



GOVT 344 – Ideas & Practice in U.S. Foreign Policy

The Fund for American Studies
The Institute on Economics & International Affairs
George Mason University

Semester: Summer 2025

Class Hours: Monday & Thursday, 5:00pm–6:30pm

Location: Van Metre Hall, Room 113

Instructor: Dr. Milorad Lazic

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Online office hours: by appointment

Course description: This course will examine major developments and ideas in American foreign relations. We will investigate what strategic interests have motivated U.S. foreign relations. We will examine how these interests aligned, coincided, or collided with strategic aims of other nations. We will discuss how other factors such as economic interests, domestic politics, ideas, and culture (broadly conceived) have influenced American foreign policy. We will also examine the validity of different historical interpretations of U.S. foreign relations. By doing that, we will analyze the (ongoing) debates about the objectives of U.S. foreign policy. Finally, we will situate contemporary issues in American foreign policy in the historical context of U.S. relations with the world.

This is a reading-intensive course and be prepared to read between 50-100 pages every week! We will follow U.S. foreign policy and relations in the chronological order, with particular focus on certain themes/topics/events.

Course prerequisites: There are no prerequisites required for enrollment in this course

Learning objectives:

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify, know, and comprehend major events, ideas, and figures of American foreign policy.
2. Identify major controversies and different historical interpretations of the history of American foreign relations.
3. Analyze primary sources and individual works of historiography
4. Evaluate authors' use of evidence, biases, and limitations, and compare different historical arguments.

5. Formulate their ideas and opinions with clarity and precision in both written and oral forms.

Required Textbooks and reading materials:

George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Michael Hogan and Thomas Paterson, eds. *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (1995)

Matthew Specter, *The Atlantic Realists: Empire and International Political Thought Between Germany and the United States* (Stanford: 2022)

Other individual book chapters and articles/essays are available on Blackboard for every session of this class. These materials can be found by going to “readings” and selecting the appropriate session. These readings are a mix of primary sources, secondary sources (chapters and/or articles) and other materials that provide different perspectives on the course topic.

Grading:

Final grades will be determined according to the following formula:

- Attendance & Participation (25%)
- Policy memo (20 %)
- Reflection essay (25%)
- Final Exam (30%)

The grading scale is as follows: A: 93-100, A-: 90-92, B+ 87-89, B: 84-86, B-80-83, C+ 77-79, C: 74-76; C-: 70-73, D+ 67-69, D: 64-66, D-: 60-63, F: below 60. All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Assignments:

Your performance will be assessed through different projects:

1. Attendance & Participation:

Most of our classes will be done synchronously. You are expected to attend and participate in lectures. You can have **one** unexcused absence. More than one unexcused absence will result in a one-third letter grade deduction per unexcused absence. Religious holidays, illness, family emergency are considered excused absences, but please notify me in advance (if possible) if you are unable to attend this class. You are encouraged to participate in class exercises (e.g., document analysis, polls, group work, quizzes, etc.). Attendance will count for 10% of your total grade and participation for another 15% (25% total). Attendance & participation will help you

engage with class materials, stimulate intellectual exchange, prepare you for your other assignments but, most importantly, create a class community. The focus of our discussions will be the weekly assigned texts and, occasionally, films & other audio-visual materials. Therefore, you are required to complete the assigned reading and to come to class prepared to discuss what you have read. You should be able to understand the main point(s), to recognize the point of view of the writer, and to have your own opinion about the material. Your grades will reflect your engagement with the reading material. Disagreements with me or your classmates are welcomed and encouraged. However, be respectful of your classmates and your instructor. Only one person talks while everyone else listens. Treat others with dignity and respect. You should feel safe to exchange ideas. Do not hesitate to ask questions! Considerate and thoughtful questions will help us understand the assigned readings and will be considered as a form of class participation.

2. Policy memo:

Policy memo is an attempt to apply your knowledge and understanding of U.S. foreign policy to the “real world.” You will choose one topic that is relevant to your personal and/or professional interests (e.g., U.S. policy toward Ukraine; Non-proliferation of the nuclear weapons; space program, etc.) and write a short memo (800-1000 words) in which you will provide your analysis and suggest policy recommendations. A policy memo is a tool for policy-making and it should be professionally written and easy to understand. It is not an argumentative paper but an evidence-based piece that recognized the issue and the consequences of different policy alternatives. This assignment constitutes 20% of your total grade. It is due before July 4.

3. Reflection essay:

The reflection essay should be between 800-1000 words long. These should be based on our readings this semester. However, these are not supposed to be summaries of different reading but rather an opportunity for you to reflect on some major issues in U.S. foreign policy (realism vs. idealism; humanitarian intervention; American exceptionalism; Grand Strategy; international order, etc.) in the context of current events. It should consist of a posted article from a major newspaper or periodical such as the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Economist*, the *New Yorker*, etc. and NOT Wikipedia or random history web sites from the Internet. Your essay should examine how the article relates to a major theme of either a specific lecture or the class in general. Let me know if you need assistance in choosing your topic and/or locating your sources. These should be written at a collegiate level, feature clear writing free of jargon. You will cite materials using the Chicago Style of Manual. Additional research is not required but you are not discouraged to use additional sources (other than assigned to this class). The essay constitutes 25% of your grade and it is due the last week of our class.

4. Final Exam:

You will take-home, open-book final exam. Final exam is 25% of overall course grade and will be cumulative. Study guides for the exam will be provided. Date is TBD.

Tentative Weekly Schedule:

Week I – Introduction; Study of the History of American Foreign Relations; Origins of American Foreign Policy

Monday, June 2: Michael Hogan & Thomas Patterson eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, pp. 10-50 (Bb)

Thursday, June 5: Herring, *From Colony*, Ch. 1&4 (Bb); “A Model of Christian Charity” (“The City upon a Hill”) by John Winthrop; “The United States Elevated to Honor and Glory” by Ezra Stiles; James Madison, *The Federalist* #10 (Bb)

Week II – The Foundation of an Empire

Monday, June 9: Herring, Ch. 7&8; Josiah Strong on Anglo-Saxon Predominance; Alfred Thayer Mahan on Sea Power; Richard Olney on American Jurisdiction in the Western Hemisphere (Bb)

Thursday, June 12: Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 2 (Bb) The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine; Roosevelt’s Case for Supporting the Revolution in Panama (Bb)

Week III – The Wilsonian Moment? Isolationism?

Monday, June 16: Herring, pp. 378-435; Erez Manela, selected on Bb; Woodrow Wilson, Peace Without Victory; Fourteen Points; League of Nations Speech; Calvin Coolidge’s Speech on the Dawes Plan;

Thursday, June 19: No Class – Federal Holiday

Week IV – Making World Safe for Democracy – FDR and the Search for a New Global Order

Monday, June 23: No class – attending conference; Readings are still due. Herring, Ch. 13

Thursday, June 26: Specter, Ch. 5; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 16 (Bb); The Atlantic Charter; FDR, Broadcast to the Nation; Bretton Woods Decisions; Dumbarton Oaks decisions (Bb).

Week V – The Origins of the Cold War

Monday, June 30: Herring, pp. 594-626; George Kennan’s Long Telegram; The Truman Doctrine; Winston Churchill’s Iron Curtain Speech; NSC 68: Conclusions and Recommendations (Bb)

Thursday, July 3: Westad, *The Global Cold War* (selected on Bb)

Week VI – The Cold War in Asia

Monday, July 7: Herring, pp. 594-650; 736-759;

Thursday, July 10: Kissinger, Ch. 29; George C. Marshall on the Situation in China; William Knowland, Argument against the Recognition of China; Dean Acheson’s Defense Perimeter Speech; The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (Bb)

Week VII – Détente

Monday, July 14: Herring, Ch. 17-18; Zubok & Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, Ch. 8

(Bb)

Thursday, July 17: Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 28; Henry Kissinger on the National Interest; NSC Options Paper on Chile; Nixon's Speech Explaining the Global Centers of Power; Zbigniew Brzezinski, Excerpt from *Memoir*; Carter-Brezhnev Exchange of Letters (Bb)

Week VIII – The Reagan Revolution and the End of History

Monday, July 21: Herring, Ch. 19; The Reagan Doctrine Speech; George HW Bush, Thanksgiving Day Address; George HW Bush Declares A New World Order (Bb)

Thursday, July 24: Herring, Ch. 20; Clinton Speech at the WTO; Statement on Kosovo March 24, 1999; Bush's War (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/bushswar/#video-1>) (selected); Richard Haas, "Trump's Foreign Policy Doctrine? The Withdrawal Doctrine" (Bb); John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault"

Religious Holidays

In accordance with the GMU policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy

Academic Integrity

This course will be governed strictly by the George Mason University's Code of Academic Integrity. All students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the code. They may find it at the following website: <https://oai.gmu.edu/full-honor-code-document/>

In writing courses, plagiarism is considered a particularly serious offense. All papers will be submitted electronically and cross-checked for plagiarism. Students found to be guilty of plagiarism will receive the maximum possible punishment.

Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification

Disability Support Services (DSS)

The instructor for this course is committed to providing accommodation for students with disabilities. Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information see: <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/non-discrimination-and-reasonable-accommodation-on-the-basis-of-disability/>

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment

that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students and employees who believe that they have been sexually harassed, sexually assaulted or subjected to sexual or interpersonal misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students and employees.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual or interpersonal misconduct: As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.