

POLI 144E: The Politics of International Trade

Instructor: Eric Thai

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Course page: <https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/67586>

Class: Tuesday and Thursday, 5:00 – 7:50 am, Zoom

Zoom Link: <https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/98172982476>

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 4 – 5 pm, sign-up on Calendly for Zoom link

Calendly Link: <https://calendly.com/ethai/officehours>

Course Description and Objectives

This course is far from conventional. Not only will it provide students with the theoretical and empirical foundations to fully grasp the economics and politics of international trade, but it will also equip them with the skills and information to apply this knowledge in practice. As students majoring in political science, you may consider a career in Think Tanks or Policy Institutes in which writing advocacy memos is a skill one must learn to master; yet, very few courses at UC San Diego offer such opportunities to write actionable and persuasive memos to affect policy. Hence, students will conduct research on their chosen industry in the US that is affected by President Trump's tariffs (i.e., any of the traded sectors from Week 1 to 3 on specific elements relevant to the week's course material. These research memos culminate as evidence in writing a advocacy memo, in which the student will act as an industry representative advocating for a policy change or maintenance in relation to President Trump's 2025 tariffs to a Congressional member of their choice. Finally, students will take on the role of a congressional member advocating for a policy that considers not only the information from the advocacy memo but also their district's characteristics.

Class Requirements

- Attendance and Participation
 - Attend 10 class sessions (5%)
 - Participate at least once in each session (5%)
- Industry Profile Research (Homework)
 - Three 3-5 page memo of a US industry (traded sector) of your choosing. Graded on completion. Opportunity for instructor to provide feedback. Directly contribute to your Advocacy Memo (30%)
- Industry Advocacy Memo to Congressional Representative
 - 10-page persuasive memo written as an industry representative to a Congressional representative of your choosing. The goal is to provide reasons as to why Congress should or should not pass a bill preventing the *Reciprocal Tariffs* from being implemented. (30%)
- Congressional Debate on "*Big Beautiful Trade Act*"
 - Industry representative testimonial speech – 5 minute (10%)
 - Congressional debate speech – 5 minute (10%)
 - Big Beautiful Trade Act (10%)

Grading Scale:

98-100 = A+	84-86.9 = B	70-73.9 = C-
93-97.9 = A	80-83.9 = B-	60-69.9 = D
90-92.9 = A-	77-79.9 = C+	0-59.9 = F
87-89.9 = B+	74-76.9 = C	70-100 = Pass if taking Pass/Fail

Class Policies:**Attendance:**

Attendance and participation will be graded.

I reserve the right to provide upward to 2% extra credit at a random point during the quarter to everyone who attends.

This class will involve frequent discussions both in large and small groups. Respect for your fellow classmates is required. Disagreement is natural, and debate is encouraged, but students must be respectful of one another.

Participation

Evidence-based research on teaching and learning has documented a strong causal relationship between active participation/discussion and student learning. I design my lectures to have intermittent active engagement and discussions to allow students time to engage with lecture materials. I strongly encourage you to come to class prepared to contribute to these discussions

Email Policy

Please email me at ethai@ucsd.edu (preferably *not* through the Canvas message function). If it is a class logistics question, please consult with the syllabus before emailing me.

Please allow me 24 business hours to respond (excluding the weekends). If it is urgent, please include "[URGENT]" in your subject line.

Late Assignment:

Assignments are due at the date and time indicated on the assignment on Canvas. Late assignments turned in within 24 hours of the due date will be penalized with minus 5%. Late assignments turned in 24-48 hours after the due date will be penalized with minus 10%. Please contact me if an assignment is later than 48 hours after the due date.

Inclusive Classroom

I am committed to creating a learning environment that supports the diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identity. I urge all of you to contribute your unique perspective to discussions so we can all learn from each other. If you ever feel excluded or unable to fully

participate in class, please let me know. I also ask that everyone abide by [UCSD's Principles of Community](#) and [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Academic Integrity

As per UCSD's Academic Integrity Policy, any form of [cheating](#) is not tolerated. This includes, but not limited to, looking up answer during exam and copying the work or answers of others for any assignments.

Writing Assistance

UCSD offers multiple opportunities for feedback on your writing and assistance outside of this course. You can find more information about the UCSD Writing Center and the OASIS Language and Writing Program for English as a second language students [here](#).

Disability Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#). Students are required to discuss accommodation arrangements with instructors and OSD liaisons in the department well in advance of any exams or assignments. Please contact the Department of Political Science OSD Liaison if you have any disability needs; please connect with staff via the [Virtual Advising Center](#) as soon as possible.

Recommendations

I am happy to write recommendation letters for students who regularly contribute to class discussions and attend office hours. Given the size of the class and the fact that Teaching Assistants do the grading of assignments, it is difficult for me to write recommendations for those who I do not get to know during class, so please participate in class and attend office hours if you think you might want to ask for a recommendation letter in the future.

Week 1

ECONOMICS AND HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Class 1, July 1: Economics Foundations to International Trade

- **Before Class:**
 - Skim World Politics Ch.7 (International Trade) [On Canvas]
 - Watch [Crash Course on International Trade](#)
 - Watch [Basics of Comparative Advantage](#)
 - Watch [Basics of Free Trade](#)
 - Read p.106-116 of Bernard, Andrew B, J Bradford Jensen, Stephen J Redding, and Peter K Schott. 2007. "[Firms in International Trade.](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21(3): 105–30.

Class 2, July 3: History of Globalization & US Manufacturing

- **Before Class:**
 - Read [Brief History of International Trade Policy](#)
 - Read [Brief History of Globalization](#)
 - [Baier and Standaert \(2020\) Gravity Models and Empirical Trade](#)
 - Fort, Teresa C., Justin R. Pierce, and Peter K. Schott. 2018. “[New Perspectives on the Decline of US Manufacturing Employment.](#)” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 32(2): 47–72.
 - Handley 2024’s [What happened to U.S. manufacturing? The evidence on technology, trade, and structural change](#)

Homework 1:

- Direction: Pick one US industry and conduct research based on materials discussed in this week’s lecture.
- 3-5 page memo. Deadline Sunday 7/6/25 11:59 PM
- Graded on completion (1 or 0) 10% of final grade.

Week 2

DOMESTIC POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Class 3, July 8: Political Economy Theories & Lobbying

- **Before Class:**
 - Read p306-312 World Politics Ch.7 (International Trade) [On Canvas]
 - Baldwin, Robert E., and Christopher S. Magee. 2000. “Is Trade Policy for Sale? Congressional Voting on Recent Trade Bills.” *Public Choice* 105(1): 79–101. doi:[10.1023/A:1005121716315](#).
 - Blanga-Gubbay, Michael, Paola Conconi, and Mathieu Parenti. 2023. “[Lobbying for Globalization.](#)” *Unpublished Manuscript*.
 - Bombardini, Matilde, and Francesco Trebbi. 2012. “Competition and Political Organization: Together or Alone in Lobbying for Trade Policy?” *Journal of International Economics* 87(1): 18–26. doi:[10.1016/j.jinteco.2011.11.011](#).
 - Kim, In Song. 2017. “Political Cleavages within Industry: Firm-Level Lobbying for Trade Liberalization.” *American Political Science Review* 111(1): 1–20. doi:[10.1017/S0003055416000654](#).
 - Alt, James E, and Michael Gilligan. 1994. “The Political Economy of Trading States: Factor Specificity, Collective Action Problems and Domestic Political Institutions.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* (2): 165–92.
- **Databases**
 - Kim, In Song. 2018. “[LobbyView](#): Firm-Level Lobbying & Congressional Bills Database.” <https://web.mit.edu/insong/www/pdf/lobbyview.pdf>.

Class 4, July 10: Domestic Trade Institutions

- **Before Class:**

- Bailey, Michael A, Judith Goldstein, and Barry R Weingast. 1997. "The Institutional Roots of American Trade Policy: Politics, Coalitions, and International Trade." *World Politics* 49(3): 309–38.
- Goldstein, Judith, and Robert Gulotty. 2014. "America and Trade Liberalization: The Limits of Institutional Reform." *International Organization* 68(2): 263–95.
- Read Section 5: Domestic Consensus-Building Institutions of Bowen, T. Renee, and J. Lawrence Broz. 2022. "The Domestic Political Economy of the WTO Crisis: Lessons for Preserving Multilateralism." *Global Perspectives* 3(1): 55655. doi:[10.1525/gp.2022.55655](https://doi.org/10.1525/gp.2022.55655).

Homework 2:

- Direction: Continuing with your chosen industry from Homework 1, conduct research on domestic political elements of the industry, including but not limited to lobbying, its political representation, the likely winners and losers of freer trade, geographic concentration of industries
- 3-5 page memo. Deadline Sunday 7/13/25 11:59 PM
- Graded on completion (1 or 0) 10% of final grade.

-----**Week 3**-----

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Class 5, July 15: Introduction to International Law and Trade Agreements

- **Before Class:**

- Staiger, Robert. 1994. *A Theory of Gradual Trade Liberalization*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. doi:[10.3386/w4620](https://doi.org/10.3386/w4620).
- Chisik, Richard. 2003. "Gradualism in Free Trade Agreements: A Theoretical Justification." *Journal of International Economics* 59(2): 367–97. doi:[10.1016/S0022-1996\(02\)00019-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-1996(02)00019-3).
- Gilligan, Michael J. 1997. *Empowering Exporters*. University of Michigan Press. doi:[10.3998/mpub.14901](https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.14901).
- Bagwell, Kyle, and Robert W Staiger. 1999. "An Economic Theory of GATT." *American Economic Review* 89(1): 215–48.
- Rosendorff, B Peter, and Helen V Milner. 2001. "The Optimal Design of International Trade Institutions: Uncertainty and Escape." *International Organization* 55: 829–57.
- Bagwell, Kyle, Robert W. Staiger, and Ali Yurukoglu. 2020. "Multilateral Trade Bargaining: A First Look at the GATT Bargaining Records." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12(3): 72–105. doi:[10.1257/app.20170574](https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20170574).

Class 6, July 17: Free Trade Agreements & Labor Rights

- **Before Class:**

- Baccini, Leonardo. 2019. “The Economics and Politics of Preferential Trade Agreements.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 20.
- Rodrik, Dani. 2018. “What Do Trade Agreements Really Do?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 32(2): 73–90. doi:[10.1257/jep.32.2.73](https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.32.2.73).
- Peacock, Claire, Karolina Milewicz, and Duncan Snidal. 2019. “Boilerplate in International Trade Agreements.” *International Studies Quarterly* 63(4): 923–37. doi:[10.1093/isq/sqz069](https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqz069).
- Baier, Scott L., and Jeffrey H. Bergstrand. 2007. “Do Free Trade Agreements Actually Increase Members’ International Trade?” *Journal of International Economics* 71(1): 72–95. doi:[10.1016/j.jinteco.2006.02.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2006.02.005).
- Hafner-Burton, Emilie M. 2005. “Trading Human Rights: How Preferential Trade Agreements Influence Government Repression.” *International Organization* 59(3): 593–629.
- Hafner-Burton, Emilie M, Layna Mosley, and Robert Galantucci. 2019. “Protecting Workers Abroad and Industries at Home: Rights-Based Conditionality in Trade Preference Programs.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63(5): 1253–82.
- Paiement, Phillip. 2018. “Leveraging Trade Agreements for Labor Law Enforcement: Drawing Lessons from the US-Guatemala CAFTA Dispute.” *Georgetown Journal of International Law* 49(2): 675–92.
- Read [Congressional Research Service Report on USMCA: Labor Provisions](#)

Homework 3:

- Direction: Continuing with your chosen industry from previous Homework assignments, conduct research on international related to the industry, including but not limited to existing international agreements that have benefited the industry (FTAs, BITs), the industry’s biggest export market.
- 3-5 page memo. Deadline Sunday 7/20/25 11:59 PM
- Graded on completion (1 or 0) 10% of final grade.

-----Week 4-----

DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Class 7, July 22: Economic Consequences of Import Competition & Trade Policies

- **Before Class:**
 - Pierce, Justin R., and Peter K. Schott. 2016. “[The Surprisingly Swift Decline of US Manufacturing Employment](#).” *American Economic Review* 106(7): 1632–62.
 - Autor, David H, David Dorn, and Gordon H Hanson. 2013a. “The China Syndrome: Local Labor Market Effects of Import Competition in the United States.” *American Economic Review* 103(6): 2121–68. doi:[10.1257/aer.103.6.2121](https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.103.6.2121).

- Autor, David H, David Dorn, and Gordon H Hanson. 2013b. “The Geography of Trade and Technology Shocks in the United States.” *American Economic Review* 103(3): 220–25. doi:[10.1257/aer.103.3.220](https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.103.3.220).
- Pierce, Justin R., and Peter K. Schott. 2020. “Trade Liberalization and Mortality: Evidence from US Counties.” *American Economic Review: Insights* 2(1): 47–63. doi:[10.1257/aeri.20180396](https://doi.org/10.1257/aeri.20180396).
- Fajgelbaum, Pablo D., and Amit K. Khandelwal. 2022. “The Economic Impacts of the US–China Trade War.” *Annual Review of Economics* 14(1): 205–28. doi:[10.1146/annurev-economics-051420-110410](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-051420-110410).
- Autor, David, Anne Beck, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson. 2023. “Help for the Heartland? The Employment and Electoral Effects of the Trump Tariffs in the United States.” *Unpublished Manuscript*. <http://www.ddorn.net/papers/ABDH-Heartland.pdf> (June 10, 2023).

Class 8, July 24: Political Consequences of Import Competition

• Before Class:

- Margalit, Yotam. 2011. “Costly Jobs: Trade-Related Layoffs, Government Compensation, and Voting in US Elections.” *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 166–88.
- Autor, David, David Dorn, Gordon Hanson, and Kaveh Majlesi. 2020. “Importing Political Polarization? The Electoral Consequences of Rising Trade Exposure.” *American Economic Review*: 1–69.
- Autor, David, David Dorn, Gordon Hanson, and Kaveh Majlesi. 2017. “A Note on the Effect of Rising Trade Exposure on the 2016 Presidential Election.” *Appendix to “Importing Political Polarization”*.
- Margalit, Yotam. 2019. “Economic Insecurity and the Causes of Populism, Reconsidered.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33(4): 152–70. doi:[10.1257/jep.33.4.152](https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.4.152).
- Ritchie, Melinda N., and Hye Young You. 2021. “Trump and Trade: Protectionist Politics and Redistributive Policy.” *The Journal of Politics* 83(2): 800–805. doi:[10.1086/710322](https://doi.org/10.1086/710322).
- Che, Yi, Yi Lu, Justin R Pierce, Peter K Schott, and Zhigang Tao. 2016. “Does Trade Liberalization with China Influence US Elections?” *NBER Working Paper No. 22178*.
- Blanchard, Emily, Chad Bown, and Davin Chor. 2019. *Did Trump’s Trade War Impact the 2018 Election?* Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. doi:[10.3386/w26434](https://doi.org/10.3386/w26434).
- Kim, Sung Eun, and Yotam Margalit. 2021. “Tariffs As Electoral Weapons: The Political Geography of the US–China Trade War.” *International Organization* 75(1): 1–38. doi:[10.1017/S0020818320000612](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000612).

Advocacy Memo:

- Direction: Utilizing materials from Homework 1-3, compose an advocacy memo written as an industry representative to persuade a Congressional member on President Trump's 2025 Tariff Policies (of your choice).
- 10-page memo, double-spaced 12pt font. Deadline Sunday 7/27/25 11:59 PM
- Graded on persuasiveness and utilization of prior research. Rubric will be provided. 30% of final grade.

Assignment: Prepare a 5-minute speech as Industry Representative

- Direction: Acting as the industry representative from your **Advocacy Memo** assignment, prepare a 5-minute speech as if you're presenting a testimony to Congressional Committee on Ways and Means regarding President Trump's tariff policies.
- Graded on completion. 10% of final grade.
- Deadline: Before Class 9

-----*Week 5*-----

Class 9, July 29: Congressional Session: Committee Session

- **In Class Activity: Industry representative testimonies**

Assignment: Prepare a 5-minute speech as a Congressional Member

- Direction: I will randomly assign a classmate's Advocacy Memo to you. You will act as the Representative addressed in the memo. Prepare a 5-minute speech in an attempt to convince your fellow Congressional members to take the same stance as you.
- Graded on completion. 10% of final grade.
- Deadline: Before Class 10
- **Resources:**
 - <https://www.census.gov/mycd/>

Class 10, July 30: Congressional Session: Floor Debate

- **In Class Activity: Congressional Debate**

Assignment: One Big Beautiful Trade Act

- Direction: Based on the debated material, collaborate with other Congressional members to craft a bill that would satisfy everyone. More direction forthcoming on Canvas.
- Access Shared Google Doc [HERE](#)
- Graded on Completion: 10% of final grade
- Deadline: Sunday 8/3/25 11:59 PM