American Foreign Policy  
Spring 2018  
POGO 750.010  
Thursdays, 7:20 – 10:00 pm

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Introduction and Objective:

This is not a standard course in American foreign policy. Typically, courses in American foreign policy focus either on the institutions and processes of American foreign policy decision-making (for example, they sequentially explore the role of the President, the State Department, and Congress in making foreign policy) or on current issues in American foreign policy. This course, however, takes a historical approach. It draws heavily on primary sources both to look at American foreign policy in historical perspective and to try to understand how past American decision-makers conceptualized foreign policy.

The central theme of the course is that the unique challenges of trying to preserve a liberal, democratic republic have demanded and continue to demand a distinctive American foreign policy. In other words, we will explore how the effort to create a domestic novus ordo seclorum has inevitably shaped not only the pursuit but the very meaning of “national security” and “national interest.” With an eye to better understanding the choices that now face the American republic and its citizens, we will investigate how successive generations of Americans have interpreted these challenges and how they have framed competing solutions.

The reading load for this course is substantial.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students should have acquired:

1. A clear understanding of the historical trajectory and aims of American foreign policy and the forces and concerns that have shaped it.
2. A theoretical and historical context for understanding and analyzing the foreign policy choices facing the United States today and likely to face the United States in the future.
3. Practice in critical thinking about the underlying assumptions, motivations, strategies, and strategic calculations of decision-makers.
4. Improved skills in presenting analyses and arguments in professionally useful formats.
5. Greater familiarity with primary documentation and greater confidence in relying on them.

Course Materials:

Reading for the course includes a mix of primary documents and secondary accounts and analyses.

In addition to those primary materials available online, we will use a published collection of historical documents:


**NB:** This work is no longer in print, but used copies are available through AbeBooks.com, Amazon.com or similar sites, often for prices as low as a few dollars. I am working to getting this work returned to print, or to get a new edition published, but it is unlikely that this will happen in time for the spring semester, and even were it to happen, it is likely that used copies would remain less expensive. Once you are certain that you will be taking the course, I would advise you to go ahead and acquire one of the used copies available. If you are unable to acquire a used copy for a reasonable price (say, less than $50 or $60), let me know and we can discuss options.

Secondary readings include:


Used copies of these two works are available through online retailers. In addition, I have asked the bookstore to stock them.

Expectations, Grading, and Requirements:

Grading for the course will NOT be on a curve. Class members are NOT competing against each other.

Grading for the seminar will be based on:

- Class participation (20%)
- Op-ed essay (20%)
• Analytical essay (35%)
• Policy memo (25%)

All written assignments must be submitted BOTH in hard copy and electronically. Consistent with School policies regarding plagiarism, the instructor will use electronic data bases to screen submitted materials.

Class Participation:

Class participation grades will reflect the contribution that each student makes to the class’s collective understanding of the topic. This necessarily means that the quality of thought embedded in the contribution, the frequency of involvement, and the responsiveness of the contribution to issues or questions on the table or to the previous contributions of other seminar members will all be taken into account. Class members are expected to engage openly, thoughtfully, and respectfully in classroom discussions, debates, and intellectual give-and-take. Class discussions assume that all course members will come to class fully prepared, having done the assigned readings, completed the required written assignments, and having pondered the issues and materials.

Because this course is built around our weekly meetings, attendance represents a sine qua non. It is understood that professional lives or family responsibilities may on occasion prevent class attendance. Professionalism, though, requires that students inform the instructor by email in advance when their other scheduled responsibilities will prevent class attendance and that, in the event of illness or family emergency, students notify the instructor as soon as reasonably feasible. Student grades will be lowered for unexcused absences.

Students who anticipate missing more than two or three classes, should consider postponing enrollment in this class to a later semester.

Op-Ed Paper:

Every member of the class is required to submit one written Op-Ed essay of no more than 1000 words, of the sort that might appear in a major national newspaper. Students have the option of submitting this Op-Ed piece prior to class on February 15, on February 22, or on March 1. Details of the assignment and the list of possible topic options for each week are listed on the course Blackboard site.

Analytical Paper:

Every member of the class is required to submit one analytical essay, modeled on one of the short essays in the journal Foreign Affairs. While there are no precise minimum or maximum lengths for this piece, normally such an essay would run between 3500 words and 4500 words. This essay is due before class on April 19. Details of the assignment can be found on the course Blackboard site.

Policy Memo:

Every member is required to submit one policy memo of no more than 1250 words. This memo is due before class on May 3. Details of the assignment can be found on the course Blackboard site.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:
George Mason University, the Schar School, and the instructor regard plagiarism and academic dishonesty as serious transgressions, meriting disciplinary action potentially as severe as expulsion from the academic program or university. In submitting written work, students are representing that it is their own work and free from plagiarism.

**Academic Accommodation for a Disability:**

The following is Schar School policy with regard to accommodation for a disability:

“If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.”

**Use of Cell Phones, Computers, and Other Electronic Devices in Class:**

Class members are expected to focus their attention entirely on class discussion during weekly class meetings. They are expected to refrain from carrying on other professional or personal activities while the class is meeting. Class members engaged in other professional or personal activities during class time will be asked to leave the classroom until they are finished with such activities and to return only when they are prepared to participate in the class.

Use of cell phones in class is not permitted. Seminar members who for professional or other reason need to carry a cell phone with them must turn these devices off or set them to “vibrate.”

The use of computers or other electronic devices while class is in session is limited to class-related purposes. At his discretion, the instructor may require that all computers and similar electronic devices be turned off.

Class members with disabilities that necessitate the use of computers or other electronic devices should inform the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS). All accommodations must be arranged through ODS.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1:** Creating a *Novus Ordo Seclorum*: States, Nation-States, Liberal States, Republics, and Democracies.


**Week 2:** The Foreign Policy of a Madisonian Republic: Hamilton, Washington, John Quincy Adams, and the Monroe Doctrine.

Primary sources:

George Washington, “Farewell Address,” 1796, especially the section beginning with the paragraph “Observe good faith” and continuing to the conclusion of the address. Available online at: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp)


Analyses:


**Week 3: The Problems of Commerce, War, Populism, and America’s Original Sin: 1812 and 1861.**

Primary sources:


Bartlett, pp. 74-77, 118, 123-29, 134-44, 145-47, 276-81, 286-89, 292-296. (Reading IV.5; Chapter VII summary, readings VII.2 – VII.8, VII.11 – VII.15; Chapter VIII summary, readings VIII.1, VIII.3 Chapter XVII summary, readings XVII.1 – XVII.3, XVII.6 – XVII.7, XVII.9 – XVII.11.)

Analyses:


Mead, chapters 4, 6, and 7.


**Week 4: The Foreign Policy of Manifest Destiny: Louisiana, Florida, Texas, California, Oregon, The Polk Corollary, and the Roosevelt Corollary.**
Option for submitting Op-Ed paper.

Primary sources:

Bartlett, pp. 103-17, 155-56, 164-67, 188-207, 209-16, 217-18, 226-42, 297-308, 310-19. (Chapter VI entire; Chapter IX summary, reading IX.4 – IX.5; Chapter XI entire; Chapter XII summary, readings XII.1, XII.3 – XII.6; Chapter XIII summary, reading XIII.1, XIII.7 – XIII.10; Chapter XIV entire; Chapter XVIII entire; Chapter XIX summary, readings XIX.2 – XIX.5.)

Theodore Roosevelt, “Special Message to the Senate, February 15, 1905.” Available on course Blackboard website

Analysis:

McDougall, chapter 4.


Option for submitting Op-Ed paper.

Primary sources:


Bartlett, pp. 369-90, 407-11, 414-19. (Chapter XXIII entire; Chapter XXV summary, readings XXV.1 – XXV.2, XXV.5 – XXV.9.)

Analyses:

McDougall, chapter 5.


Option for submitting Op-Ed paper.

Primary sources:

Bartlett, pp. 431-32, 452-82, 485-86. (Chapter XXVI summary, readings XXVI.8 – XXVI.9; Chapter XXVII summary, readings XXVII.1 – XXVII.6; Reading XXVIII.1.)

Analyses:

McDougall, chapter 6.

Mead, chapter 5.

**Week 7. A “Return to Normalcy”: Harding, Hughes, and “the Pathway of Peace”**

Primary sources:

Harding readings. Available on course Blackboard site.


Bartlett, pp. 484-85, 491-99, 500-01, 505-09, 519-33. (Chapter XXVIII summary, readings XXVIII.3 – XXVIII.4; Chapter XXIX summary, reading XXIX.4; Chapter XXX entire.)


Analysis:


**Week 8. The Crisis of Liberalism, Part I: Global Economic Collapse, Fascism and Militarism.**

Primary sources:

Bartlett, 564-72, 577-98, 607-10, 612-19, 623-28, 637-51, 658-76. (Chapter XXXII summary, readings XXXII.1 – XXXII.2, XXXII.6 – XXXII.8 ; Chapter XXXIII
summary, readings XXXIII.1 – XXXIII.2, XXXIII.7, XXXIII.9 – XXXIII.10, XXXIII.14 – XXXIII.15; Chapter XXXIV summary, reading XXXIV.1 – XXXIV.3, XXXIV.7—XXXIV.11; Chapter XXXV summary, reading XXXV.1—XXXV.2.}

Week 9. **The Crisis of Liberalism, Part II: A World Destroyed, Communism, and the Soviet Union**

Primary sources:


“NSC 68,” 1950. Skip or skim section VIII. Available online at: [http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nscrept/nscrept-68.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nscrept/nscrept-68.htm)

Analyses:


McDougall, chapter 7.

Week 10. **Foreign Policy and Nuclear Weapons**

Primary sources:

Bartlett, pp. 699-707. (Readings XXXV.6 – XXXV.7)

Bernard Brodie, ed., *The Absolute Weapon* (draft manuscript; note that this copy belonged to General – later President – Eisenhower; the annotations are presumably Eisenhower's, as presumably is the indication that it was read in April 1946). Read introduction by Frederick Dunn and chapter 1 by Brodie. Available online at: [https://www.osti.gov/opennet/servlets/purl/16380564-wvLB09/16380564.pdf](https://www.osti.gov/opennet/servlets/purl/16380564-wvLB09/16380564.pdf)

Albert Wohlstetter, “The Delicate Balance of Terror,” 1958. Read sections iv, vi, and vii; skim the rest. Available online at:
http://www.rand.org/publications/classics/wohlstetter/P1472/P1472.html


Analyses:


Analyses:

McDougall, chapter 8.


Week 12. Foreign Policy for an “End of History?” Bush, Sr. and Clinton; Fukuyama, Huntington, and Mearsheimer

Analytical paper due.
Primary sources:


Analyses:


Mead, chapter 8.


Primary sources:


Analyses:

Week 14. A Search for Principles to Guide Foreign Policy.

Policy memo due.

Analyses:

Mead, Chapter 9.

Additional readings may be announced.