

Arab-Israeli Conflict (AIC) Simulation Mentor Seminar

Winter 2020 Wednesdays/Fridays 10:30-12:00, 2225 School of Educ. Course Site on Canvas

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Office Hours: *Fridays 2-3 or by appointment*

Simulation Website: <http://aic.conflux.org/> (also linked via CANVAS)

Country and Characters Website:

http://aic-background.conflux.org/index.php/Main_Page (linked via CANVAS)

Course Purpose

This course is based on the idea that the most meaningful learning happens when one is actively engaged in a purposeful activity. By participating in AIC as a mentor, I hope that you will learn more about the politics and history of the Middle East, but that you will also have opportunities to think deeply about the nature of diplomacy, about what is important to you as a learner and a teacher, and about what it takes to foster thoughtful discourse.

Commitment

Each year hundreds of students participate in AIC. A significant part of their experience depends on the work of the mentor team. Because your role is so important, it is essential that you make a commitment to fulfilling your responsibilities until the end of the term. By taking this course, you are taking on the job of a teacher, and your work will impact many others.

Course Requirements

Your responsibilities include the following:

- 1) **Learn the simulation.** Read the rules, learn how to use the website, and be familiar with the characters and the scenario. There will be several activities and readings in the first few weeks related to this.
- 2) **Check in on-line every day** during the 10 weeks of simulation "play." Yes, you really need to check in to the game EVERY weekday. If you absolutely cannot get online a certain day, you *must* let me know by e-mail or phone and make sure one of your colleagues can cover for you. Exactly what you will do online, and how we will divide up the mentoring work, will be discussed very soon.
- 3) **Attend class.** There will be many issues that come up as you go along, and while you should contact me immediately with urgent concerns, our class meetings are the place to solve problems together and share ideas. Class meetings are also times for you (and your fellow team members) to determine what needs to be done in your simulation. If, because of unavoidable circumstances, there is no alternative to your missing a class meeting, I expect that you will contact me beforehand.

4) **Reflect on what you do.** I want to know what was challenging, what was frustrating, what was rewarding, and what you think could be done to make AIC better for the participants as well as the mentors. Take note of these thoughts as you have them, and bring them up in the seminar. There will be regular written and in-class assignments that will ask you to engage in specific reflective tasks, drawing upon these observations.

Class Schedule

January 8: We'll talk about the simulation, the course, and the playful spirit of learning. We'll also talk about the strategic questions paper due on January 15 (*see assignment description under January 15th*).

January 10: We'll discuss the Birnbaum/Tibon article about the last attempt to negotiate a Palestinian-Israeli peace ("How the Israel-Palestine Peace Deal Died") and the "Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine" guide (links on the announcements page of our CANVAS site). Regarding the Birnbaum/Tibon article, be prepared to talk and ask questions about the image you're given of Abbas and Netanyahu, and about the challenges of reaching a 2-state solution. Please also come with questions about matters discussed in the "Everything you Need to Know..." Guide, and be ready to share some thoughts about why resolving this conflict is so complicated.

Country Reviews

Over the next few weeks, we will be dividing up the task of getting acquainted with the domestic and international politics of the nations represented in our simulation. You'll each be reading about several of those nations, and we'll discuss them all in class. As you do the readings in preparation for these discussions, consider topics like: **How does the nation define its interests with regard to the Middle East? How militarily strong is the country? Whatever its military strength, what other sources of regional influence does the nation have? How are its leaders chosen? How invested is the nation in a "two-state" solution in Israel/Palestine? What are the most important domestic political considerations for this nation?**

January 15:

1) Please read the **country profile** and the **what you should know about playing...** at the *AIC country and character profiles* site (links on the announcements page of our CANVAS site) about ***your group's country***, plus the articles about your country under **pages** on CANVAS.

Jordan (Group 1) Saudi Arabia (Group 2) Egypt (Group 3) Russia (Group 4)

2) **Strategic Question Essay:** Please write an essay **of at least 750 words (due on Canvas by midnight tonight—Jan. 15)** responding to the question below that corresponds to the country you were assigned to research. Please be careful to both *make and support your assertions*:

**** Jordan is considered to be an important “moderate” Arab nation (in the eyes of Israel and the West, to be sure). Why are they considered to be “moderate,” and how does the presence of a huge Palestinian population in Jordan affect its political actions/outlook? (Group One)**

**** Many say that Saudi Arabia’s primary regional interest lies in protecting “stability.” The Saudis surely define stability in broad and varied terms. Talk about the different kinds of stability that the Saudis seek to protect, and how they try to do so. (Group Two)**

**** Since the military took control of Egypt’s government in 2013, relations have warmed somewhat between Israel and Egypt, and Egypt has shown growing interest in mediating between Israel and Palestine (especially Hamas). What has Egypt done in this connection, and what does Egypt have to gain from taking on this kind of leadership role? (Group Three)**

**** Russia’s involvement in Middle Eastern geopolitics continues to grow, most notably with its involvement in Syria, but also extending to its relations with Palestine and Israel. Talk about Russia’s policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and about the nature of the connections between Russia and both Israel and Palestine. (Group Four)**

RESEARCH GROUPS

Group 1:

Group 2:

Group 3:

Group 4:

January 17:

We’ll continue our **country review** discussions today, discussing the **round two** countries and organizations (listed below) that you’re to have read about for today. Please read the **country profile** and the ***What You Should Know about playing...*** on the *AIC country and character profiles* site for the country or political organization that you are assigned, as well as the readings for your country on CANVAS, and be ready to talk about the questions listed above in the **COUNTRY REVIEWS** section.

The Lebanon March 14 Coalition (Group 1)

The Lebanon Hezbollah Coalition (Group 2)

Iran (Group 3) France (Group 4)

January 22:

Please bring to class the sample goals statement for the **round two** country that you studied with your comments written on it **as you would actually address them to the student diplomats**. *Do your utmost to both consider and reflect back to the student diplomats the strengths you see in terms of the ideas, composition, clarity, and evidence of thought shown in the goals statement you reviewed. Please discuss where the statement needs to be clarified or sharpened, and remember to use the powerful tool of posing questions...if something is unclear or under-developed, how would you frame your request for clarification? Honor any concerns you have about the document, but seek language that conveys a sense of respect for the efforts of the student diplomats, and that you feel is encouraging **even** if you are asking for revisions (which you **must** not be shy about doing). Finally, think about what is MOST important for them to work on...you likely won't be able to polish the entire document, so what are the priorities? You'll hand in a paper copy of your marked-up strategic goals statement at the end of today's class.*

The Simulation & Your Mentoring Responsibilities:

The AIC website opens on January 27th, as the country teams start posting their strategic goals statements. The actual simulation begins on February 10th. There will be other simulation-related assignments that will be discussed in class, as will the specific nature of your mentoring work. For the moment, know that your work related to the simulation is the central part of your overall coursework, and **I expect that you will be online every week day** starting February 3rd, and during the 11 weeks of the actual simulation (apart from your spring break, of course).

January 24:

Review sample goals for round two nations.

January 29:

1) Please read the **country profile** and the **what you should know about playing...** sections on our website about the following **round three** countries/organizations, along with the readings for that country on CANVAS. Once again, please be ready to talk about your country/organization regarding the questions listed above under **COUNTRY REVIEW**.

European Union (Group 1) Turkey (Group 2)
Iraq (Group 3) Syria (Group 4)

2) **Please bring to class** the sample goals statement for the **round three** country that you studied with your comments written on it **as you would actually address them to the student diplomats**. *Do your utmost to both consider and reflect back to the student diplomats the strengths you see in terms of the ideas, composition, clarity, and evidence of thought shown in the goals statement you reviewed. Please discuss where the statement needs to be clarified or sharpened, and remember to use the powerful tool of posing questions...if something is unclear or under-developed, how*

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You'll hand in a paper copy of your marked-up strategic goals statement at the end of today's class.

3) With the opening of the AIC website this week, we'll take a tour of the site and go over the logistics of site navigation, and we'll look in detail at the business of responding to strategic goals statements.

Most of you will serve as National Security Advisors (NSAs) to several country teams. I expect that over the next two weeks you will read the country profiles for the teams that you've been assigned.

January 31:

1) We'll review the **scenario** today, so please read it (available on CANVAS) before class, and come to class with questions.

2) We'll also talk today about Press Releases, and I'll give you an assignment that will be due **in class** on February 7th.

3) Finally, we'll talk about the political scene in Palestine (Please read the articles in the Palestine MODULE on CANVAS).

"The Lemon Tree"

Over the next few weeks, we will be reading and discussing the book "**The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East,**" by Sandy Tolan (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2006). During the class sessions designated below, we will discuss that week's readings generally, and you'll have a specific assignment for class related to that day's readings.

February 5:

Lemon Tree, Chapters 1-4: Choose a passage from the week's reading that really caught your attention... a new insight, an illuminating perspective, an instructive bit of history. Be prepared to share and discuss the passage you've selected, and to tell your colleagues about your reaction to the passage, what it made you think about, what questions it raised, etc.

February 7:

In addition to our team Meetings, we will discuss Weekly Reports, and we'll talk about the political scene in Israel (Read the articles in the Israel MODULE on CANVAS).

*We will also discuss the Press Release assignment that was distributed in class on January 31st, and that is due **in class** today.*

February 12: Lemon Tree, Chapters 5-7: Once again, choose a passage from the week's reading that really caught your attention... a new insight, an illuminating perspective, an instructive bit of history. Be prepared to share and discuss the passage you've selected, and to tell your colleagues about your reaction to the passage, what it made you think about, what questions it raised, etc.

Mentor Team Meetings

We will have several concurrent simulations running, and you will each be a member of a mentoring team that will facilitate one of those simulations. We'll speak in class about the specifics, but my expectation is the NSAs will come to *each class meeting* prepared to briefly discuss the content of any recent **press releases** that they've approved, or that have been submitted by their teams, and that everyone (especially the Game Mentor and the originating team's NSA) will have reviewed any submitted **action forms**.

February 14: We'll talk today about **action forms**, the mechanism through which the diplomats make things happen in the game, and how you evaluate and enact them. We'll also talk about the first **Close Look at your mentoring paper, which is due on February 21st**.

February 19:

Lemon Tree, Chapters 8-10: Be prepared to speak in class about a *specific connection* you've seen between something that you read about in Lemon Tree and your work as a mentor. Talk about something you've read about that you think would be important for your students to understand, and speculate a bit about how you might support that understanding through your work.

Close Look at Your Mentoring

I will ask each of you to choose and share with me recent examples of your mentoring interactions so that I can offer you some feedback, support and guidance. I'll tell you more in class, but the basic idea here is that you'll include a piece of student work, your response to it, and your rationale for responding as you did. I will also ask that you focus on the communicative dimension of your work, and that you outline the "big picture" message that you wanted to convey to your students, and how you tried to do that.

This is an opportunity to both focus on the details of your work and to reflect on your process, and the choices you make. **This paper is due on Canvas on February 21st**.

February 21: Team Meetings/Review of your mentoring work.

February 26: We'll look today at how the simulation looks to the teachers and their student diplomats.

Our reading for today is about observation and about *looking carefully at student work*. I hope to add complication to some central questions growing out of your mentoring. What does it mean, for example, to cultivate the *disposition* of observing the work of our

students in a patient and non-judgmental way? How do we reconcile that stance with our sense of what it means to be a mentor, and of our responsibilities to our students, and to the simulation itself? We'll discuss this piece, its meaning and, of course, its potential relevance to your mentoring work: "**Learning from Looking**" by **Steve Seidel**.

February 28: Lemon Tree, Chapters 11-14: We'll discuss the concluding chapters and your sense of Dalia and Bashir, and we'll also discuss the question (directly below) that you'll respond to in the essay you'll turn in tomorrow.

Due February 28th, an essay of at least 750 words in response to the question: Do you see "The Lemon Tree" as being ultimately a hopeful book? In your essay (to be handed in on Canvas) articulating your opinion, please support your response by citing and discussing *specific* references from the book. In this paper, I will be looking for you to take a stand and to support that stand with evidence from the book as well as from your own point-of-view and your own process of making meaning.

March 11:

We'll have team meetings today and will concentrate on getting caught up with what has taken place over break.

March 13:

We'll talk today about the **Decision** Reports assignment, and have more time for team meetings.

Decision Reports

We will have several simulations running concurrently this term, and each of you will be a member of a team that will facilitate one of these simulations. Over the course of the term, you'll be making a series of collective decisions that we'll be discussing in great detail.

The **Decision Report** assignment is meant to be a way to capture the nuances of some of the decisions that lead to the **updates** that you'll write and post, which contain portrayals of events that occur and that drive the story of the game, sparking actions by the diplomats. **Each of you will author one of these decision reports**, describing both the student work that sparked your activity, and the decision process undertaken by your group. More details about this assignment will follow.

March 18:

We'll talk today about the In-Class presentations that each group will do, starting March 27th.

March 20:

Guest Speaker (tent.): Ashley Bates—Ashley is a journalist who has been based in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jordan, and she is also the longtime Executive Director at Hands of Peace (www.handsofpeace.org), a dialogue and leadership program for

Palestinian, Israeli, and American teenagers. She'll talk today about her time in Gaza, and about Hands of Peace (Readings posted on Canvas).

In-Class Presentations

Starting March 27th, each mentor team will take a turn making a short, informal presentation to the class related to an issue/s unfolding in their game. I'll ask that you talk about a situation in your game where you're facing a choice of some kind, whether it be how or whether to enact a particular action form, how to complicate things for a country team that is taking a strong initiative in the game, or how to present productive challenges to your diplomats. We'll talk more about this in class.

I'll give you a specific schedule for these presentations on March 18th

The rest of the schedule in brief (Schedule subject to change, and other assignments and class activities will be added as needed)

Date	Class Topics	Assignments Due
3-25	Group discussion of simulation, team meetings.	Continue daily on-line work
3-27	Group discussion of simulation, team meetings Group presentations start today	Continue daily on-line work
4-1	Group discussion of simulation, team meetings Group presentation	Continue daily on-line work
4-3	Group discussion of simulation, team meetings Group presentation	Continue daily on-line work Yes! Moments paper assigned—due on CANVAS by Sunday, April 5th
4-8	Group discussion of simulation, team meetings Group presentation	Continue daily on-line work.
4-10	Group discussion of simulation, team meetings	Continue daily on-line work
4-15	Group discussion of simulation, team meetings Group presentation	Continue daily on-line work
4-17	Final Class Meeting Reflection on AIC Simulation ends April 17th	Final updates/summaries/NSA messages must be posted on the AIC website by Tuesday, April 21st Final Reflection paper due (on CTools) by Sunday, April 26th.

Grades will be determined based on the following:

Quality and consistency of mentoring work (25%) Written assignments (20%)
Final reflection (35%) Seminar participation & attendance (20%)

You must do your mentoring work on time, consistently, and without prodding, and if you are unavoidably unable to do your work at a certain time, you must give the rest of your group as much notice as possible and arrange for another mentor to cover for you. Owing to the nature of the simulation, it's rarely possible to make up missed work in the necessary time frame. Doing an excellent job some of the time can't make up for not consistently keeping up with your responsibilities.

Grade Scale

A	4.0	95 - 100
A-	3.7	90 - 94
B+	3.3	86 - 89
B	3.0	82 - 85
B-	2.7	78 - 81
C+	2.3	74 - 77
C	2.0	70 - 73
C-	1.7	67 - 69
D	1.0	60 - 66
F	0.0	0 - 59

Navigating the Arab-Israeli Conflict Simulation



AIC Rules



The Arab-Israeli Conflict Simulation (AIC) is a political and diplomatic character-playing exercise. Here are several major ways for you to proceed in the simulation.



Strategic Goals

At the beginning of the game, each team needs to submit a strategic goals statement to their NSA for approval. These goals should outline what your team wants to achieve during the simulation.



Communiques-What are they?

Communiques are tools for private communication. Each leader can send private communiques to members of other teams. But not every country is on your communication matrix.



Communiques-How they work

There are two methods to communicate with an individual who is not on your matrix: A team member who is in contact with that individual can serve as the messenger, or a participant on another team can serve as an intermediary.



NSA



Game Mentor

Strategic Goals, Press Releases, and Action Forms all need to be submitted to the NSA (or, in the case of the action form, to the Game Mentor) for approval before they get posted in the game.



Student Diplomat



NSA

Weekly reports need to be submitted to NSAs. The primary purpose of the Weekly Report is to outline for the NSA what the team has been doing, how their actions align with their goals, and what they plan to do in the coming weeks.



2 days

Student Diplomat

NSA

Please allow two weekdays for NSAs to respond to your press releases, action forms, weekly reports or any other messages.



Updates

When press releases or action forms are approved, they become part of the reality of the simulation through being announced by the Game Mentor as updates on the main page of the site.



Press Release

Press releases are a team's public voice in the international community. They can be used to make proposals to other countries, state a country's position on matters of public import, and to persuade other nations for support.



Action Forms

Submitting action forms is a mean to make things happen. They need approval from the Game Mentor before becoming part of the reality of the simulation.



It is absolutely against the rules of the simulation to speak—write a message or press release—in someone else's name. It is the responsibility of each member of each country team to maintain the individual integrity of all roles.



Once the game starts, events that happen in real life do not automatically occur in the simulation.

Advice for Student Diplomats



1. Be active. Align any action and decisions made in the game with your strategic goals.

How?

Check for updates by at least signing in twice a week.

Why?

It is vitally important that you get your opinions out there, and that you push back on any ideas or opinions that may be counter to your nation's interests.



How?

Who is what you're saying meant to impress or persuade? How are you "spinning" your statements so as to put yourself and their allies in the best light, and those who oppose you in the worst?

Why?

If you know the audience and purpose you are writing for, the statements you make will help you make a good impression on the public, and give you an edge over your opponents.



3. Have communication with different countries.

How?

Use the communiques function. Don't forget the rules, but try to make connections with countries who are not on your side.

Why?

Get their help with achieving your goals since you cannot proceed in the game without help from other teams.



4. Be aware of time management; the game ends faster than you expect.

How?

Bear in mind the strategic goals you wrote at the beginning of the game. Try to track how much progress you've made towards achieving these goals.

Why?

Managing time well can help you get more goals achieved.



5. Regularly read and reply to communiques, press releases and updates.

How?

Check for updates by signing in at least twice a week.

Why?

You won't miss any important messages from other teams or from your NSA. Being on track in the game helps things proceed more smoothly.



6. Keep thinking about how your goals could serve the interests of other nations.

How?

Understand relationships among different countries by researching and reading background information. Know who shares similar or contradictory goals with you.

Why?

Having support from other nations helps you get your goals accomplished more easily.



7. Stay in character all the time.

How?

Read the background information so you know what beliefs your character holds and who your allies are.

Why?

When you stay in character, you know how to respond to updates and messages in the game. Also, you can more effectively interact with other teams, and you know who shares similar views.



8. Write like a journalist and leader.

How?

Proofread your writing and your communiques. Think carefully about word choice and check for typos and grammatical errors.

Why?

Gain respect, make a good impression on the public, and avoid misunderstandings.