the rate of the rest of the planet. In the 21st century the region will see an ice-free Arctic Ocean for the first time in history. Many Arctic indigenous peoples have gone from being nomadic hunters to internet users in just one generation. The Inuit have become global leaders including making the important connection between climate change and human rights. Meanwhile, geopolitics in the Arctic intensifies. Russia has planted a flag at the North Pole. China, with a fifth of the world's population, demands rights to Arctic energy. Military forces in the Arctic have been stepped up in recent years while Arctic communities struggle to build stronger capacity. As part of this Task Force, students will have the opportunity to travel to Ottawa, Canada's capital, where they will meet with ambassadors, Inuit leaders and scholars. Two students will be selected to present their findings to the Senior Arctic Officials meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska in March! For students who want to be on the cutting edge of international affairs, this course is for you!

Background

The Arctic has become a game changer in global geopolitics. According to some scholars the region has emerged as the "center of world politics" – its relevance in international relations is rapidly increasing. The impacts of climate change are opening the Arctic Ocean to international shipping while sea ice melt is increasing access to oil, gas and other valuable resources. Concerning climate change, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, has called the region "a bellweather" for the planet. The opportunities and challenges of climate change have moved the Arctic to the forefront of international relations. Governments from Arctic and non-Arctic nation-states and sub-national regions, transnational corporations, indigenous peoples, and environmental justice organizations are increasingly invested in the region's future.

The [Arctic Council](#), the decision-making body for the region, has correspondingly grown from a little-known institution to a major international body with nation-states from around the world pursuing official Observer status. Indeed, after the 2013 admittance of China, India, South Korea and Singapore, media coverage on the Arctic Council almost tripled. The Council is now making international [legally binding agreements](#) and is shaping international policy in significant ways. Importantly, the Arctic Council is the first international body founded in collaboration with indigenous peoples and where indigenous organizations serve on almost equal par with nation-states. An Inuk just served as chair of the Council for the first time in history. UW's 2015-16 Fulbright Visiting Chair in Arctic Studies, H. Nicol (with colleague L. Heininen) has called this phenomenon,

"some sort of renaissance of regional co-operation by circumpolar Indigenous peoples and civil societies." The six indigenous [Permanent Participant](#) organizations on the Arctic Council represent half a million Arctic and sub-Arctic indigenous people and, via the Council, are influencing international relations.

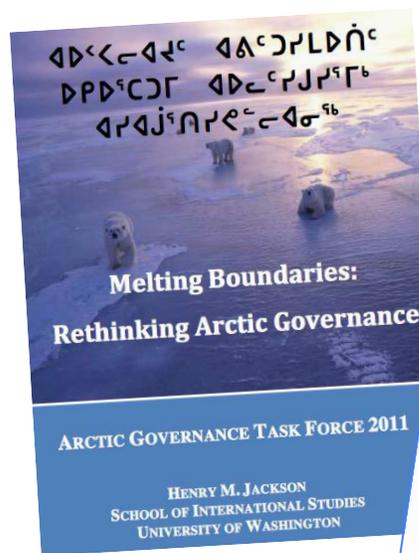
What You Will Learn

Task Force lectures will begin with an overview of the climate change and the current issues facing the Arctic region today – environmental, legal, geopolitical, and economic. Following, students will be introduced to the Arctic Council. Lectures will include the critical role of the Inuit in first framing the circumpolar world as a distinct region (1970s); how Gorbachev inspired the founding of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (1991), the precursor to the Arctic Council; how nation-states and indigenous peoples worked together in drafting the founding documents for the Arctic Council (1996); the structure and functioning of the Council including, importantly, the non-Arctic nation-state interest in Observer status; key accomplishments of the Council over the last 20 years; and, the Canada (2013-15) and [U.S. Chairmanship \(2015-17\)](#) of the Council. Attention will be given to the developments of the Council during the Canadian chairmanship including the founding of the [Arctic Economic Council](#) and the mandate to include indigenous knowledge in all workings of the Council. Course projects will focus on the U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and its theme of "One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities."

What You Will Do

Students will write policy reports that consider the role of the Arctic Council in addressing the most critical issues facing the region today. At the completion of the Canada Chairmanship, a declaration was written to guide the Council over the next two years. This document is entitled, the [Iqaluit Declaration 2015](#). The Iqaluit Declaration focuses on sustaining Arctic communities, protecting the unique Arctic environment and, building a stronger Arctic Council. Students might consider some of the following issues:

- The new Arctic Economic Council (AEC) is an independent forum of business representatives who will facilitate Arctic business activities and provide the Arctic Council with a circumpolar business perspective. What is the relationship between the AEC and the Permanent Participants and how should the AEC incorporate indigenous economic models into a distinct circumpolar business perspective?
- The Arctic Council now recommends the integration of traditional and local knowledge into all workings of the Council. This is unique for an international organization. How is traditional knowledge shaping the decision-shaping of the Arctic Council and therefore international relations more broadly?
- In 2013 the Arctic Council admitted four new Asian countries as Observers – South Korea, China, India and Singapore. How should the Arctic Council adapt to cope with these new members?
- Climate change is a key pillar of the U.S. Chairmanship. How can the Council play a leadership role in climate change mitigation – what agreements ought to be considered?
- The Arctic Council is a collaborative and cooperative body that, via the involvement of the various departments of foreign affairs, is approaching Western-Russian relations differently. How might the approach of the Arctic Council be applied to international geopolitics more broadly?



Transnational Component

Students will travel to Canada's capital, Ottawa, from **January 23rd to 30th, 2016** to engage in on-the-ground research with organizations and specialists in the field. The week will begin with a tour of the city including of the Parliament Buildings, a photo-op at the National Gallery, and a 10-minute walk across the Ottawa River from Ontario to French-speaking Québec. We will skate on the world's longest rink – the Rideau Canal (5 miles long!). Students can enjoy hot chocolate and beaver tail pastries along the way!



During the week we will engage in back-to-back visits. Visits (to be confirmed) include to the embassies of the Arctic nation-states where we will meet with ambassadors and key personnel; Canadian federal departments including [Foreign Affairs \(Canada & the Arctic\)](#), [National Defense](#) and [Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development](#). We will also visit the Inuit national association in Canada, the [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#), and the international Inuit organization, the [Inuit Circumpolar Council](#).

We will visit with various scholars and leaders in the field. Speakers (to be confirmed) include: Donat Savoie, former chief federal negotiator for the Inuit of Nunavik; Heather Nicol, a key scholar in Arctic geopolitics; Jean-François Arteau, former legal counsel for the president of a major Inuit corporation (Makivik); Terry Fenge, a consultant who worked with Inuk leader Sheila Watt-Cloutier on a petition connecting climate change to human rights; Joël Plouffe, managing editor of the *Arctic Yearbook*; and Barry Pottle, Inuk photographer.

We will stay at the historic [Ashbury House](#) where hosts Charmaine (formerly with the World Bank) and George (who assisted with the Canadian robotic arm for the International Space Station) will greet us with warm apple pie! We will enjoy gourmet breakfasts and cozy rooms!

Costs

A program fee of **\$1,000** includes a \$250 International Programs and Exchanges charge; health insurance; and \$700 toward travel. This covers your round-trip flight, transportation to and from the airport in Ottawa, accommodations including breakfast, in-city transportation, and some meals. Students are responsible to get to and from the Seattle airport, for luggage fees, most meals, and clothing appropriate for sub-zero temperatures.

Student travel is subsidized by the **Center for Global Studies** and the **International Policy Institute** both housed in the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies.

