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Course Information

Course Number: INTA 605
Course Title: American Foreign Policy
Section: TBD
Time: Tuesday, 6:15pm – 8:55pm
Location: Classroom 4
Credit Hours: 3 credit hours

Instructor Details

Instructor: Professor Yuval Weber
Office: 7th Floor, L St NW side
E-Mail: weber@tamu.edu
Office Hours: Available in-person or video by appointment

Course Description

This course aims to provide students with the conceptual and critical tools to understand and analyze the origins, institutions, and policy challenges of contemporary American foreign policy. In assessing the transition away from the post-9/11 focus on non-state actors, irregular warfare, and counterterrorism towards a “return” to great power or strategic competition and the challenges posed by adversary states, we will evaluate how American policymakers and institutions have addressed core questions about American statecraft since the founding of the Republic. Namely, how has the national interest been defined? How engaged should the United States be in international affairs and the merits of isolationism, restraint, and internationalism? What are the rules and institutions of international affairs that best promote U.S. materials interests and moral values? How have the internal processes and equities within the various branches of U.S. government developed to permit or constrain the President from pursuing idiosyncratic foreign policy approaches?

The answers to these questions—and the theoretical debates and bureaucratic battles that shaped those answers—will help students understand the parameters of American power abroad, the domestic and institutional motivations and limitations to foreign policy, and the challenges posed by specific rivals to the international and regional interests of the United States.

The course proceeds in three broad sections: the conceptual bases and history of American foreign policy, the institutions of American foreign policy, and the contemporary challenges of American foreign policy. We will find that policymakers have long understood the tensions between the national security state and individual civil liberties, between the costs and benefits of an active role abroad versus relative disengagement, and perhaps most importantly, between formal and informal commitments to other states.
Course Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate a working knowledge of the history of U.S. foreign policy.
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of major schools of thought of the International Relations discipline.
- Critically analyze contemporary and historical international events and issues as they relate to U.S. foreign policy.
- Apply theories of foreign policy and international relations to decisions by historical and contemporary state leaders.
- Demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

One book is required for all students:


Other articles and chapters assigned will be accessed electronically through the course website. Other items will be downloaded from the Internet using links indicated in the outline by topic.

Coursework and Grading

Grades are based on pre-class writing assignments (30%), in-class participation (10% comprised of 5% in-class assignments and 5% engaged participation in discussion), two response papers (30% comprised of two 15% papers each), and CHOICE of a final in-class exam (30%) or a Congressional Research Service-style policy report.

- Pre-class writing assignment (30%)

Prior to each class meeting—except for two for the response papers outlined below—each student will answer 1-2 questions with each answer being no shorter than 100 words and no longer than 250 words. These questions will be disseminated by email or course website and can take several forms: they may be provocative questions for students to grapple with the theoretical or policy issues for that week, or they may be asked to take positions and argue for or against a particular notion, or they may be asked to speculate on the contemporary or future significance of a reading.

For our Tuesday evening class, the questions will generally be posted the previous Wednesday. The deadline for the responses will be 48 hours ahead of time on Sunday evening by 6:30pm. Many of the questions will be used to form debates in class, so feel free to put down your best and hottest takes.

Full credit will be given to answers that 1) answer the question and 2) provide logical reasoning or evidence to support that answer.
In-class participation (10% -- 5% for in-class assignments and 5% for engaged participation in discussion)

During each of the class meetings, we will have group and individual exercises and quizzes through a variety of modalities. Some of those exercises and quizzes will be graded for correctness and others for successfully completing them.

During each of the class meetings, the bulk of the time together will be in discussion. If you have done the reading and are ready to discuss, that is clearly obvious to me, your colleagues, and yourself, and will be evaluated according to Department and University rubrics. If you have done the reading but are not ready to discuss, there will be other opportunities to participate but you will have limited the discussion. If you have not done the reading and are not ready to discuss, that is also clearly obvious to me, your colleagues, and yourself.

Reflection Papers (30% -- 15% each)

Over the course of the semester, each student will prepare two “reflection papers” of no less 1250 words and no more than 1500 words (exclusive of notes and citations) due Week 8 and Week 15 by the beginning of those class meetings. There will be pre-class writing assignments those weeks.

Topics/Questions for the reflection papers will be distributed by the instructor ahead of time.

FINAL CHOICE A: Congressional Research Service-style report (30%)

The first choice for the final grade of the semester will be a Congressional Research Service-style report on a topic of the student’s choosing that will be no less than 1500 words and no more than 2500 words. “The Congressional Research Service (CRS) serves as shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. CRS experts assist at every stage of the legislative process — from the early considerations that precede bill drafting, through committee hearings and floor debate, to the oversight of enacted laws and various agency activities. CRS approaches complex topics from a variety of perspectives and examines all sides of an issue. Staff members analyze current policies and present the impact of proposed policy alternatives.”

Your task for this assignment is to summarize very concisely a foreign policy topic, outline the existing external conditions shaping U.S. policy options, and lay out without bias or rancor the potential policy pathways the U.S. government might pursue to fulfill the national interest. A bit more colloquially, the Congressional Research Service is often asked to prepare reports along the lines of: “We’re about to tackle ______, and I need you to become an expert now. Please write me a memo that outlines current US policy on ______ and how we have developed this policy over time. In short, tell me what our policy is, how we developed that policy, and what the international situation on this issue is right now. I need to understand what our realistic future policy options might be.”

Students electing this option will turn in their papers whenever the University schedules the final exam. They will not sit for the final exam.
• FINAL CHOICE B: Final exam (30%)

The second choice for the final grade of the semester will be a final exam that covers the course material and will be given whenever the University schedules the final exam.

Late Work Policy

• Pre-class assignments are considered late after 12:00pm on the day of the class meeting but will be accepted for half credit. Pre-class assignments will not be accepted after the beginning of class.
• In-class assignments are not eligible to make up. Excused absences on class days will obviate the requirement on that class day.
• Written products will be penalized one letter grade per day following deadlines.
Course Schedule

Please note that all readings subject to change but will be communicated to you as quickly as possible. I will be adding numerous recommended (not required) readings throughout the semester.

In addition, should world events or the news cycle take our class in a new direction, we’re going to ride that wave! In that regard, I expect students to keep track of ongoing international and national news so that we can have informed discussion of current events.

Week 01 | August 30, 2022 | Course Introduction

America First or American Leadership?


Week 02 | September 6, 2022 | What defines the national interest(s)?

Is there a single US national interest or are there competing national interests?


Recommended


Week 03 | September 13, 2022 | American Empire and the Not-Yet Indispensable Power (1865-1920)

How did the United States become the dominant power of the Western hemisphere but choose not to become an explicitly imperial state? What were the limits (then) of America’s extraterritorial power? Why did American influence not match its power?

**Recommended**


**Week 04 | September 20, 2022 | From Indispensable Power to Superpower (1920-1945)**

Why did the experience of WWI not lead to greater US involvement in international affairs? What was different about WWII?

• *Additional readings TBD*

**Week 05 | September 27, 2022 | Cold War Begins: America Tries on Great Power Competition (1945-1952)**

How did the United States and its interests and alliance decisions come to define “the Western world” and how did it conduct great power politics from a position of international leadership? Why did its leaders embrace indefinite conflict?

• Kennan, George F. *The Sources of Soviet Conduct by “X”.* *Foreign Affairs,* 1947.
• NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security. [https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm](https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm)

**Recommended**


**Week 06 | October 4, 2022 | Cold War Ends, Unipolarity Begins and Ends: (1953-2020)**

How did America build a hierarchical order of allies and partners? How did it survive strategic blunders under conditions of bipolarity? How did the Cold War end peacefully? Could unipolarity have run indefinitely? What are the lasting impacts—if any—of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks?


**Additional readings TBD**

**Week 07 | October 11, 2022 | NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

**Week 08 | October 18, 2022 | Washington’s Watchers: Ideology, Interests, and Foreign Policy Observers**

- Special Guest: Professor David McCourt (UC-Davis)
- **Readings TBD**

**Week 09 | October 25, 2022 | Institutions: Presidency**

- **Additional readings TBD**

**Week 10 | November 1, 2022 | Institutions: Congress**


**Week 11 | November 8, 2022 | Institutions: Executive Branch**

Week 12 | November 15, 2022 | Institutions: Interest Groups and Public Opinion

• Trevor Thrall and Erik Goepner, Millennials and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Next Generation’s Attitudes toward Foreign Policy and War (and Why They Matter), (Washington, DC: CATO Institute, 2015).

Week 13 | November 22, 2022 | Transnational Politics


Week 14 | November 29, 2022 | Asia-Pacific and China

China: Any Other Outcome Except Another Cold War?

• “China’s National Defense in the New Era”


• Additional or different readings TBD

Week 15 | December 6, 2022 | | Europe and Russia

Why Are the Russians So Angry and What’s Their Endgame?

• Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Foreign Policy Concept, 2021.


• Additional or different readings TBD

Learning objectives: By the end of the session, students will be able to explain and evaluate Russia’s sources of dissatisfaction with the international order alongside official Washington’s (in)ability to assess Russian conduct and policy.

Week 16 | DATE TBD | Final Exam OR Final CRS-style Report Due

Final papers due in line with University and School policies on final examinations.
University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” (Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see University Rule 08.01.01.M1):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in
most instances, you will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s Title IX webpage.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in proper self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Makeup Work Policy

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines. The fact that these are university-excused absences does not relieve the student of responsibility for prior notification and documentation. Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1). Please also note that “the instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2). Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code; failure to notify and/or document properly may result in an unexcused absence. Falsification of documentation is a violation of the Honor Code. (See Student Rule 24.)

- Participation in an activity that is required for a class and appears on the university authorized activity list at https://studentactivities.tamu.edu/app/sponsauth/index
- Death or major illness in a student's immediate family.
- Illness of a dependent family member.
- Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student's presence.
- Religious holy day. NOTE: Prior notification is NOT required.
- Injury or illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class.
  - Injury or illness of three or more class days: Student will provide a medical confirmation note from his or her medical provider within one week of the last date of the absence (see Student Rules 7.1.6.1)
  - Injury or illness of less than three class days: Student will provide one or both of these (at instructor’s discretion), within one week of the last date of the absence:
- (i.) Texas A&M University Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class form available at [http://attendance.tamu.edu](http://attendance.tamu.edu) or
  (ii.) Confirmation of visit to a health care professional affirming date and time of visit.

- Required participation in military duties.
- Mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school that cannot be rescheduled.
- Other absences may be excused at the discretion of the instructor with prior notification and proper documentation. In cases where prior notification is not feasible (e.g., accident or emergency) the student must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence, including an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class.
- On rare occasions, the instructor might have to miss a class due to administrative or academic responsibilities out of town. This will be exceedingly rare, but if it does occur, the instructor reserves the right to reschedule class at a time when the vast majority of students are available for the make-up class and will convey the material to students unable to attend the make-up during office hours. The instructor may also schedule a virtual class at the same time as the regular class meeting time as an alternative to rescheduling the class meeting.