



2025 Academic WorldQuest Study Guide Topics and Descriptions

Academic WorldQuest inspires a culture of global engagement
in schools across the United States

The United States and Foreign Languages - U.S. language education policy is focused on helping students improve their communication skills, understand different cultures, and be better prepared for a globalized world. In the past, schools mainly taught major languages like Spanish, German, and French. Now there is more encouragement for learning a wider variety of languages to meet global needs. Recent policies highlight the importance of learning languages at a young age, using technology in language learning, and supporting bilingual education to help students succeed in a multilingual, connected world.

Space and National Security - Space is now an important part of U.S. national security. As technology improves, there is more focus on protecting space-related assets from threats like cyber attacks, space debris, and hostile actions from other countries. The creation of the U.S. Space Force in 2019 showed America's commitment to keeping space safe as a key part of its national security. The goal is not only to protect space infrastructure but also to develop the ability to maintain the U.S.'s advantages in this growing area.

Nontraditional Approaches to Foreign Policy - More and more political thinkers are studying ways to create policies that promote fairness by focusing on the needs and voices of marginalized groups. This includes making sure diverse perspectives are part of foreign policy decisions, understanding how different forms of discrimination and inequality are connected, and focusing on human well-being instead of just national security. These ideas have led to new approaches in diplomacy, development, and conflict resolution. However, there has also been criticism about how hard it is to turn these big ideas into real, effective policies.

Music and Globalization - Music has been a big part of globalization by going beyond cultural and national borders, allowing people from different backgrounds to connect and share ideas. Streaming platforms, social media, and digital downloads make it easier than ever for music to reach listeners all over the world. Music can also be a strong way to inspire social change and political expression, bringing up global issues, challenging cultural expectations, and starting important conversations. Globalization through music not only celebrates cultural diversity but also helps bring different cultures together, creating a more connected world.

Indigenous Peacebuilding (USIP Sponsorship) - Around the world, Indigenous peoples often live in contested border areas on the front lines of violent conflict, insurgency and organized crime. And with limited employment opportunities, Indigenous peoples are disproportionately recruited into armed groups. Meanwhile, traffickers and criminals target their lands for natural resources, ranging from violence from extractive industries operating illegally to the poaching of protected species and land theft. Yet despite these many risks and obstacles, Indigenous communities have consistently drawn on their traditions, culture and religious practices to resolve violence and build local peace. While often highly successful, these efforts are underappreciated by the peacebuilding community or ignored entirely in formal peace processes.

Critical Minerals in Africa (USIP Sponsorship) - The United States is seeking to diversify its critical minerals supply chains to strengthen its economic and national security. Meanwhile, many African countries are aiming to develop critical mineral industries, taking economic advantage of the growing demand for their natural resources. The mining sector in Africa presents many challenges, however, including the potential for environmental destruction, labor abuses and even violent conflict due to weak governance. USIP experts are focusing on how the U.S. and its allies can better forge mutually beneficial critical mineral partnerships with African governments in the face of competition with China, which has been growing its presence on the African continent for decades.

Borders and Boundaries - When international borders don't line up with cultural boundaries, it can cause problems with identity, government, economics, social unity, and human rights. Some of the effects include people feeling out of place, political and administrative difficulties, economic inequality, and social tensions or conflicts. Solving these problems requires careful approaches that take both the political and cultural sides of the affected areas into account.

Mexico: 2025 Focus Country - The relationship between the U.S. and Mexico is influenced by both political and cultural factors. Important political issues include trade, immigration, and security, while cultural aspects like shared history, cross-border communities, and cultural exchange also play a big role. As both countries held Presidential elections in 2024, their foreign and domestic policies continue to be closely connected, affecting not only regional stability but also global interests.

Additional resources from the Embassy of Mexico are forthcoming and will be accessible no later than December 2024.

Great Decisions (2025) - Great Decisions is an annual program for informed civic discussion on critical international issues facilitated by the Foreign Policy Association (FPA), a member of the World Affairs Councils of America. Since 2024, we have chosen two topic areas from the eight yearly themes to include in Academic WorldQuest. **FPA has not yet made the text of these articles available, but once released, they will be added to the topic descriptions below.**

The Future of NATO and European Security - European security is more uncertain than it has been for decades. Putin's Russia has launched a war with Ukraine on its doorstep, and America's role as leader of NATO and security provider has been called into question with the failure of Congress to pass supplemental military support for Ukraine. What are Europe's options, and how might developments on both sides of Western Europe – in Ukraine and across the Atlantic – impact its choices? What are America's stakes in NATO and Europe's strategic dilemmas?

AI and American National Security - The AI revolution is the leading edge of a larger high-tech revolution which promises to transform the world. Experts argue that international cooperation is needed to expand the opportunities these new technologies hold while protecting societies from their dangers. What are the key policy debates in this area, and what are the opportunities and limits on global AI rules of the road? How will the AI revolution impact American national security? What are its policy options to secure the benefits of AI and guard against its dangers?

Current Events - This yearly dive into the world of current events is meant to test your knowledge of what's happening around the globe and to help you spot larger trends in these events. The sources and questions are chosen to expose you to different perspectives and news outlets, helping you think more critically about the information you come across. Understanding current events allows you to make informed choices, join in on important discussions as young leaders, and decide how to contribute to your community.

Questions for this round will be sourced from several media outlets and aggregators and encompass news items that appear from January – March 2025. The full list of resources to consult will appear in the Study Guide no later than December 2024, but two enrichment resources from the Council on Foreign Relations will be useful preparation now:

Council on Foreign Relations | [Global Conflict Tracker](#)

Council on Foreign Relations | [Sign up for the CFR Education newsletter](#)

Source: *World Affairs Councils of America, Global Education. October 8, 2024.*



The Indiana Council on World Affairs' Academic WorldQuest is February 22, 2025, at the University of Indianapolis. All high schools in Indiana are eligible, free-of-charge. Registration is open: www.IndianaWorld.org/academic-world-quest