GOVT 344: Republic or Empire?
Ideas and Practice in American Foreign Policy

Summer 2022, Seminar: Mondays & Thursdays, 5:00-6:30pm
One Asynchronous Weekly Assignment

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

Course Description:

Is the United States a republic or an empire? Even before George Washington warned in his Farewell Address against unnecessary entanglements, Thomas Paine argued that “the birthday of a new world is at hand” and that Americans possessed a special mission to liberate other peoples. The debate continues today in arguments over American involvement in the Middle East, the proper posture toward international alliances, and whether humanitarian concerns may justify war. This course will explore the development and trajectory of American foreign policy from the perspective of the history of ideas, connecting issues of human nature and the moral life to practical questions of international affairs, constitutionalism, and the paradoxes of American exceptionalism. Readings will be drawn from history, philosophy, and case studies in American and international politics.

Course Goals:

- Acquaint students with a broad overview of American foreign policy history and some of the principles on which that foreign policy has been worked out over time.
- Explore competing voices within that foreign policy tradition, with an emphasis on the long-running debate over intervention vs. restraint, attending to its subtleties and ironies.
- Connect these questions to broader philosophical concerns about the nature of politics, power, and human nature in a way that complements the undergraduate curriculum as a whole.

Required Texts:


Additional texts will be distributed digitally
Course Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly, and are permitted one unexcused absence. Additional absences should be for legitimate reasons and adequately explained and documented. Each unexcused absence after that will result in a 1/3rd letter grade penalty per absence. The class will meet via Zoom, with podcast lectures posted on Fridays.

Examinations and Assignments (100 points): Assignments for this course involve completing:

- A foreign policy “autobiography” (20 points)
- Two seminar reflection paper (20 points)
- One simulation policy brief (20 points)
- Participation and Exit Tickets (20 points)
- Final exam (20 points)

The foreign policy “autobiography” should be between 2 and 3 pages in length (double-spaced) and is due in class on June 13. This short assignment is designed to get you thinking about the factors that have shaped your own thinking on American foreign policy, as well as the broader historical situation we find ourselves in. There is no “wrong” answer, other than to violate the basic rules of paper-writing.

The reflection papers should between 3 and 4 pages in length (double-spaced). You will sign up for a slot at the beginning of the course, and the papers should analyze and explore the readings for that particular class. Although these papers do not involve research, they will need to follow some of the same standards as a traditional paper—specifically, they should be written at a collegiate level, feature clear writing, and convey thoughtful analysis that goes beyond mere summary. The reflection papers should be posted on Blackboard by 10pm the night before the class it is for. Details on the particulars of these assignments will be discussed in class, especially regarding the simulation policy brief.

Class discussion is highly encouraged, and thoughtful participation will be noted. Each class, there will be an exit ticket quiz and reflection questions on the readings. At various points in class, we will pause to answer questions or write reflections on the exit ticket, which will be turned in at the end of class. The lowest two exit ticket grades will be dropped.

At the end of the course, there will be a take-home, open-book essay exam covering the themes of the course.
Course Policies (cont.):

- Grading Scale: This course uses a ten-point grading scale (e.g. A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-90), B (83-86), etc.). Final grades will be rounded to the first decimal point.
- Late work: Assignments may be submitted late only with prior authorization and will normally incur a significant penalty.
- In weeks where we meet in person, computers are not permitted in class without my express permission. All smartphones or equivalent devices must be securely put away and out of reach, sight and hearing before class begins. Consider printing out any readings that do not appear in the textbook. Any intentional violation of this policy may result in penalties up to and including expulsion from the course. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs.
- Writing assignments turned in electronically must be turned in either as PDFs or Microsoft Word documents. Do not turn in assignments in Google Docs or as links to Google Docs. They will not be accepted. If you work in Google Docs, you must export the file as a PDF or Word document. This will sometimes interfere with formatting. As students, you have access to free copies of Microsoft Office - see the Technology Services website for details.
- While this is not an English course, learning to write well is an essential element of collegiate instruction. As such, all of your work may be marked for grammar or spelling. However, given that this is an introductory course, as long as the material is readable, grammar and spelling will not be graded.
- Professorial Prerogative: The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus. Major changes will be made only after announcement in at least one class meeting.

Academic Honesty:

- The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the appropriate format for this class. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the
academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

- As in many classes, a number of projects in this class are designed to be completed within your study group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Collaborative projects may be divided up so that individual group members complete portions of the whole, provided that group members take sufficient steps to ensure that the pieces conceptually fit together in the end product. Other projects are designed to be undertaken independently. In the latter case, you may discuss your ideas with others and conference with peers on drafts of the work; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

- Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. 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 Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

- Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit http://ds.gmu.edu/
for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

- **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 703-993-3686 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
Course Schedule:

**Week 1: Present Discontents: The Last Twenty Years**

June 6. Course Overview & Introduction

June 9: Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I.4, I.6, II.1, III.1, III.3.

**Week 2: The Founding(s)**

June 13  [Foreign policy “autobiography” due.]

June 16
- “Federalist No. 11”, by Publius [Alexander Hamilton]. In Bacevich, 21-24


**Week 3: Westward Expansion**

June 20  NO CLASS - JUNETEENTH

William Penn [Jeremiah Everts], "Present Crisis in the Condition of the American Indians" (1830) In Bacevich, 41-42.

John Ross, "Letter to Congress" (1836) In Bacevich, 42-43.


*From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*, by George C. Herring. Pages 93-114 (“Purified, as by Fire”)

**Week 4: World War and the Advent of a Grand Strategy of Primacy**

June 27   From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776, by George C. Herring. Chapter 9-10

“Chatauqua Speech,” by Franklin D. Roosevelt. In Bacevich, 208-211.

Walter Lippmann, U. S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic (1943) in Bacevich, 242-245.


United States Objectives and Programs for National Security (“NSC 68”)


From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776, by George C. Herring. Pages 635-650.

**Week 5: Retiring Superpower?**

July 4    NO CLASS – INDEPENDENCE DAY


**Week 6: The Liberal International Order and American Power**
July 11  


“China Is Not an Enemy” (Open Letter), by M. Taylor Fravel et al

**Week 7: Foreign Policy Simulation**

July 18  In-Class Crisis Simulation


*How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, by Daniel Immerwahr. Chapters 18, 21 and 22

**Week 8: Rethinking American Foreign Policy**


July 25  Take home Exam Due (Issued July 21)