POLI 4043: American Foreign Policy
Fall 2010

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Required Texts


*You will also be expected to read the major newspaper of your choice (Washington Post, New York Times, etc.) in order to keep up with current events in American Foreign Policy. I have also provided links to required online articles.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide you with the analytical and critical tools necessary to evaluate American foreign policy. While part of the course involves examining the historical record, our main objective is to underline the persistent issues in foreign policy. Should the U.S. serve as “policeman” for the world? What are the implications of doing so? Is a return to isolationism possible? Desirable? What are the domestic constraints to U.S. foreign policy? How does the structure of the international system affect foreign policy? These are the fundamental questions that we will explore throughout the semester. The goal is for you to gain an understanding of how American foreign policy is constructed and carried out.

Course Requirements

This course will require a fair amount of reading. While the lectures will be designed to cover the main points, we simply will not have time to cover everything that was assigned in the readings. Attendance is mandatory and absences will considerably hurt your overall grade. Given the nature of the issues we are covering, I expect to have lively class discussions. However, those discussions will be informed by our course materials so it is imperative that you come to class prepared. The goal is to get you to think critically about these issues. Since this is an upper level course, you will be required to write a term paper (30%). The paper must be 10-12 pages (typed, double-spaced, with 12pt. font and 1 inch margins.) The particular topic will be up to you, but it has to be on an
issue that deals directly with American foreign policy. I must approve the topic and will provide you with more information as the semester progresses. We will also have a midterm (30%) and final (30%). These will consist of a mixture of multiple choice, short answers, and essay questions. The final 10% of your grade will come from class participation/discussion. You will be expected to participate in class discussions and attend class faithfully. Occasionally, you will be required to write a short response paper to questions raised in class. These will be given randomly in class and will count towards your overall participation grade. If you have more than 4 unexcused absences, you will automatically receive a 0 for participation. If you have to miss class due to an emergency, please let me know as soon as possible (and prior to class if possible). For examinations, make ups will be allowed only if you can provide documented evidence of an emergency. For the paper, you will lose one letter grade for each day past the deadline. Coming in late, leaving early, talking during class, reading newspapers, etc. will not be tolerated. Furthermore, computers are only to be used for the purposes of taking notes. This is not the time to surf the internet. Cell phones must be turned off at all times. Please respect your fellow students. If you have to leave early or come in late, let me know ahead of time.

Course Schedule

The dates listed here are tentative. I will give the reading assignments in class and also post them online. Do not rely solely on the syllabus; it is a general guide! It is your responsibility to keep up with the assignments and the best way to do so is through class attendance. You should check Moodle regularly, as any changes in the class schedule will be posted there. As the exams get closer, I will give you more details as to their format and what to expect. I will also set aside some time in class for a brief review session before the midterm and final. If you have any questions throughout the semester, I will be more than happy to try to help you out. Just try to do so as your questions arise (as opposed to waiting until the day before the exam).

August

24-Introduction

Overarching Questions of Foreign Policy

26-Reading Assignment: Melian Dialogue (http://www.wellesley.edu/ClassicalStudies/CLCV102/Thucydides--MelianDialogue.html), Washington’s Farewell Address (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp), and Monroe Doctrine (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/monroe.asp)

Key Questions: the role of power/morality in International Relations, Realism vs. Idealism, Isolationism vs. Internationalism, Foundational Principles of Foreign Policy.

Key Questions: Determining Foreign Policy Goals (4 P’s), Constraints on Foreign Policy, American Power vs. American Influence.

September

2- No Class

7-Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch. 3 and 209-223, Ambrose/Brinkley Intro and Ch. 1
Key Questions: Foreign policy strategy, isolationism vs. internationalism.

American Foreign Policy: World War II and the onset of the Cold War

9-Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 2 and 3
Key Questions: Changes in FP between WWI and WWII, Presidential Power (FDR), Internationalism, Entangling alliances.

14-Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch. 4 and pp.224-240, Ambrose/Brinkley Ch.4
Key Questions: impact of technology (atom bomb) on FP, Eastern European relations, role of the United Nations

16-Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 5 and the Truman Doctrine
(http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp)
Key Questions: impact of the Truman Doctrine, role of economics in FP (Marshall Plan), “domino theory.”

21- Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch.6 and NSC 68
(http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nscc-68.htm)
Key Questions: effectiveness of containment, formation of NATO (entangling alliance), impact of domestic politics (McCarthyism), impact of NSC 68 and the argument for the U.S. to become “world policeman.”

23-Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 7 and Ch. 8
Key Questions: the Korean War/Asian relations, Eisenhower and the rejection of NSC 68, “massive retaliation.”

28-Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 9 and Ch. 10

30- Reading Assignment: “Catch up day,” In class video: “13 Days” (Cuban Missile Crisis)
Vietnam and the End of the Cold War

October

5-Reading Assignment: Ambrose Brinkley Ch. 11, Jentleson Ch. 5 (pp. 128-138)
Key Questions: containment tested, guerilla warfare, role of technology, power vs.
principles (support of dictators), constraints on strategy (fear of Chinese intervention,
public opinion, etc), Israeli-Arab relations

7-Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 12, Finish Jentleson Ch.5 and pp.241-250
Key Questions: “Vietnamization,” Kissinger’s unprecedented influence, “linkage,”
mutually assured destruction (ABM treaty), role of the media, “Vietnam syndrome.”

12-Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 13 and Ch. 14
Key Questions: the rising importance of the Middle East, economic motivations (oil),
protection of Israel, problems in Africa, role of ideals (Carter and human rights) in FP,
Iran-Iraq.

14-Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 15 and Ch. 16, Midterm Review
Key Questions: Reagan and the arms race, “gunboat diplomacy,” use of Contras, hard
line approach to the Soviets (“evil empire”), fall of the Soviet Union.

19-Midterm Exam

21-Fall Holiday

Post Cold War Foreign Policy: Bush and Clinton

26-Paper Topic Due, Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 17
Key Questions: America as sole superpower, impact on U.N., Iraq war as high point in
international cooperation, Operation Desert Storm, Bush’s unprecedented approval
rating, implications of refusal to take Baghdad/lack of support for the Kurds.

28- Reading Assignment: Ambrose/Brinkley Ch. 18
Key Questions: Domestic policy as driving force of 92’ election, elevation of economic
interest as driving force of FP, nuclear dismantlement, global trade policy, challenges in
Somalia and Bosnia.
November

2-Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch.6 and pp.556-567
Key Questions: Overview of FP in 21st century, shifting goals of FP, unilateralism vs. multilateralism, force vs. diplomacy, role of UN, threats from non-state actors (terrorism)

4-Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch. 7 and pp.568-572
Key Questions: Geopolitics, role of major powers, problem of nuclear proliferation, China as emerging super power

9-Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch. 8, pp. 573-581 (Bush Doctrine and responses), Krauthammer’s article on meaning of Bush Doctrine (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/12/AR2008091202457_2.html)
Key Questions: Impact of 9/11 on FP, war on terrorism, 2nd Iraq War, differences from first Gulf War, constraints (global perception, domestic support). Pre-emptive war, re-establishment of black-white/good-evil framework.

11-Reading Assignment: TBA (will be posted online and announced in class)
Key Questions: continuation of previous class

16-Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch. 9 and pp.582-592 (Genocide/Humanitarian Intervention)
Key Questions: When is intervention justifiable? Should the U.S. intervene for purely humanitarian reasons? What are the potential consequences of inaction?

18- Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch. 10 and pp.593-607 (Globalization)
Key Questions: Role of NGO’s, Climate Change, Challenges to State Sovereignty

23- Reading Assignment: Jentleson Ch. 11 and pp.609-625 (Prospects of Democratization)
Key Questions: Democratic Peace? Is Democratization desirable? What are the dangers of democratization?

25- Thanksgiving Holiday

Key Questions: Is there a defined Obama Doctrine? What does it consist of? How does it differ from the Bush Doctrine?

December

2-Exam Review, No New Reading Assignment (catch up day, review of major themes of course)

10- Final Exam 3-5 PM