POLI 4040
Foreign Policy Decision Making
Fall 2009

Mark Schafer
235 Stubbs
578-2531
Office Hours: MWF 1:15 to 2:15 and by appointment

Course Overview

In this class our focus is not so much on specific foreign policies or the patterns of policies in one country (such as a course on American Foreign Policy). Instead, our focus is on the process of foreign policy decision making (FPDM). In this class we want to understand how policies get made. Inherent in this topic is the question of how the process of decision making might be improved.

Anyone who has ever discussed international relations and foreign policy can tell you that some decisions or outcomes are poor and others are excellent. Likewise, when we stop and think about it, we can assume that sometimes the processes leading to decisions can be better or worse. We cannot assume -- and history strongly supports this -- that a leader always follows a thorough and rational decision-making process that leads to the best policy. Given this, our task is to look at the process, understand weaknesses and limitations of decision making, and look for both positive and negative patterns.

Why is it appropriate to study the process? Because the stakes in the process are incredibly high. States make such foreign policies as sending aid, initiating embargoes or boycotts, increasing or decreasing trade, developing new weapons systems, making or breaking alliances, starting war, and making peace. Quite often foreign policies deal with matters of life and death and can fundamentally alter the course and structure of global relations. We need to ask about such things as: what factors matter in the process; when do they matter and why; are there ways to improve the process of making foreign policy.

There are several parts of this course that factor into your learning the material and my evaluation of your work. Three areas in particular are central to the organization and structure of this course. The first area is learning the material theoretically and empirically through readings and lectures. The second area is experiential learning through doing. A major part of this class will be participation in a simulated foreign policy decision-making process throughout the semester. The third area is application of the material; you will choose a foreign policy decision from history and write a formal research paper on that case in which you apply the material you have learned in the rest of the class. By the end of the semester you will have studied the material, participated in the process of foreign policy decision making, and applied the material to an important historical example.

As with all my classes, we will focus part of our attention on current events in international politics. Students are required to read daily editions of the New York Times online. This is a free
service and can be found at www.nyt.com. This will give us real-time applications of the theoretical and empirical material we are covering in the rest of the class.

**Required Readings**


**Course Objectives**

There are two broad sets of objectives for this class. The first is for you to gain knowledge about international relations in general and foreign policy decision-making processes in particular. The second objective is for you to further develop your academic skills in several areas: reading, writing, speaking, and thinking critically.

**Course Requirements**

Midterm....................................................................................................................25%
Term Paper..............................................................................................................20%
Simulation Activities............................................................................................10%
Miscellaneous assignments and quizzes ..........................................................10%
Class Participation...............................................................................................10%
Final Exam...........................................................................................................25%

**Course Calendar**

Weeks of August 24 and August 31: Read the Forward and Hudson’s chapter (pp. 1-20) in *FPDM*.

Week of September 9: Read pp. 21-51 in *FPDM*.

Week of September 14: Read pp. 52-75 in *FPDM*.

Week of September 21: Read pp. 76-89 in *FPDM*.

Weeks of September 28 and October 6: Read pp. 90-144 *FPDM*.

Week of October 12: Read Chollet and Goldgeier (pp. 153-176) in *FPDM*.

**Midterm – Friday October 16**
[NOTE: There are no new readings from October 19 through November 6. This time will be used for lecture materials, simulation activities, and your own work on your research papers.]

Week of November 9: Read pp. v. to 40 in Presidential Judgment.

Weeks of November 16 and 23: Read pages 41 to 88 in Presidential Judgment.

**Term Paper due at the start of class Wednesday November 25**

Week of November 30: Read pages 89 to 115 in Presidential Judgment.

**Final Exam – Tuesday December 8, 5:30**

Policies

I welcome and encourage questions, comments and discussion either in or out of the classroom. I love teaching and I love what I teach, so remember my door is open!

Any papers or assignments must be turned in on or before the due date. Emailed papers will not be accepted unless previously arranged with me due to dire circumstances. Exams and quizzes may not be rescheduled or postponed. Exceptions will be allowed only under extreme, documented circumstances; under such circumstances, you are required to notify me (or, if I am not available, the Department of Political Science) prior to the date or as soon as possible if prior notice is impossible.

Late papers are generally not accepted. If I accept a late paper because of circumstances, I will deduct 10% from the paper grade for every day it is late, up to a maximum of 75% deduction.

According to the Dean of Students, cell phones, pagers and other such things going off in class are a violation of PS29 (the University policy that regulates conduct in the classroom), and therefore are not permitted in class.