I. You and the World
   A. International affairs matter
      1. International crises
         a. 9/11/01
         b. Iraq War
      2. The National Economy
         a. Almost $1 of every $5 in U.S. tax money goes to national defense
         b. Prices of goods (e.g., price of oil)

II. Defining International Relations
   A. Narrow Definition: *Interstate Relations*
      1. “International Politics”
      2. Focus is on the state behavior
      3. Inadequate description
   B. Broad Definition: *International Relations*
      1. State behavior plus
      2. Other actors (e.g., multi-national corporations, movements, individuals)
      3. Issues (e.g., terrorism, global warming)

III. Learning and Thinking about International Relations
   A. A dynamic area in a state of constant flux
      1. Continuous change
      2. Area of overwhelming complexity
      3. A focus on “today’s issues” gains little lasting value
         a. Names, places, faces change
         b. Fundamental problem and issues tend to reappear (albeit in different form)
      4. Thus, the goal: to bring order through systematic thinking
   B. Systematic Thinking
      1. Realize that the present is a product of the past, the future the result of today
         a. World War II laid the seeds for World War II
         b. The war in Iraq will sow future situations in the Persian Gulf
      2. A knowledge of history helps move beyond a mere description of events
      3. The more difficult task is to use history as tool to explain events
         a. We want to know why something happened not just that it did
         b. The problem is: establishing causation
         c. But we need to achieve explanation if we are to get to prescription
      4. Prescription is the desired end
         a. Ultimately, the goal is to solve and deal with problems
   C. Historical facts do not necessarily translate to explanation
      1. Historians might totally agree on the “facts” surrounding an event
         a. Though some “facts” may be in dispute or unclear
      2. Despite agreement on the “facts,” historians may have different explanations
How Do We Study Politics?

I. There are two approaches to the study of comparative politics.
   A. The normative approach focuses upon philosophies, norms, or “should.”
      1. For example, the normative approach would ask, “What is justice?”
      2. “Should there be free education?”
   B. The empirical approach relies on measurement and observation rather than norms.
      1. The empirical approach is not to ask what should be but what is.
      2. Does everyone in a society have equal access to education?

II. Arend Lijphart’s four basic methods of discovering and establishing empirical propositions.
   A. The case study method involves an intensive study of an individual subject.
      1. Micro-level analysis might focus on individuals
      2. Macro-level analysis might focus on groups or institutions.
      3. In this approach the researcher develops expertise, albeit limited in scope.
   B. The statistical method involves sophisticated forms of measurement and observation.
   C. The comparative method involves looking for similarities and differences in two or more cases.
      1. Diachronic comparison is a comparison of one subject across time (e.g. comparing the British House of Commons in 1952 with the one in 1992)
      2. Synchronic comparison compares subjects across national borders (e.g. examining the British prime minister with the Japanese prime minister)
   D. The experimental method involves the manipulation of variables.
      1. The case study, the statistical, and the comparative methods are based exclusively on observation and measurement not manipulation of variables.
      2. In the experimental approach one manipulates one variable to observe the effect upon another variable.
      3. This approach has its limitations.
         a. One problem is the complexity of the subject.
            1. The real world of politics “consists of an endless number of variables.” (Kesselman, et al)
            2. Unlike physics or chemistry (the “hard sciences”), variables in political science (a “soft science”) are difficult to isolate and manipulate
         b. The second problem is that humans have free-will, i.e. even if one assumes humans can be rational, their choice, attitudes, and behavior cannot be fully explained or predicted.

III. The Matter of Causation: “If X happens, then Y is the result.
    A. Variables: X (the independent variable) is manipulated to see how, if at all, it causes (influences) Y (the dependent variable)
    B. Example: What causes conflict (Y) to intensify among groups in a particular country?
       1. Hypothesis: If a country’s economic pie (X) decreases, conflict (Y) intensifies
       2. This might be tested by statistical analysis of a very large number of cases or by focusing on one country, or several, to analyze how X and Y relationships have varied over time and with what effect.
3. "Why" and "how" are open questions
   a. Historical facts do not speak for themselves

D. Competing interpretations result from people's pre-existing opinions
   1. Interpretations are subject to subjective analysis
      a. "people tend to see what they want to see"
      b. Humans are affected by attitudes, beliefs, cultural influences
   2. "If the facts are ambiguous or open to several plausible interpretations, people will usually accept the interpretation that is consistent with their beliefs instead of one that challenges them."

E. Critical thinking, therefore, is essential to avoiding the pitfall of pre-existing opinions
   1. Critical thinking appreciates competing worldviews
   2. It entails looking at issues and problems from many perspectives
   3. Being able to argue positions with which you may personally disagree aids critical analysis
      a. It makes you think about the structure of argument and the nature of evidence
      b. It makes you aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your own position

IV. Plan of Text: International Relations: Perspectives and Controversies
A. Chapter 1 begins with a survey of international relations over the last 500 years
B. Chapter 2 is an introduction to the major perspectives of worldviews
   1. Traditional perspectives, e.g., realism, liberalism, Marxism
   2. Recent perspectives, e.g., feminism, constructivism
C. Chapters 3-13 deal with enduring and contemporary controversies in international relations
   1. Abstract and theoretical (e.g., war and human nature)
   2. Concrete and policy oriented (e.g., nuclear proliferation)
   3. Current issues (e.g., international terrorism)
   4. The focus will be on two or three major positions that reflect differences on fundamental questions dividing people on important issues (rather than the full range of positions)
      a. This permits exposure to "coherent and fully developed arguments rather than an endless series of short intellectual snippets."
   5. The "Points of View" sections tries to make the transition from classroom to the "real world" (which is never "simple or tidy")
      a. Can apparently incompatible ideas or policies be reconciled or combined?
      b. Does the "evidence" presented support or undermine the arguments?