

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

Summer 2020, Mondays & Thursdays, 6-8:30pm, Room TBD

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:**

*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 and Participation: 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 1/3<sup>rd</sup> letter grade penalty per absence.

Class discussion is highly encouraged, and thoughtful participation will be noted.

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

- A foreign policy **“autobiography”** (20 points)
- One seminar reflection papers** (20 points)
- One simulation policy brief** (20 points)
- A **final essay** (40 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). They can be turned in for any class, and 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. Details on the particulars of these assignments will be discussed in class, especially regarding the simulation policy brief and the final essay.

## Course Policies:

- No computers, tablets, or cell phones may be used in the classroom without specific prior permission.
  - 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. Plagiarism, or the unattributed borrowing of another person's ideas in written work, will constitute cheating and will be dealt with as such.
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- **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 8 (3pm-5:30pm). 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.

*From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*, by George C. Herring. Pages 938-951 (Bush and his administration's transformation from 2000 to 2003).

June 11: Saint Augustine, *City of God*, 5.12, 5.19, 5.24.

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I.4, I.6, I.9, I.58, II.3, III.1, III.3.

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

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

June 15 [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

"*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."

June 18 NO CLASS

**Week 3: Westward Expansion**

June 22 "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.

“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”)

June 25 “The March of the Flag,” by Albert J. Beveridge. In Bacevich, 85-89.

“In Support of an American Empire,” by Albert J. Beveridge. In Bacevich, 97-102.

“Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine,” by Theodore Roosevelt. In Bacevich, 112-114.

“The Promise of American Life,” by Herbert Croly. In Bacevich, 114-121.

*From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*, by George C. Herring. Pages 427-435 (“A New Age”)

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

June 29 “What is Grand Strategy? Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield,” by Rebecca Lissner

“War Message,” by Woodrow Wilson. In Bacevich, 147-152.

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

“Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels,” by Charles Beard. In Bacevich 214-215

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

*From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776*, by George C. Herring. Chapter 13.

- July 2 “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 6 “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.
- July 9 *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.

### **Week 6: The Liberal International Order and American Power**

- July 13 *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
- July 16 “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: Rethinking American Foreign Policy**

July 20 “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 23 In-Class Simulation

**Week 8:**

July 27 Class-Decided Topic

July 30 [Final Essay Due]