

**GOVT 344: U.S. Foreign Policy:  
Republic or Empire?  
Ideas and Practice in American Foreign Policy**



Fall 2020, Seminar: Tuesdays, 4:30–7:00pm  
(with some additional early  
semester meetings due to the  
quarantine and one asynchronous  
element; see below)

The Fund for American Studies  
Capital Semester Program  
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:**

Bacevich, Andrew J., editor. *Ideas and American Foreign Policy: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0190645403

McDougall, Walter A. *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997. ISBN: 978-0395901328

Greene, Graham. *The Quiet American*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2004. ISBN: 978-0143039020

(Note: This course also occasionally uses supplementary readings, which are available on Blackboard. If you have trouble downloading, printing, accessing them, etc., please let me know as soon as possible.)

## 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 1/3<sup>rd</sup> letter grade penalty per absence (i.e. from B+ to B, etc.). The class will meet via Zoom through September 4<sup>th</sup> and on GMU's Arlington Campus (Van Metre Hall 118) after that.

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

- A foreign policy “autobiography”** (15 points)
- Three reading analysis papers** (3 x 10 points each = 30 points)
- Open book quizzes** (15 points)
- Final exam** (20 points)
- Participation** (20 points)

The **foreign policy “autobiography”** should be 500-800 words in length (double-spaced) and is due via email by class time on **September 8**. 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 in which we find ourselves. There is no “wrong” answer, other than to violate the basic rules of paper-writing and academic integrity.

The **reading analysis papers** should be between 800-1200 words in length (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman size 12). You will **sign up for three slots by Sept. 1 at the link below**; papers should analyze and explore the readings due for that particular class. No more than 3 students may sign up for a reading analysis of the same class period; the third slot may only be taken if all other class periods have two slots filled. These papers do not involve research, but they must follow 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. Signup is via the Google Sheet at this link:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1eNw1BIRO1uHJGIqOuV10HfALBuV9wfVHUYE\\_QRmZoEU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1eNw1BIRO1uHJGIqOuV10HfALBuV9wfVHUYE_QRmZoEU/edit?usp=sharing)

For most class meetings, you will take an **open-book quiz** of the material covered. The questions will go out in advance via email and answers are **due back via email by 11:59 p.m. the night before that class**.

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

### 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.” Academic dishonesty of any kind 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:**
**Session 1: Present Discontents: The Last Twenty Years (Aug. 25 – 90 minutes via Zoom)**

Course Overview, Syllabus, & Introductions

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

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

“Weighing the Costs of War in Iraq,” by Barack Obama. In Bacevich, 462-463.

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

“Study Finds Relationship Between High Military Casualties and Votes for Trump Over Clinton,” by Zaid Jilani. *The Intercept*.

**Session 2: Republicanism and Empire Before America (Aug. 26 – 90 minutes via Zoom)**

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.1, 2.34-2.54, 5.84-5.113, 6.8-6.24.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III, chapter 11: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.3.three.html>

Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, 3.10, 3.14, 3.21, 4.4, 4.15, 5.12, 5.19, 5.24.

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book IX, 1-2, 4; Book X, 1-9, and Book XI, 6.

**Session 3: American Republicanism Developing (Sept. 1 – 90 minutes via Zoom)**

[ Deadline to **sign up for Reading Analysis** dates:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1eNw1BIRO1uHJGIqOuV10HfALBuV9wfVHUYE\\_QRmZoEU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1eNw1BIRO1uHJGIqOuV10HfALBuV9wfVHUYE_QRmZoEU/edit?usp=sharing) ]

“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.

“Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death,” by Patrick Henry. In Bacevich, 10.

“The United States Elevated to Glory and Honor,” by Ezra Stiles. In Bacevich, 15- 20.

**Session 4: American Republicanism and Nationhood (Sept. 2 – 90 minutes via Zoom)**

[Foreign policy “**autobiography**” due]

McDougall, “*Preface*”, “*Introduction*,” and Chapter 1: “Liberty, or Exceptionalism (so called)”

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

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

*Federalist* nos. 11, 15, 16, 17, 39.

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

Agrippa, Letter XII and Cato, Letter III. *The Anti-Federalist: Writings by Opponents of the Constitution*. Edited by Herbert J. Storing.

### **Session 5: Movie: *The Quiet American* (1958) (120 minutes – asynchronous, but due before class 9/8)**

Watch: *The Quiet American* (1958):

<https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/gmu277629/watch/D0B587C5B61A8D3D?referrer=direct>  
(Use need your GMU NetID credentials for access. N.B.: Mac users will need to use Chrome, Firefox, or some other non-Safari browser.)

Also READ: Roger Ebert, Review of *The Quiet American* (2003):

<https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-quiet-american-2003>

### **Session 6: Imagination and World Affairs (Sept. 8)**

“A Covenant with all Mankind: Ronald Reagan’s Idyllic Vision of America in the World,” by Justin D. Garrison. [PDF]

Greene, *The Quiet American* (entire book)

### **Session 7: Looking Homeward (Sept. 15)**

McDougall, Chapter 2: “Unilateralism, Or Isolationism (so called)”

“Third Annual Message,” by Thomas Jefferson. In Bacevich, 29-32.

McDougall, Chapter 3: “The American System, or Monroe Doctrine (so called)”

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

Speeches of Henry Clay and others on the Independence of the South American Republics and the Monroe Doctrine (1818/1822) [PDF]

### **Session 8: Expansionism as Imperialism? (Sept. 22)**

McDougall, Chapter 4: “Expansionism, or Manifest Destiny (so called)”

“On Indian Removal,” by Andrew Jackson. In Bacevich, 40-41.

[Jeremiah Everts], “Present Crisis in the Condition of the American Indians.” In Bacevich, 41-42.

“Letter to Congress,” by John Ross. In Bacevich, 42-43.

“The Great Nation of Futurity,” by John L. O’Sullivan. In Bacevich, 53-56.

“Annexation,” by John L. O’Sullivan. In Bacevich, 56-59.

“The War with Mexico,” by Abraham Lincoln. In Bacevich, 61-63.

“Letter to the Emperor of Japan,” by Millard Fillmore. In Bacevich, 63-65.

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

### **Session 9: From McKinley to Wilson: A Turning Point (Sept. 29)**

McDougall, Chapter 5: “Progressive Imperialism”

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

“On Empire and the Philippines,” by William Graham Sumner. In Bacevich, 89-90.

“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.

“A Broadway Pageant,” by Walt Whitman. In Bacevich, 65-67.

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

“Preparedness, the Road to Universal Slaughter,” by Emma Goldman. In Bacevich, 138-142.

### **Session 10: One Last Retreat? The Interwar Years (Oct. 6)**

“Kellogg-Briand Pact.” In Bacevich, 196-197.

“Merchants of Death,” by H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen. In Bacevich, 200-202.

“War Is a Racket,” by Smedley Butler. In Bacevich, 203-208.

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

“Neutrality and War,” by Charles Lindbergh. In Bacevich, 215-220.

### **October 13 – GMU Administrative Monday – No Class**

### **Session 11: World War and the Advent of a Grand Strategy of Primacy (Oct. 20)**

McDougall, Chapter 6: “Wilsonianism, or Liberal Internationalism (so called)”

“Peace without Victory,” by Woodrow Wilson. In Bacevich, 144-147.

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

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

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

### **Session 12: The Cold War and Character (Oct. 27)**

McDougall, Chapter 7: “Containment”

Chapter IX: “Robert A. Taft.” In *Profiles in Courage*, by John F. Kennedy.

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

“The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” by George F. Kennan. In Bacevich, 250-259.

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

### **Session 13: “A Normal Nation for Normal Times?” (Nov. 3)**

McDougall, Chapter 8: “Global Meliorism”

McDougall, “Conclusion: A Delightful Spot”

“From Containment to Enlargement,” by Anthony Lake. In Bacevich, 431-435.

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

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

“The Future of the Liberal World Order: Internationalism After America” by G. John Ikenberry.: [PDF]

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

### **Session 14: The Liberal International Order and American Power (Nov. 10)**

“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.

“Liberals, Neocons, Realcons,” by Michael C. Desch. [PDF]

“Robert Kagan: Machiavellian in Liberal Disguise,” by David C. Hendrickson. [PDF]

Patrick Porter, “Why America’s Grand Strategy Has Not Changed” [PDF]

“What is Grand Strategy? Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield,” by Rebecca Lissner [PDF]

*How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything*, by Rosa Brooks. Chapters 7 and 8. [PDF]

**Session 15: Rethinking American Foreign Policy (Nov. 17)**

*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.

*Democracy in America*, by Alexis de Tocqueville. Book II, Part iii, ch. 26 (“Some Considerations on War in Democratic Societies”): [https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/democracy-in-america-english-edition-vol-2/simple#lf1593-02\\_label\\_1026](https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/democracy-in-america-english-edition-vol-2/simple#lf1593-02_label_1026)

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

Final Exam Review

**Final Exam – Nov. 24**

Details to follow.