

Political Science 2300

U.S. Foreign Policy

Autumn 2023

Instructor Information:

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COURSE SUMMARY

This course examines U.S. Foreign Policy – its conduct, sources, architects, and consequences. In particular, we will focus on the **narratives that dominate thinking about politics and policy**. What stories do we have in our heads about how the world works? And how do we apply those stories to political issues? Most importantly, when are such analogies appropriate to make – and when do they lead to misguided and dangerous decisions?

Because understanding policy choices always requires considering **long-term consequences**, we'll explore these questions by looking at both historical US foreign policy, and at the most pressing contemporary challenges facing the United States today: The War on Terror, confrontations with peer competitors like Russia and China, globalization and trade conflicts, climate change, etc. While we will be using historical episodes as a vehicle to examine many enduring foreign policy questions, note that this is not a history course. You don't need to have any background in the subject matter!

Important: This course is certainly about a topic (U.S. foreign policy). But it is, perhaps even more so, a *skills* course. It is designed to teach you **how to engage with difficult policy issues, to tell a good argument from an argument that just sounds good**, and to reflect on your own reasoning strategies. This requires not just that you be attentive to the subject matter, but also that you engage in a degree of introspection. I wouldn't call this course "hard" in the traditional sense (and it certainly isn't like, organic-chemistry-hard!). But it will ask you to think in ways you are probably not used to (about the world, and about your own thought process). This will take effort, can sometimes be uncomfortable, and will *feel* very difficult. But for reasons we will discuss, it is vitally necessary in order to make a serious engagement with political questions.

COURSE GOALS

- Developing an understanding of **how and why** politicians, policy experts, and the general public learned what they did from various episodes of foreign policy history, and how these lessons **shaped future decisions**.
- Building the capacity to use **counterfactual reasoning** to examine difficult policy questions. We will focus on the *causal logic* behind key decisions and outcomes in foreign policy history, and learn how to consider difficult questions of policy in the context of the real world – a context that is often lost in the “sound bites” that tend to dominate most discussions.
- Breaking down the narratives and assumptions we (and others) bring into discussions of foreign policy. This is an inherently personal exercise: You will need to explore what narratives you have about the way the world works, and examine the tendencies in evaluation and judgement that you are most prone to.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

This class will be graded as follows:

20% Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is taken daily (automatically, through Top Hat). The primary source of your participation grade, however, will be the **quality of your discussion** in class, and your participation in classroom activities: Interactive questions or polls (via Top Hat), group discussions, etc.

20% Midterm:

There is only one midterm in this class, which I hope will lessen your workload. The midterm will consist of multiple choice, ID, and short answer questions.

20% Final Exam:

It's like a midterm exam, but later! You're probably familiar with the concept.

20% Foreign Policy Memo

A short (1-2 page) paper assigned toward the end of the course. In the memo, you'll be asked to develop a thoughtful answer to a difficult foreign policy question facing the United States. The focus of this assignment is not on research, but rather on using the tools of causal analysis and counterfactual reasoning that we will build during the

semester. More details will be posted on Carmen during the class.

Note: You will have the chance to write a “practice” memo earlier in the course (which won’t count for many points). This will let you get feedback on what kind of things the assignment is looking for, make sure nobody is surprised by how the grading will work, etc.

20% Reading Quizzes:

Most readings will have 5-question multiple choice quizzes. They will open on carmen at the beginning of the week, and must be completed by the scheduled time of the associated lecture.

These won’t be difficult conceptual tests – their purpose is to ensure you read and engage with what’s assigned. However, the readings in this class are not easy, and one of the skills we’re working on is how to process nuanced pieces that deal with difficult questions. You will need to **read carefully**, and probably learn some different reading habits. I encourage you to meet with me about this.

There is a document of suggested questions for each reading on Carmen. Being able to answer these questions will help you prepare for the quiz.

NOTE: “Reading” in the syllabus means the reading is DUE that day, not homework for the next class. The quiz will be due before the start of the corresponding lecture.

I understand that life happens; as such, **your lowest quiz score will be automatically ignored**. So, you can miss (or, you know, shank) one quiz during the semester without consequences. If you miss a quiz for an excused reason – with proper documentation, per course policy – you won’t lose points, and it won’t count as your free drop.

EXTRA CREDIT QUIZ REPLACEMENT: You also have the opportunity to replace your next-lowest quiz grade (whether you missed it or just didn’t do well) through an extra credit assignment. To do this, you should find an event relevant to foreign policy (for instance, one of the several talks held each semester by the Mershon Center). Clear the event with me first to make sure it counts, and write a single page reflection on what was discussed – and whether you found it convincing. You can do this up to two times.

GRADING IN THIS COURSE

Grading Philosophy: As you have no doubt experienced, conventional college grading is based around **avoiding the deduction of points**. That is, getting an ‘A’ isn’t so much about developing as a thinker and producing good work, as much as it is about producing work that manages not to lose 10% of available points.

This often forces students to (quite rationally!) become preoccupied with ticking all the boxes, making vague but likely defensible statements that avoid staking a position that might be wrong, and numerous other hallmarks of uncreative thinking. I think this is bad! Consequently, grading in this course will work a bit differently.

What does this mean for you? Basically, you should focus on producing good work, and in particular on pushing yourself out of your comfort zone for assignments. In terms of grading, this means that your grade won’t just be a sum of all the points you didn’t lose. So, if you struggle with one part of an assignment, or one topic in the exam, you can potentially *make those points up* by doing very well in another area. You could think of this as a curve, but it’s a curve you earn by doing something well, rather than based on the scores of students who happened to be in the course with you. If you’re confused about exactly what this will mean, don’t worry – we will talk about it during the intro lecture.

Extra Credit: See the note under the “quizzes” section above. You should also consider the system outlined here to essentially operate as one big source of extra credit.

There’s also one more: As a reward for actually reading the syllabus, you should log on to the course’s Carmen page, where you will find an assignment labeled “Test Assignment – Ignore This.” Don’t ignore it! Instead, please enter the name of the last **non-fiction** book you read (*not* for a course – unless you really liked it). Please also include a sentence about what you thought about it. You’ll get .5% extra credit, regardless of what the book was – even if it was a pop-up book. [Honestly, *especially* if it was a pop-up book.]

READINGS AND CLASS SCHEDULE

All readings for the course are available on Carmen. There are no books to buy; college is expensive enough already.

I also encourage everyone to sign up for *Foreign Policy*’s weekly email newsletters – specifically, “Editor’s Picks” and “Flash Points,” which offer a round-up of the week’s relevant foreign policy news. You can do so here: <https://foreignpolicy.com/newsletters/>.

OFFICE HOURS

You should make use of office hours! We'll talk about this in class, but office hours are time that's set aside for us to talk. This can be used to ask for help with the course, work on improving relevant class skills, discuss aspects of the class or topics that you're interested, or simply to get to know each other better. It is time I enjoy spending with students, so seriously, don't hesitate to make use of it.

TOP HAT/LECTURE SLIDES

This course uses the Top Hat functionality, which allows you to respond in real time using your smartphones/tablets/laptops to questions that I project on the screen.

Slides will be posted after the lecture. **NOTE:** Slides are visual aids and cues for lectures; they will not be sufficient to patch over a missed class – this just isn't a topic where that strategy can work.

DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER ACCOMODATIONS

Students with disabilities, or who are facing significant barriers to fulfill course requirements should inform the instructor at the **beginning of the course** or at the **outset of the concern**.

Let me be clear here: **I want you to succeed in this course.** If you're struggling with something – a health issue, job difficulties, family responsibilities, etc. – let me know, and I will make every effort to work something out with you.

Notably, I wish to reaffirm that *mental health issues are every bit as legitimate as physical health issues.* I encourage anyone dealing with depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges to make use of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting <http://ccs.osu.edu> or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp).

Note that academic misconduct not only includes acts of plagiarism and cheating, but also attempts to intimidate, put down, or in other ways distract, insult, or threaten students before, during, and after class discussions. If students engage in any of these acts, they may be asked to leave class for the day and face consequences for their participation grade. In particular, *abusive language will not be tolerated*.

The use of artificial intelligence tools to produce work for this class is considered cheating. I'm very familiar with what these programs can do; be aware that all exam/memo responses will be run through some highly reliable AI detectors. In addition, plenty of the questions are written exactly so that Chat-GPT gets them *wrong* in some important ways, so you would not even benefit from doing this anyway. Imagine getting expelled for a wrong answer! That would be sad.

UNIVERSITY GEN-ED GOALS

GEC/GENED category: Social Science: Organizations and Polities

Goal: Understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S.
2. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

GEC/GENED category: Diversity -- Global Studies

Goal: Students understand the systematic study of human behavior and cognition; the

structure of human societies, cultures, and institutions; and the processes by which individuals, groups, and societies interact, communicate, and use human, natural, and economic resources.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students understand the theories and methods of social scientific inquiry as they apply to the study of organizations and polities.
2. Students understand the formation and durability of political, economic, and social organizing principles and their differences and similarities across contexts.
3. Students comprehend and assess the nature and values of organizations and polities and their importance in social problem solving and policy making.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Monday, August 21

Lecture 1: Course Introduction

- *What is Foreign Policy, and why should we care?*
- *Course design, grading, and how to succeed in this class*
- *Core themes and key skills*

READING: Read the syllabus **before** coming to class, download Top Hat, and make sure to submit the (very short) Carmen assignment.

Lecture 2: Foreign Policy, Learning, and the Human Mind

- *How do we form ideas about politics and policy issues? How does human psychology impact the way we think about these things?*
- *What sort of specific issues with learning/perception/judgement tend to come up when dealing with foreign policy?*
- *How can we use what we know about history, human behavior, etc. to make better judgements about the political world?*

READING:

Krebs, Ronald & David M. Edelstein. “Delusions of Grand Strategy: The Problem with Washington's Planning Obsession.” *Foreign Affairs* (2015) 94: 109-116.

Week 2: Monday, August 28

Lecture 3: Foreign Policy, Narrative, and Cost vs. Cost

- *How dangerous is the international landscape confronting the United States? What should we do about it – and how do you go about answering questions like this?*
- *What drives foreign policy? What factors inform it? How have different theories tried to explain this?*
- *Introduce core class skill: Counterfactual reasoning and cost vs. cost framing*

READING:

Zenko, Micah, and Michael A. Cohen. “Clear and Present Safety: The United States Is More Secure Than Washington Thinks.” *Foreign Affairs* (2012): 79-93

Miller, Paul D. “National Insecurity: Just How Safe Is the United States?/Zenko and Cohen Reply.” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 4 (2012): 146-151.

Optional:

Snyder, Jack. "One World, Rival Theories." *Foreign Policy*, Nov/Dec 2004, pp. 52-62. (Useful to do if you haven't done coursework on IR theory).

Lecture 4: Revolution and the National Interest

- *What is the national interest? Who decides it – and how?*
- *Isolation vs. engagement*
- *Values, policy, and realpolitik*

READING:

Morgenthau, Hans. 1950. "The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstractions." *American Political Science Review* 44 (4): 833-854.

Week 3: Monday, September 4**Lecture 5: Rising America in the Long 19th Century**

- *What drove American foreign policy as the country rose as a great power?*
- *What are the narratives about US policy in Latin America? Do they hold up against reality?*
- *How do you know if a policy was successful?*

READING:

Caplan, Dennis. 2003. "John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the Barbary Pirates: An Illustration of Relevant Costs for Decision Making." *Issues in Accounting Education* (18:3).

Lecture 6: Reading, Writing, and Thinking about Foreign Policy

- *Politics and language*
- *How to critically read analytic pieces*
- *How to think and write about policy*

READING:

Orwell, George, "Politics and the English Language," in *Shooting an Elephant* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1950: pp. 77–92.

Week 4: Monday, September 11

Lecture 7: World War I and the Security Dilemma

- *What causes wars?*
- *Power, competition, and the security dilemma*
- *Warfare, technology, and the modern era*

READING: None. However, it may be useful to have a little bit of historical background, if you're not familiar – there's a decent Crash Course video on the origins of WWI here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd2ch4XV84s>

Lecture 8: World War II

- *Pathologies in Foreign Policy Planning*
- *Comparative foreign policies on the eve of global war*
- *The Agent-Structure debate in foreign policy*

READING: The reading for today is below. But honestly you can just watch [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=361D8Znu89M) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=361D8Znu89M>) to get the major points. Reading optional, but feel free if you're interested in the concept/still have questions about the idea – it's a classic text in the field.

Optional: Putnam, Robert. 1988. "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization*. 41 (3): 427-460.

Week 5: Monday, September 18

Lecture 9: The Cold War (I)

- *Origins of the Cold War*
- *Managing the nuclear landscape*
- *Counterfactual case study – was the Cold War inevitable?*

READING:

Zakaria, Fareed. "The New China Scare: Why America Shouldn't Panic About Its Latest Challenger." *Foreign Affairs* 99 (1): 52–69.

Lecture 10: The Cold War (II)

- *Ideology and Foreign Policy*
- *Communism and the Red Scare*
- *Nuclear weapons: Technology, theory, and politics*

READING:

Grindy, Matthew A. "Civil Rights and the Red Scare." *Rocky Mountain Communication Review* Volume 4:1 (Winter 2008), 3-15.

Additionally: Listen to the Paul Robeson recording posted on Carmen.

Week 6: Monday, September 25

Lecture 11: Thursday, February 16: The Cold War (III)

- *The Cuban Missile Crisis*
- *Organizational models of foreign policy*
- *Foreign policy and domestic politics in the nuclear era*

READING: Jervis, Robert. (2013). "Do Leaders Matter and How Would We Know?" *Security Studies*, 22(2), 153-179.

Lecture 12: MIDTERM

Week 7: Monday, October 2

Lecture 13: Vietnam (I)

- *Occupation and insurgency – strategy, tactics, and politics*
- *Political violence and civilian populations*
- *Domino theories and national narratives*

READING:

Bator, Francis M. "No Good Choices: LBJ and the Vietnam/Great Society Connection." *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (June 2008).

Lecture 14: Vietnam (II)

- *Foreign policy and the U.S. political system*
- *Congress and war*
- *Causal reasoning and U.S. foreign policy*

READING:

Howell, William G. and Jon C. Pevehouse. 2007. "When Congress Stops Wars: Partisan Politics and Presidential Power." *Foreign Affairs*, January/February: 95-107.

Week 8: Monday, October 9

NO CLASS – AUTUMN BREAK

Week 9: Monday, October 16

Lecture 15: The Cold War (IV)

- *Arms control*
- *Proxy conflicts and global violence*
- *International legacies*

READING:

Watch *Another Day of Life* (2018), a film based on the exemplary book of the same name by Ryszard Kapuściński. Link will be posted on Carmen.

Lecture 16: Humanitarian Intervention

- *When and how should the US intervene abroad?*
- *What has the recent history of US intervention looked like?*
- *What other options exist for foreign engagement?*

READING: Autesserre, Sérvine. “Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention.” *International Organization* 63, no.2 (2009): 249-280.

Week 10: Monday, October 23

Lecture 17: Development, Aid, and Peacebuilding

- *Development: How to operationalize a concept*
- *Measurement challenges (and potential solutions)*
- *Key measures in foreign policy:*

READING:

Bhagwati, Jadish. “Banned Aid.” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 89, No 1 (2010): 120-125

Lecture 18: War on Terror (I) – Terrorism and U.S. Policy

- *Threat and response*
- *Terrorism in domestic politics and foreign policy*
- *Illusions, delusions, and misconceptions*

READING:

Mueller, John and Mark G. Stewart. “The Terrorism Delusion: America’s Overwrought Response

to January 11.” *International Security* Vol. 37, No. 1 (Summer 2012), pp. 81–110.

Week 11: Monday, October 30

Lecture 19: War on Terror (II) – Afghanistan Case Study

- *What were U.S. goals in Afghanistan? What went wrong?*
- *Could a better/different outcome have been possible?*
- *What should our policy toward Afghanistan/the Taliban be now?*

READING: Mir, Asfandyar. “Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Future of U.S. Counterterrorism in Afghanistan.” Nexus article (Program on Extremism at George Washington University), September 2022.

<https://extremism.gwu.edu/al-qaeda-the-taliban-us-counterterrorism-in-afghanistan>

Lecture 20: War on Terror (III) – Occupation and Insurgency

- *What role will terrorism/counterterrorism play in the future of U.S. policy?*
- *What is the logic of occupation/counterinsurgency? How did it go in Iraq and Afghanistan?*
- *What factors determine the success or failure of counterterrorist efforts?*

READING: TBA.

Week 12: Monday, November 6

Lecture 21: Trade Policy and Globalization

- *Why do countries trade? What is the case for free trade?*
- *Political realities of free trade*
- *Trade wars and the road ahead*

READING:

Colgan, Jeff and Robert Keohane. “The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither.” *Foreign Affairs*. 2017;(Issue 3):36.

Guisinger, Alexandra. 2017. “Politicians take a negative view on trade deals — even the ones they voted for.” *Washington Post*.

Lecture 22: Russia and the Invasion of Ukraine

- *The Ukraine Crisis*
- *NATO and international security agreements*
- *How do we assess the intentions of other actors?*

READING:

Watch this Munk Debate with Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer, Michael McFaul, and Radoslaw Sikorski: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhgWLmd7mCo>

Week 13: Monday, November 13

Lecture 23: Iran – America’s Best Bad Guy

- *Perceptions, attitudes, and ideology: Shaping America’s Iran policy*
- *The JCPOA and technological reality in foreign policy planning*
- *Do sanctions work? Iranian case study*

READING:

Kroenig, Matthew. “Time to Attack Iran: Why a Strike Is the Least Bad Option.” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 1 (2012): 76-86.

Kahl, Colin H. “Not Time to Attack Iran: Why War Should Be a Last Resort.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 91, no. 2 (2012): 166–173.

Lecture 24: Interest Groups

- *Can external third parties influence American foreign policy?*
- *Debate: Israel Lobby and U.S. foreign policy*
- *Is the influence of lobbies about money? Politics? Information?*

READING:

Mearsheimer, John J., Stephen M. Walt, Aaron Friedberg, Dennis Ross, Shlomo Ben-Ami, and Zbigniew Brzezinski. “The War over Israel’s Influence.” *Foreign Policy*, no. 155 (2006): 56-66.

Week 14: Monday, November 20

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15: Monday, November 27

Lecture 25: The Future of U.S.-China Relations

- *Competition, cooperation, or conflict?*
- *How do we know if a power is “rising”/“falling”? What does that necessarily mean?*
- *Taiwan, Trade Wars, and Technology*

READING:

Brands, Hal and Michael Beckley. “China Is a Declining Power—and That’s the Problem.”

Foreign Policy, September 24 2021,

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/24/china-great-power-united-states/>

Lecture 26: Emergent Threats: Cyberwarfare and Climate Change

- *How should we think about unprecedented threats?*
- *Coordination challenges and collective action problems*
- *Case Study: Syrian Civil War*

READING:

Gartzke, Erik. “Fear and War in Cyberspace.” Lawfare Blog, December 1st, 2013.

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/foreign-policy-essay-erik-gartzke-fear-and-war-cyberspace>

- (A blog post highlighting a longer article – if you’re interested, the full article is on
- Carmen).

FINAL EXAM: TBA