Political Science 361 - Spring 2024
American Foreign Policy

Contact Information

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Course Description and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to explore the determinants and consequences of contemporary United States foreign policy. Early material will introduce key themes. First, we will review the intellectual history and evolution of classical liberalism, which underlies US culture and informs US foreign policy—and which facilitated the rise of the scientific method that we use to study foreign policy systematically. Second, we will scrutinize the conceptualization and operationalization of US power and influence in order to understand the US role in creating and maintaining the contemporary liberal international order. Third, we will consider the foreign policy implications of new challenges to the liberal international order, such as political polarization in the US, growing populism in the West, and the rise of China in the East. Fourth, we will attempt to disentangle the complicated relationship between US public opinion, elites, and the media within the realm of foreign policy. The remainder of the course will reinforce these broad themes via deeper examinations of specific foreign policy issues and tools.

Learning outcomes

- Upon completion of this course, students will be able to distinguish between narrative and scientific approaches to the study of US foreign policy
- Upon completion of this course, students will be able to apply the scientific approach to describe and explain US foreign policy
- Upon completion of this course, students will be able to analyze contemporary US foreign policy issues and tools with grounding in important themes
- Upon completion of this course, students will be able to synthesize and engage arguments found in recent studies on foreign policy

Course Access

Students can access this online course via my.asu.edu and canvas.asu.edu. I recommend that students create bookmarks for both sites.

Computer requirements

This course is entirely online. As such, students will need access to a computer and the internet. Specifically, this course requires:

- a desktop or laptop computer (note: tablets, smartphones, and Chromebooks, etc. are not adequate to complete all course requirements)
- computer audio via speakers, headset, or earbuds
- a reliable internet connection that can handle streaming videos and timed examinations
- a web browser such as Firefox, Safari, Chrome, or Edge
- software that can view PDF documents, such as Preview or Acrobat Reader

ASU Online Course Policies

See ASU's detailed online course policies here: https://asuonline-dev.asu.edu/qm-template/CanvasQM/qm-policies.html.

Accessibility

See ASU's accessibility page here: https://asuonline-dev.asu.edu/qm-template/CanvasQM/qm-accessibility.html.

Course Assignments

Lecture

Every module will include a series of lecture videos broken down by topic. Each video will be approximately five minutes long; and lecture typically will total no more than 75 minutes per module.

Reading

Readings are intended to supplement lecture. Many readings consist of peer-reviewed, scholarly articles, some of which use sophisticated methods. Students can largely skim over technical information while focusing on the substance—the research question, argument, and findings—of each academic reading. A few required readings are (relatively) recent blog posts and journalistic articles relevant to the curriculum.

In addition to the required readings each week, supplemental readings used to develop the lecture—typically academic articles and book chapters—will be posted to Canvas. While students can feel free to ignore the supplemental readings, these studies will offer greater depth for those with particular interest in a given topic.

All readings will be made available as PDF documents uploaded to Canvas or as linked web sources. **Students do not need to purchase any materials for this course**.

Discussion board

Given that we do not have opportunity to interact live in a classroom, this course will utilize Canvas discussions. There will be a discussion board for each course topic, as well as a general board for questions about course procedures. Students are encouraged to ask questions and make comments, as well as to respond to each other, though this participation is not required and not graded. The professor will check the boards and respond to posts at least twice per week.

Quizzes

The first thirteen modules (every module aside from the final exam) include a quiz. Quizzes typically consist of five multiple choice question. These questions often require students to apply course material to hypothetical scenarios, not simply memorize and repeat information. Once started, a quiz attempt must be completed in 10 minutes. Each quiz can be taken twice, with the highest score recorded. Students have access to lectures and readings while taking the quizzes, though the time limit makes looking up answers an inadvisable strategy. Students must work independently on quizzes.

Final exam

The final exam will consist of 50 primarily multiple choice questions, many of which will be "remixed" quiz questions. Once started, a final exam attempt must be completed in 100 minutes. The final exam can be taken twice, with the highest score recorded. Students have access to lectures and readings while taking the exam,

though the time limit makes looking up answers an inadvisable strategy. Students must work independently on the exam.

Deadlines

While the Canvas calendar includes recommended deadlines throughout the semester, all graded material (13 quizzes and the final exam) are technically due at 11:59 PM on the last day of class: February 27, 2024. This schedule reflects my desire to maximize flexibility. However, keep in mind that there is a lot of class material to get through. I do not recommend waiting until (near) the end of the course to get started.

Grading

The thirteen quizzes will be equally weighted, and together will compose 50% of the course grade. The final exam will compose the remaining 50% of the course grade. Final grades translate to letter grades in accordance with the standard ASU grade scheme:

A+	100%	to 97.0%
A	< 97.0%	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0%	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0%	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0%	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0%	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0%	to 76.0%
C	< 76.0%	to 70.0%
D	< 70.0%	to 60.0%
E	< 60.0%	to 0.0%

Schedule

Part 1: Themes

Module 1: Introduction

Topics	Instructor introduction; class procedures; grading; introduction to major themes and topics
Readings	This syllabus

Module 2: The Enlightenment origins of contemporary US foreign policy

Topics	The Enlightenment and US founders; The scientific revolution (and pseudo-science); tenets of classical liberalism; hypocrisy and contradictions in US liberalism; limitations and trade-offs of liberalism; variants of liberalism
Readings	Desch 2008 IS article Web article: "Why Race Matters in International Relations"

Module 3: Approaches to the study of US foreign policy

Topics
Narrative vs. science; "grand" theory; deductive reasoning; experiments vs. observational analysis; bias; critical theory

Readings
Walt 1998 FP article
Web article: "I'm a data scientist who is skeptical of data"

Module 4: The foreign policy "toolkit" and the scope of US power and influence

Topics
Conceptualization and operationalization of power; trajectories over time; networks and "weaponized interdependence;" policy tools

Readings
Farrell and Newman 2019 IS article
Starrs 2013 ISQ article

Module 5: US leadership and the liberal international order

Topics
Early foreign policy; WWI and Wilsonian liberal internationalism; interwar isolationism and the Great Depression; post-WWII leadership; from Bretton Woods to the Washington Consensus; Cold War realism; competing narratives on liberal hegemony

Readings
Ikenberry 2009 POP article
Goldgeier 2018 WQ article

Module 6: Contemporary challenges to the liberal international order

Topics
US decline; technological and economic change; populism; polarization; the rise of China

Readings
Myrick 2021 IO article
Adler-Nissen and Zarakol 2021 IO article

Module 7: Elites, the media, and public opinion

Topics
The challenge of endogeneity; top-down vs. bottom up public opinion models; the elasticity of reality; social media; polarization and media trust

Readings
Baum and Potter 2019 JOP article
Saunders 2021 ARPS article

Part 2: Issues

Module 8: Security policy and counter-terrorism

Topics
Grand strategy; deterrence theory; regime change and state-building; the pivot to Asia; terrorism; cyber-security

Readings
Gadarian 2010 JOP article
Web article: "After Afghanistan, US military presence abroad faces domestic and foreign opposition in 2022"
Web article: "The U.S. government thinks TikTok is a national security threat. So why can't the government decide what to do?"

Module 9: Nuclear/WMD anti-proliferation

Topics   WMD strategy; cooperation on non-proliferation; dual-use export controls; sanctions and armed conflict against proliferators

Readings   Miller 2014 IO article
Web article: "Do Americans Support Using Nuclear Weapons Because They Don't Understand the Consequences?"
Web article: "China's nuclear arsenal is growing. What does that mean for U.S.-China relations?"

Module 10: Fostering democracy and human rights

Topics   Defining democracy; democratization over time; classifying human rights; the politics of human rights ratings; democracy aid

Readings   Hackenesch 2015 Democratization article
Pevehouse and Vabulas 2019 ISQ article

Module 11: Promoting economic development and free markets

Topics   Poverty over time; US consequences of development abroad; development aid; structural adjustment; development and democracy

Readings   Lee 2021 ISQ articke
Babb and Kentikelenis 2021 ARPS article

Module 12: Regulating trade and globalization

Topics   Extent and composition of trade over time; global production chains; comparative advantage; trade exposure and public opinion; populist backlash to globalization; trade barriers; trade policy over time

Readings   Mutz and Kim 2017 IO article
Web article: "Would China's move to join this transpacific trade pact push the U.S. to rejoin? It's complicated"
Web article: "U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods didn't bring companies back to the U.S., new research finds"

Module 13: Protecting the environment, Combating drug trafficking across borders

Topics   Scarce resources as a tragedy of the commons; pollution as an externality; collective action problems on the environment; international drug flows; the war on drugs; narcotics trafficking and sanctions

Readings   Web article: "The Only Force That Can Beat Climate Change Is the U.S. Army"
Web article: "The U.S. Opioid Epidemic"

Module 14: Final exam