

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Political Science 345, Winter 2020
Portland State University

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Office Hours: Monday & Friday 11:30-12:30

Description

Governments are expected to provide for the security and well-being of their citizenry, and both of these functions require governments to engage with states and other actors in international society. That engagement is the stuff of foreign policy. The United States, after World War II, broke with its own history of isolation and became a fully engaged world power. And since the cold war ended in the early 1990s, it has become the predominant and largely unchallenged power, an exceedingly rare occurrence in world history. This course is about these two eras in U.S. foreign policy. Although it is partly a course about the policy process (how policy is made), it is mostly a course about policy content—what policies have the United States adopted toward both friends and rivals, and why?

There are several dimensions to U.S. foreign policy, including diplomacy, national security, economic relations, international order, and humanitarianism. The course addresses all of these dimensions because all have been integral to the rise of American power and reflect the nation's self-image as key player on the world stage. Roughly one-half of the course will be devoted to the cold war and one-half to the period since then.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this course are to develop the student's capacity to critically examine U.S. foreign policy issues, consider a range of perspectives on these issues, and communicate the results of this analysis to others. These objectives are to be accomplished by exposing students to the history of U.S. foreign policy, contemporary developments in American diplomacy, and concepts from the field of foreign policy analysis. After this course, students should be able to:

- demonstrate a familiarity with a wide range of substantive issues in U.S. foreign policy;
- understand the worldviews and strategies that have shaped the U.S. government's response to opportunities and challenges in international affairs;
- understand the basic functioning of the most important organizations involved in the U.S. foreign policy process; and

- articulate coherent positions on key normative debates arising from the America's pursuit of national interests overseas.

Requirements and Evaluation

Course grades are based on two [midterm exams](#), covering weeks 1-3 (30%) and weeks 4-6 (30%), and a [final exam](#) covering weeks 7-10 (40%). The exams consist of questions requiring both short answers and longer essays. Attendance is expected; course grades will be adversely affected by excessive absence from class.

I hold on to students' written work for one academic term after the end of the course, so if you want to keep your final exam, please get it from me no later than the end of spring term 2020.

Readings

Assigned reading comes from the course textbook, available to rent or buy from the [Portland State Bookstore](#):

- Steven Hook and John Spanier, [American Foreign Policy since World War II](#), 21st edition (CQ Press, 2019)

In addition to the assigned chapters from the Hook and Spanier text, you should be reading, on a regular basis, some newspaper that provides thorough coverage of international affairs and U.S. foreign policy (e.g., the [New York Times](#) or the [Washington Post](#)).

For each weekly topic, under "Other," there are links to documentaries or expert presentations. View this content to the extent that the topics interest you; they are not required assignments. You may also be interested in one or more of the following websites and blogs:

- Website: [Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State](#)
- Website: [Diplomacy and International Institutions](#) (Council on Foreign Relations)
- Website: [National Security Archive](#) (George Washington University)
- Blog: [DipNote](#) (U.S. Department of State Official Blog)
- Blog: [Foreign Service Blogs](#) (American Foreign Service Association)
- Blog: [Foreign Policy](#) (The Hill)
- Blog: [Foreign Policy In Focus](#) (Institute for Policy Studies)
- Blog: [Geopoliticus](#) (Foreign Policy Research Institute)

All slides used during lectures are available online via a link to the list of weekly reading assignments. If those slides are revised prior to the time of the lecture, an updated version will be posted shortly thereafter.

Conduct, Courtesy, and Student Resources

Students are responsible for being familiar with the PSU [Student Code of Conduct](#), especially the section concerning academic misconduct -- that is, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. If you are unsure of the definition or consequences of academic misconduct, consult your instructor.

PSU's policies require faculty members to report any instance of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about these experiences with an employee who does not have these reporting responsibilities and can keep the information confidential, please contact a confidential advocate (503.725.5672 or [online](#)) or another confidential employee listed on the sexual misconduct resource [webpage](#). For more information, please complete the required student module [Creating a Safe Campus](#) in D2L.

Because they are distracting to others, cell phones may not be used during lecture and should be silenced at the start of class. Laptops and tablets may be used to take notes, but not for email, web browsing, or social media. Electronic devices may not be used to photograph, video, or stream course lectures or discussion, but lectures may be audio recorded with permission of the instructor.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The [C.A.R.E. Team](#), hosted by the Dean of Student Life, is available to consult with you regarding any issues of students in distress, including sexual misconduct.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE and ASSIGNMENTS

6-10 Jan **America in the World**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chap. 1

Other

- [To Conquer or Redeem: Manifest Destiny](#). JAK Films, 2010.
- [slides](#)

13-17 Jan **Cold War and Containment**

- *No class on Friday, 17 Jan.* Instead, listen to this podcast: [60 Words](#). Radiolab, 7 January 2020.

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chaps. 2-3

Other

- [Iron Curtain 1945-1947](#). Episode 2 of *Cold War*, CNN, 1998.
- [America and the Cold War](#). John Lewis Gaddis, Chicago Humanities Festival, December 2012.
- [slides](#)

22-24 Jan **America and the Periphery**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chap. 4

Other

- [Hearts and Minds](#), Warner Bros., March 1975.
- [slides](#)

27 Jan **MIDTERM EXAM 1**

29-31 Jan **Détente and Back**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chaps. 5-6

Other

- [Cold War: Détente 1969-1975](#). Episode 16 of *Cold War*, CNN, 1998.
- [Henry A. Kissinger Looks Back on the Cold War](#). Council on Foreign Relations, November 2014.
- [slides](#)

3-7 Feb **End of the Cold War**

- *No class on Wednesday, 5 Feb.* Instead, watch [The Wall: A World Divided](#).

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chap. 7

Other

- [The Wall: A World Divided](#). PBS, June 2010
- [slides](#)

10-14 Feb **New World Order**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chap. 8-9

Other

- [The Wall: A World United](#). PBS, June 2010.
- [Monsters to Destroy: Manifest Destiny](#), segments 1-22 (0:00-49:43). JAK Films, 2011.
- [slides](#)

17 Feb **MIDTERM EXAM 2**

19-21 Feb **War on Terrorism**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chaps. 10-11

Other

- [The Wall: A World United](#). PBS, June 2010.
- [Monsters to Destroy: Manifest Destiny](#), segments 23-41 (49:45-1:29:10). JAK Films, 2011.
- [slides](#)

24-28 Feb **America and the Middle East**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chap. 12

Other

- [The Rise of ISIS](#). Frontline, October 2014.
- [Obama at War](#). Frontline, May 2015.
- [slides](#)

2-6 Mar **Contemporary Power Politics**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chap. 13

Other

- [Putin's Way](#). Frontline, January 2015.
- [slides](#)

9-13 Mar **Trump and “America First”**

Reading

- Hook and Spanier, chap. 14
- Hal Brands and Peter Feaver, [Living in Trump's World: The Global Reaction to “America First.”](#) Commentary, War on the Rocks, 17 March 2018
- Prof. Kinsella on the [“America First” policy](#) and [Trump’s trade wars](#)

Other

- [Trump's Trade War](#). Frontline, May 2019.
- [slides](#)

18 Mar **FINAL EXAM, 10:15-12:05**

This syllabus is available online at web.pdx.edu/~kinsella/ps345w20.pdf and all course materials can be linked from there. Check online syllabus regularly for updates to course requirements.

Last updated on 12 March 2020.