Professor Beth A. Simmons
Political Science 5400 Section 301, CRN 79140
(Suitable for PhD, MA, and advanced undergraduate students by permission)
PROSPECTUS Fall 2024
Borders and Boundaries in International and Comparative Perspective.
Class structure: seminar, minimal lecturing, discussion

International borders have multiple meanings as designations of state authority, national security buffers, and expressions of social meaning and opportunities for economic integration. This seminar explores their creation, challenges, erosion, and reinforcement over time and around the world.

The first part of the course is about how territorial sovereignty and boundedness came to have meaning in governance and international relations. How was a political world based on territorial sovereignty created, how are international borders determined, and how are they contested and maintained? How do international borders influence war and peace between states? How do they influence state consolidation?

The second part of the course focuses on border issues, actors, and consequences. How do borders, border regions, and border activities speak to national encounters with neighbors and the rest of the world? How do they affect international trade and development? How and why are international borders "securitized," and how does this affect the flow of goods, people, and illicit activities around and across the border? How do bordering practices affect human rights and community identities and relationships?

The seminar examines the meaning and function of boundary-making between states from multiple disciplines and perspectives: political science, law, international relations, history, geography, sociology, and economics.

As a seminar designed primarily to stimulate research, this course will be concerned with historical and current problems relating to international borders around the world. We will concentrate on formulating interesting research questions, thinking carefully about how to bring data to bear on specific questions or hypotheses, becoming familiar with data sources, and designing our own research. All assignments are related to developing research skills; there are no in-class exams.

Learning objectives:

1. Substance: students will learn about a range of perspectives on how international boundaries developed, are maintained, and function, as well as some of the consequences they have for human organization, behavior and welfare.
2. Research skills: students will develop a researchable question, learn thoughtful research design and use appropriate evidence to support a research paper.
3. 'Soft skills' including oral and written communication; successful teamwork (productive brainstorming, clear and concise communication in a team setting, dividing responsibilities; pulling your weight and encouraging others to do the same; meeting time schedules set by your group, presenting data and research in a professional manner).

Collaboration Policy:

Collaboration among class members is *required* for co-authored research project sand *encouraged* for all other aspects of the course. *All collaborative conversations and ideas must be acknowledged in writing.* For guidance, on plagiarism, please refer to http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_collaboration.html. If in doubt, err on the side of attribution.

Graded Assignments:

	Description	Grade share
Research Progress presentation	Posted a 3-page canvas memo on your project's preliminary theory and findings. 5-minute oral presentation; field questions & gain feedback from class.	10%
Final presentation	Polished presentation with preliminary results. Field questions & suggestions from class. Paper need not be finished.	20%
Research Project: Individual paper **OR** Collaborative paper	All research papers must have a thesis, theory and evidence. *Individual* research paper; 20-30 pages. Length and quality of collaborative projects are expected to be higher.	50%
Participation	Includes discussion in seminar and breakout sessions; class presentations (summaries of and responses to readings); feedback on classmates' research.	20%

Readings: There is no single text for this course. We use a combination of academic and policy articles, book chapters, and other materials from a broad range of disciplines. Per the course designation, political science is the disciplinary focus, but the commitment is to inter- and multi-disciplinarity. Readings are expected to be done before seminar meets.

This course is suitable for exploring dissertation and thesis ideas, and developing research, writing and presentational skills.