



University at Buffalo

PSC 348: Trade Wars and International Trade Law

Spring, 2026 (Number of Course Credits: 3)

TuThu: Cfa 144, 2:00pm-3:20pm

Instructor

Professor Jieun Lee

Email

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Office Location & Hours

503 Park Hall, By appointment

Teaching Assistant

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515 Park Hall, Fridays 10am-12pm

Course Description

This course will take an interdisciplinary approach toward understanding current trade wars and the world trading system drawing on studies of economics, political science, and international trade law. You will learn what international trade policy is about, why it becomes politicized, and how trade policies are formulated in the U.S. and China and used against one another. Another important component of this course is to study how current trade policies are governed by international agreements and laws. Along the way, we will explore current trade trends and how they affect consumers, workers, firms, and industries in the U.S. and other countries. You will also learn about domestic and international trade institutions more generally, and trade-related topics on the environment, labor, intellectual property, and more.

Learning Outcomes

Students will develop a broad understanding of current trade controversies and apply theoretical and analytical tools to examine real world cases.

| Outcome | Method of Assessment |
|--|---|
| Demonstrate an understanding of the economic, political, legal background of the current U.S. trade war with China | Student presentation, weekly discussion and assessment. |
| Demonstrate proficiency in interpreting graphs, charts, and tables relating to international trade relations | Student presentation, weekly discussion and assessment. |
| Identify the ways in which international trade has been politicized and misconceptualized | Student presentation, weekly discussion and assessment. |
| Analyze how trade-related measures are governed under international trade agreements and WTO principles | Student presentation, weekly discussion and assessment. |
| Analyze major trade disputes under the WTO | Student presentation, weekly discussion and assessment. |

Texts & Materials

Students with a serious interest in the topics are encouraged to refer to the following reading materials which will not be fully covered in class:

- Bown, Chad P. 2018. "Trump's Trade War Timeline: An Up-to-Date Guide." Peterson Institute for International Economics. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/trade-and-investment-policy-watch/2018/trumps-trade-war-timeline-date-guide>
- Barton, John H., Goldstein, Judith L., Josling, Timothy E., & Steinberg, Richard H., 2008. *The Evolution of the Trade Regime: Politics, Law, and Economics of the GATT and the WTO*. Princeton University Press. Book available online via University Libraries.
- Pauwelyn, Joost, Andrew T. Guzman, and Jennifer A. Hillman. *International Trade Law*. 4th ed. Wolters Kluwer, 2022.

Students are also advised to regularly stay current with developments in international trade. Useful sources include the Financial Times, The Economist, the Council on Foreign Relations, CRS reports, and the World Trade Organization website (<http://www.wto.org>).

Course Requirements

The final course grade will be determined based on a mixture of written assignments, group discussions, and class participation.

1. **Group case study (30%)**: You will be responsible for leading one seminar-type discussion during the course of the semester. For this, you will create **PowerPoint slides** of the following content: **1) a brief summary** of the assigned week's class materials, **2) an in-depth case study** of a real-world example that reinforces the assigned week's lessons, and **3) a few discussion questions** to be answered by the class (for their participation points). Your presentation grade will be determined by the class (20 points), your groupmates (5 points), and the instructor (5 points). Presenters of the week must have their presentation idea approved in advance and send me their draft slides via email by **Monday 11:55pm** of the presenting week. I will provide feedback on your draft, which I expect you to incorporate into your final slides. You will also upload your final slides to 'Group Presentation' in **UBLearns** by **Wednesday 11:55pm** of the presenting week. Please note that non-participation in the group case study (as reported by peers) will negatively affect your individual grade. Complete nonparticipation will result in zero points for this assessment.
2. **Weekly virtual assessments (25%)**: Each Friday morning, I will post the weekly assessment under 'Weekly Course Materials' in **UBLearns**. Each weekly assessment has a total of 25 points. 10 points are earned by evaluating the quality of that week's group presentation and discussion. Another 15 points are earned by answering some questions assessing your understanding of the course material covered during lecture that week. **Responses must be submitted by 11:55pm on Saturday**. Late submissions are not acceptable unless excused by the instructor ahead of time. No submission will result in zero points for that week.
3. **Attendance and participation (15%)**: Students are expected to attend and actively participate in class discussions.

4. **Final paper (30%):** There will be a single final paper that is due on **May 11 at 11:55pm**. Details about the assignment will be announced later in the semester. Late submissions will be penalized by 1 point per day.

Course Schedule

Note that I reserve the right to change the following schedule (e.g., contents, due dates for assignments) in order to accommodate student learning or other unforeseeable events. Announcements will be made if changes become necessary.

| Week | Topic | Assignments | Deadline |
|--------|---|---|----------------------------|
| Week 1 | Course introduction and group assignment for weekly presentations | Group sign-up | TBD |
| Week 2 | Intro to international trade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definitions - World trade trends - Benefits and costs of trade - Policies that promote and discourage trade | Virtual assessment on Week 2 lecture and group presentation | Jan 31, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 3 | Politicized international trade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - America's view on international trade - Understanding trade deficit - Trump trade policies | Virtual assessment on Week 3 lecture and group presentation | Feb 7, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 4 | U.S. trade features and policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Domestic institutions of trade - U.S. policies in support of trade - U.S. policies under Trump | Virtual assessment on Week 4 lecture and group presentation | Feb 14, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 5 | The rise of China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economy, trade, technology, R&D, military, etc. | Virtual assessment on Week 5 lecture and group presentation | Feb 21, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 6 | China trade features and policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Domestic institutions of trade - Trade policies of China - Xi administration and trade | Virtual assessment on Week 6 lecture and group presentation | Feb 28, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 7 | U.S.-China trade war I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - China shock - Trump China tariffs - Post-Phase One Deal | Virtual assessment on Week 7 lecture and group presentation | March 7, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 8 | U.S.-China trade war II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pandemic and the trade war - U.S. producers' reaction - Other domains of the trade war | Virtual assessment on Week 8 lecture and group presentation | March 14, Saturday 11:55pm |

| Week | Topic | Assignments | Deadline |
|---------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Week 9 | Spring Recess | No assignment | No assignment |
| Week 10 | Intro to international trade institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why we need them - Emergence of the GATT/WTO - Evolution and impact | Virtual assessment on Week 10 lecture and group presentation | March 28, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 11 | WTO laws and dispute settlement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WTO laws - WTO administered protection - Dispute settlement mechanism | Virtual assessment on Week 11 lecture and group presentation | April 4, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 12 | U.S., China, and the WTO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - China's accession - Key statistics - Trump and the WTO | Virtual assessment on Week 12 lecture and group presentation | April 11, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 13 | No Class | No assignment | No assignment |
| Week 14 | Intellectual property rights (IPR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definitions - Importance to the U.S. and China | Virtual assessment on Week 14 lecture and group presentation | April 25, Saturday 11:55pm |
| Week 15 | International laws on IP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WTO TRIPS Current issues | Virtual assessment on Week 15 lecture and group presentation | May 2, Saturday 11:55pm |

Grading Chart

| Letter Grade | Points | Letter Grade | Points | Letter Grade | Points |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| A | 93-100 points | B- | 80-82 points | D+ | 65-69 points |
| A- | 90-92 points | C+ | 77-79 points | D | 60-64 points |
| B+ | 87-89 points | C | 73-76 points | F | < 60 points |
| B | 83-86 points | C- | 70-72 points | | |

Course Policies and Campus Resources

Course Website

The website for this course is on [UBLeans](#). I will be posting class announcements, materials, and required readings on the website. Student assignments are also to be submitted through

UBLearns. If you have any trouble accessing UBLearns or any of the course materials, please let me know right away.

Emails

Including the course number in the subject line (e.g., “PS 348 Question about group presentation”) helps me respond more quickly.

Academic Integrity

I take academic integrity very seriously. Cheating, plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cite others’ work appropriately and do not submit others’ work as your own. Students must be familiar with and abide by the university’s policies and procedures on Academic Integrity, available at the following link: Academic Integrity <https://catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/integrity.html>.

Use of AI Tools

All work submitted for this course must be your own. Any use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT or Grammarly) is prohibited in this class and will be considered a violation of UB’s academic integrity policy. Details of what resources are allowed will be provided for each assignment. If you are unsure if a resource or tool is allowable, be sure to ask.

Protecting Course Materials Disclaimer

All materials prepared and/or assigned by me for this course are for the student’s educational benefit. Other than for permitted collaborative work, students may not photograph, record, reproduce, transmit, distribute, upload, sell or exchange course materials, without my prior written permission. Course materials include, but are not limited to, all instructor-prepared and assigned materials, such as lecture notes, presentation materials, tests and assignments. Public distribution of such material may also constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law. Violation of this policy may additionally subject a student to a finding of “academic dishonesty” under the Academic Integrity Policy and/or disciplinary charges under the Student Code of Conduct.

Grade Disclosure

All personal information concerning students’ performance in this course is governed by federal privacy legislation, known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). No grades or status information can be provided to students by phone or email. All grades will be posted on UBLearns.

Accessibility Resources

If you have any disability which requires reasonable accommodations to enable you to participate in this course, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources in 60 Capen Hall, 716-645-2608 and also the instructor of this course during the first two weeks of class. Information about reasonable accommodations can be found at: <http://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/accessibility.html>.

Sexual Violence

UB is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and stalking. If you have experienced gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), UB has resources to help. This includes academic accommodations, health and counseling services, housing accommodations,

helping with legal protective orders, and assistance with reporting the incident to police or other UB officials if you so choose. Please contact UB's Title IX Coordinator at 716-645-2266 for more information. For confidential assistance, you may also contact a Crisis Services Campus Advocate at 716-796-4399.

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. These might include strained relationships, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, health concerns, or unwanted sexual experiences. Counseling, Health Services, and Health Promotion are here to help with these or other issues you may experience. You can learn more about these programs and services by contacting:

Counseling Services:

120 Richmond Quad (North Campus), 716-645-2720
1st floor Michael Hall (South Campus), 716-829-5800

Health Services:

4350 Maple Road (near Sweet Home Rd.), 716-829-3316

Health Promotion:

114 Student Union (North Campus), 716-645-2837