Course Outline

Government 311 United States Foreign Policy

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Note: This outline should not be used by students currently enrolled in this course. The current schedule, assigned readings, and requirements are available to enrolled students on the course Moodle.

For information on my grading policies, expectations, and the drop/add wait list process, see http://dfoyle.faculty.wesleyan.edu/.

Course Description

This course provides a survey of the content and formulation of American foreign policy with an emphasis on the period after World War II. It evaluates the sources of American foreign policy including the international system, societal factors, government processes, and individual decision makers. The course begins with a consideration of major trends in U.S. foreign policy after World War II. With a historical base established, the focus turns to the major institutions and actors in American foreign policy. The course concludes with an examination of the challenges and opportunities that face current U.S. decision makers. A significant component of the course is the intensive discussion of specific foreign policy decisions.

Requirements and Course Grading

Grades will be based on: (1) a take-home final (35%), (2) a take-home midterm (30%), and (3) participation (35%).

Class periods will be devoted to a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students must come to class prepared to discuss the day’s assigned reading.

Exams

Midterm: The take-home midterm will be comprised essays. The exam is open book and open note. You may not give or receive aid from any other person.
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References to material from the course are expected. No references to material from outside the course are expected. Excused (no penalty) late exams will be allowed only for significant and verifiable personal emergencies. No unpenalized extensions will be granted due to the pressures of academic life (such as work due in other classes) so plan accordingly.

Unexcused late exams will be penalized 1/3 of a full letter grade (e.g., B+ to B) for each day it is late (every full 24 hours from the due time is a one grade step). Please inform me immediately through e-mail that your exam will be late under this provision. No unexcused late exams will be accepted after 7 days.

Final: There will be an essay-format, take-home final. The expectations are the same as described for the midterm.

**Participation**

Participation will be evaluated based upon the student’s contribution to discussion, responsiveness to other students, and quality of insight. Class attendance is a basic requirement of the participation grade.

**Readings**

There are two books for purchase.


Example Schedule

Historical Legacy, Patterns, and Decisions

Day 1: Overview of course

Day 2: The Legacy of U.S. Foreign Policy History


Lantis, USFPA, pp. 1-35.

Day 3: Models of American Foreign Policy Making: International and Societal Forces


Lantis, USFPA, pp. 38-67.


Day 4: Models of American Foreign Policy Making: Individual Level


Nelson, "Person and Office: Presidents, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy," DSAFP, pp. 179-188.
Day 5: Case Discussion -- Cuban Missile Crisis

Institute for the Study of Diplomacy Case 129 “The Cuban Missile Crisis”


Day 6: Case Discussion – Vietnam


Recommended:


The Decision Making Context

Day 7: The Presidency


Lantis, USFPA, 68-99

Day 8: Congress


Lindsay, "The Shifting Pendulum of Power: Executive-Legislative Relations on American Foreign Policy" DSAFP, pp. 223-238.


Midterm Posted by end of the week on Friday.

Day 9: Case Study Discussion -- Iraq War 2003


Day 10: Structured Debate -- The War on Terror

Lantis, USFPA, pp. 100-111.

Day 11: Public Opinion and Elections


Lantis, USFPA, pp. 204-224.


Day 12: Interest Groups and Political Parties

Lantis, USFPA, pp. 163-203.


Mearsheimer and Walt, "The Israel Lobby," DSAFP, pp. 89-104.

Day 13: Public Opinion Exercise

Lantis, USFPA, pp. 226-237.

Project 1: Alternative News Media and Foreign policy: Educating the Public

Project 2: The Media and National Security: Is There a Public "Right to Know"?

We will spend half of the class period (40 minutes) on each of these questions. The section will begin with a presentation by the group assigned for that period.

Day 14: Case Discussion -- DP World


Day 15: Foreign Policy Institutional Actors

Lantis, USFPA, pp. 116-144.

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Midterm Due.

Day 16: The Military


The Future of American Foreign Policy

Day 17: Interests and Goals


Rachman, "Think Again: American Decline," DSAFP, pp. 47-54.

Day 18: Grand Strategy

Lantis, USFPA, pp. 243-82.


Day 19: Security Threats


Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in U.S. Decision on Somalia and Bosnia," DSAFP, pp. 399-416.


Current Director of National Intelligence Threat Assessment.

Day 20: Economics


Day 21: The Financial Crisis, the Budget Deficit, and Foreign Policy


Day 22: Defense Policy


Day 23: The Great Powers and Simulation Day 1: A Nuclear Detonation In Iran


Simulation, see Lantis pp. 145-162.

Day 24: Simulation Day 2: A Nuclear Detonation In Iran

Day 2 assignment: 1 options memo

Day 25: Day 3 Simulation: A Nuclear Detonation In Iran

Day 26: Why does the U.S. do what it does?

Lantis, USFPA, pp. 282-295.

Final Due: Finals Day 1 at 11:59 p.m.