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 2023
Class Hours: Monday/Thursday, 5pm-6:30pm
Location: Van Metre Hall, Room 311

Instructor: Milorad Lazic
Email: mlazic@gmu.edu
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)


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

You are not required to purchase any materials for this class. 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 (30%)
- Policy memo (25 %)
- Reflection essay (25%)
- Two blog posts (10% each – 20% total)

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 emergencies 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 10% (20% 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 policymaking, 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 15% 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.). 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 is due on July 20.

4. Blog posts:

You must submit two blog entries to Blackboard. One must be submitted between June 3 and July 3 and the other must be submitted between July 4 and July 24. Blog entries 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. The posting should include an essay of 350-400 words explaining how the article relates to a major theme of either a specific lecture or the class in general. For example, you can read Michael McFaul’s Foreign Affairs article, “Xi Jinping Is Not Stalin. How a Lazy Historical Analogy Derailed Washington’s China Strategy,” and discuss it in the context of the strategy of containment. Let me know if you need assistance in choosing your topic and/or locating your sources. Blog entries will be graded on a 5-point scale. You are
welcome to post comments on each other’s blog entries. No late blog entries will be accepted, and you are advised to submit them long before the due date. Blog entries will be graded on a 5-point scale and constitutes 20 percent (7.5% each) of your total grade.

**Tentative Weekly Schedule:**

**Week I – Study of the History of American Foreign Relations and the Origins of American Foreign Policy:**

**Mon, June 5:** Michael Hogan & Thomas Patterson eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, pp. 10-50; 212-256.

**Thr June, 8:** Herring, *From Colony*, Ch. 1&4; “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 – TR and the Foundation of Empire**

**Mon, June 12:** Herring, Ch. 7&8; Specter, *The Atlantic Realists*, Ch. 1; George Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, Ch. 1; Josiah Strong on Anglo-Saxon Predominance; Alfred Thayer Mahan on Sea Power; Richard Olney on American Jurisdiction in the Western Hemisphere (Bb)

**Thr, June 15:** Herring, pp. 337-363; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 2 (Bb) The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine; Roosevelt’s Case for Supporting the Revolution in Panama; Theodore Roosevelt, The Strenuous Life; Theodore Roosevelt, Speech at Charleston: Roosevelt’s Letter to Cecil Rice (Bb)

**Week III – Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order**

**Mon, June 19:** NO CLASS

**Thr, June 22:** Herring, pp. 378-435; Erez Manela, selected on Bb; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 9 (Bb) Woodrow Wilson on Latin America Policy; Robert Lansing on Intervention; Woodrow Wilson, Peace Without Victory; Declaration of Neutrality; War Message; Fourteen Points; League of Nations Speech (Bb)

**Week IV – The Internationalism of the 1920s and 1930s & WW2**

**Mon, June 26:** Herring, Ch. 11; Specter, Ch. 2; Herbert Hoover on Foreign Trade; Calvin Coolidge’s Speech on the Dawes Plan; Charles Evan Hughes on Naval Disarmament; FDR, Message to the Nations of the World; FDR Address at Chautauqua (Bb)

**Thr, June 29:** Herring, Ch. 13; 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**

**Mon, July 3:** NO CLASS
Thr, July 6: Herring, pp. 594-626; Specter Ch. 6; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 17-18 (Bb); George Kennan’s Long Telegram; The Truman Doctrine; NSC 68: Conclusions and Recommendations (Bb); George C. Marshall on the Situation in China; William Knowland, Argument against the Recognition of China;

**Week VI – The Cold War turns Hot: Berlin, Cuba, Vietnam**

Mon, July 10: Herring, Ch. 16; Dean Acheson to JFK on Berlin (Bb): JFK, Address to the American People about the Cuban Missile Crisis (Bb)

Thr, July 13: Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 19 & 26; Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (Bb); March 31, 1968: Remarks on Decision not to Seek Re-Election (Bb)

**Week VII – The Rise and Fall of Détente and the Reagan Revolution**

Mon July 17: Herring, Ch. 17-18; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Ch. 28; Henry Kissinger on the National Interest; NSC Options Paper on Chile; Zbigniew Brzezinski, Excerpt from *Memoir*; Carter-Brezhnev Exchange of Letters (Bb)

Thr, July 20: Herring, Ch. 19; Kissinger, Diplomacy, Ch. 30; Ronald Reagan’s Evil Empire Speech; The Reagan Doctrine Speech; George HW Bush Declares A New World Order (Bb)

**Week VIII – The US after the Cold War**

Mon, July 24: Herring, Ch. 20; Clinton Speech at the WTO; Clinton State of the Union Address; Transcript of President Clinton’s Speech on Bosnia; Statement on Kosovo March 24, 1999; Excerpt from 2000 Presidential Debate (Bb); *Bush’s War* (https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/bushwar/#video-1) (selected); Sestanovich, “Obama & Retrenchment” (Bb); John Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault”; Magnus Petersson, *NATO and the Crisis in the International Order* (selected excerpts) (Bb)

**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 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.