

GOVT 344: U.S. Foreign Policy

Republic or Empire? Ideas and Practice in American Foreign Policy

Summer 2021, Seminar: Mondays & Thursdays, 5:30-7pm

Podcast Lectures: Fridays

The Fund for American Studies
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:

Ideas and American Foreign Policy: A Reader. Edited by Andrew J. Bacevich. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

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 in person, 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 responses** (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 15. 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 be 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. We will also have a class Blackboard group for discussion and for the class simulation. Every class in which someone has submitted a reflection paper, you should post a short (3-5 sentences) engagement or response on Blackboard. You can miss up to two responses before it will begin affecting your participation grade.

At the end of the course, there will be a take-home, open-book essay exam covering the themes of the course.

Course Policies:

- Late work: Assignments may be submitted late only with prior authorization and will normally incur a significant penalty.
 - Academic Dishonesty: This class will have a "Zero Tolerance Policy." Cheating on quizzes or exams may result in a failing grade for the assignment or the course, or disciplinary action from TFAS and/or GMU.
 - 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.
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Course Schedule:

Week 1: Present Discontents: The Last Twenty Years

June 7. Course Overview & Introduction

George W. Bush, "West Point Commencement Speech" (2002) in Bacevich, 445-447.

George W. Bush, "Second Inaugural Address" (2005) in Bacevich, 456-459.

Donald J. Trump, "Inaugural Address" (2017) in Bacevich, 516.

June 10: Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I.4, I.6, II.1, III.1, III.3.

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Books X and IX

Week 2: The Founding(s)

June 14 [Foreign policy "**autobiography**" due.]

"A Model of Christian Charity," by John Winthrop. In Bacevich, 4-5.

"Theopolis Americana," by Cotton Mather. In Bacevich, 5-7.

"Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a Good Soldier," by Samuel Davies. In Bacevich, 7-10.

"Common Sense," by Thomas Paine. In Bacevich, 11-15

June 17

"*Federalist* No. 11", by Publius [Alexander Hamilton]. In Bacevich, 21-24

"Farewell Address," by George Washington. In Bacevich, 24-29.

What the Anti-Federalists Were For, by Herbert J. Storing. Chapter 3: "The Small Republic."

Week 3: Westward Expansion

June 21 "Third Annual Message," by Thomas Jefferson. In Bacevich, 29-32.

"Speech on Independence Day," by John Quincy Adams. In Bacevich, 32-37.

"The Monroe Doctrine," by James Monroe. In Bacevich, 37-40.

June 24 "On Indian Removal," by Andrew Jackson. In Bacevich, 40-41.

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.

"The Significance of the Frontier in American History," by Fredrick Jackson Turner. In Bacevich, 81-85.

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 28 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.

July 1 "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," by George F. Kennan. In Bacevich, 250-259.

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

"Dictatorships and Double Standards," by Jeanne Kirkpatrick. In Bacevich, 384-391.

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

Week 5: Retiring Superpower?

July 5 NO CLASS – INDEPENDENCE DAY

July 8 "From Containment to Enlargement," by Anthony Lake. In Bacevich, 431-435.

"Address to a Joint Session of Congress," by George W. Bush. In Bacevich, 438-441.

"Superpowers Don't Get to Retire," by Robert Kagan. In Bacevich, 501-506.

Week 6: The Liberal International Order and American Power

July 12 *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World*, by Robert Kagan. Pages 3-14, 40-61, 105-107, 153-163.

"A World Imagined: Nostalgia and Liberal Order," by Patrick Porter.

"The Case for Offshore Balancing," by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt. In Bacevich, 509-516.

“Liberals, Neocons, Realcons,” by Michael C. Desch.

July 15 “Against the Great Powers: Reflections on Balancing Nuclear and Conventional Power,” by Elbridge Colby.

“Can China Rise Peacefully?” by John J. Mearsheimer.

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

Week 7: Foreign Policy Simulation

July 19 In-Class Crisis Simulation

July 22 *Taxing Wars*, by Sarah Kreps. Chapter 7.

How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything, by Rosa Brooks. Chapters 7 and 8.

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 26 “The Catholic Worker Response to Hiroshima,” by Dorothy Day. In Bacevich, 361-362.

The Tragedy of American Diplomacy [Excerpt], by William Appleman Williams. In Bacevich 310-312.

“Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam,” by Martin Luther King Jr. In Bacevich, 332-341.

“A Citizen’s Response to the National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” by Wendell Berry. In Bacevich, 473-477.

July 30 Take home Exam Due