

Course Information

Course Number: INTA 605
Course Title: American Foreign Policy
Section: TBD
Time: Thursdays, 6:30-9:15
Location: TBD
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Professor Amy Austin Holmes
Office: TBD
E-Mail: aaholmes@tamu.edu
Office Hours: Monday and Thursday from 4-5pm and 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 Prerequisites

None

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

We will use selections from:

- W. LaFeber. *The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750-Present*. W.W. Norton, 1994.
- M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2018
- J. Mankoff. *Empires of Eurasia: How Imperial Legacies Shape International Security*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2022

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%), two response papers (30% comprised of two 15% papers each), and a final Congressional Research Service-style policy report (30%).

Pre-class writing assignment (30%)

Prior to each class meeting, with the exception of 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. Sufficient answers

answer the question through assertion of opinion; good answers additionally provide a thesis to justify the answer; great answers additionally provide evidence to support the thesis. **Answers are due 24 hours ahead of our Thursday evening class, or Wednesday by 6:30pm.**

In-class participation (10%)

Students are expected to participate actively in every class and to demonstrate that they have done the readings.

Response Papers (30% - worth 15% each)

Over the course of the semester, each student will prepare two response papers of no less than 1000 words and no more than 1500 words on that week's readings and topic in lieu of the shorter pre-class writing assignment. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor when he or she is planning to write a response paper and to confirm the topic of the response paper with the instructor. Wide latitude will be given so this is an opportunity for the student to pursue any topic of personal interest.

Final Paper: Congressional Research Service-style report (30%)

The final assignment 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."

Grading Scale:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 68 and below

Late Work Policy

Missing the deadline for assignments leads to a decrease in grade by 10% for each 24 hours.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Introduction: Approaching American Foreign Policy

America First or American Leadership?

- Walter Russell Mead, 2002. *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*. New York: Routledge, pp. 3-29.
- Daniel Deudney and Jeffrey Meiser. 2008. "American Exceptionalism." In M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 21-39.
- Daniel Immenwahr. 2019. *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Introduction.

Week 2

The National Interest

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

- Hans Morgenthau, 1950. "The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstractions." *American Political Science Review* 44 (4), pp.833-854.
- Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross. 1997. "Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy." *International Security* 21 (3), pp.5-53.
- Peter Trubowitz, 1998. *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 1.
- De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, and Alastair Smith. 2011. *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior is Almost Always Good Politics*. New York: PublicAffairs, Introduction and Chapter 1.

Week 3

America's Rise: Laying the Foundations for "Superpowerdom" (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?

- LaFeber, Walter. *The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750-Present*. W.W.Norton, 1994. Chapters 6-10.

Week 4**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?

- LaFeber, Walter. *The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750-Present*. W.W. Norton, 1994. Chapters 11-13.

Week 5**The Cold War and America as a Superpower (1945-1990)**

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? How did the United States build a network of allies and partners?

- Richard Saull. 2018. "American Foreign Policy During the Cold War." In M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch 6.
- John Ikenberry, 2019. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars, New Edition*. Princeton University Press, Chapter 6.
- 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>

Week 6**Post Cold-War and America as a Hyperpower (1990-2015)**

How did the Cold War end peacefully? Could unipolarity have endured? What are the lasting impacts of the 9/11 attacks? What are the patterns of US military intervention over time?

- Michael Mandelbaum. *The Four Ages of American Foreign Policy*, Chapters 10-11.
- John Dumbrell. 2018. "America in the 1990s: searching for purpose. In M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch 7.
- John LaFeber, 2002. "The Bush Doctrine." *Diplomatic History* 26 (4), pp. 543-558.
- Kushi, Sidita, and Monica Duffy Toft. "Introducing the Military Intervention Project: A New Dataset on US Military Interventions, 1776–2019." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2023, pp. 752–79.

Week 7

Institutions: Presidency

What role does the President play in American foreign policy? How has that role changed over time?

- Kaufmann, Chaim. "Threat inflation and the failure of the marketplace of ideas: The selling of the Iraq war." *International Security* 29, no. 1 (2004): 5-48.
- Howell, William G. 2011. "Presidential Powers in War." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14:89-105.
- Jerel A. Rosati and James M. Scott. 2007. "Presidential Power and Leadership: Constitutional Roles and Strengths," In *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy*, Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 68-72.
- Paul K. MacDonald, 2018. "America First? Explaining Continuity and Change in Trump's Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 133 (3), pp.401-434.

Week 8

Institutions: Congress

What role does Congress play in American foreign policy? How has that role changed over time?

- Michael Foley. 2018. "The foreign policy process: executive, Congress, intelligence" In M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 111-129. **(This chapter is in the 2nd edition of the book)**
- "Backgrounder U.S. Foreign Policy Powers: Congress and the President," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-foreign-policy-powers-congress-and-president>

- James M. Lindsay. 2003. "Deference and Defiance: The Shifting Rhythms of Executive-Legislative Relations," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33 (3), pp. 530-546.
- Howell, William G. and Jon C. Pevehouse. 2007. "When Congress Stops Wars: Partisan Politics and Presidential Power." *Foreign Affairs*, September/October

Week 9

Institutions: Executive Branch

What role does the Executive Branch play in American foreign policy? How has that role changed over time?

- Kevin Marsh, "Obama's Surge: A Bureaucratic Politics Analysis of the Decision to Order a Troop Surge in the Afghanistan War", *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10:3 (2013), pp. 265-288.
- Deborah D. Avant, "Are the Reluctant Warriors Out of Control? Why the U.S. Military is Averse to Responding to Post-Cold War Low-Level Threats", *Security Studies* 6:2 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 51-90.
- Joshua Rovner, *Fixing the Facts: National Security and the Politics of Intelligence*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 1-35.
- Elizabeth N. Saunders, "No Substitute for Experience: Presidents, Advisors and Information in Group Decision Making", *International Organization*, 71:S1 (2017), pp. S219-S247.
- Clarke, Duncan. 1987. "Why State Can't Lead." *Foreign Policy* (Spring): 128-142.
- William J. Burns, "The Lost Art of American Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2019, 98-107

Week 10

The U.S. National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security

How does integrated deterrence work? What roles do allies and partners play in the National Security Strategy? What are the challenges to implementing the US National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Strategy on WPS?

- U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, October 2022. Read pp. 1-23.

- The White House, *National Security Strategy*, October 2022. Read pp. 1-13, 23-27 and 37-48.
- The United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security, June 2019
[https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/WPS Strategy 10 October2019.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/WPS_Strategy_10_October2019.pdf)
- Sylvia Bashevkin, "Gender and US Foreign Policy" in M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch 20

Week 11

Contemporary Challenges: US Foreign Policy in Asia. The Rise of China

How should the United States respond to the rise of China? Are fears of Chinese growth justified? Why have tensions increased in the South China Sea?

- Feng Zhang, "US Foreign Policy in the Asia-Pacific" in M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch 15
- Jeffrey Mankoff, "China", Chapters 10-12 in: *Empires of Eurasia*, pp 213-268
- Fravel, M. Taylor, and Charles L. Glaser. "How Much Risk Should the United States Run in the South China Sea?" *International Security*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2022, pp. 88-134.
- Kelly A. Grieco and Jennifer Kavanagh, "America Can't Surpass China's Power in Asia: But It Can Still Prevent Chinese Hegemony," *Foreign Affairs*, January 16, 2024. At: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/america-cant-surpass-chinas-power-asia>
- "Taiwan and the South China Sea: Two Views with Oriana Skylar Mastro and Wu Xinbo," *Think China*, January 9, 2024. At: <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/taiwan-and-the-south-china-sea-two-views>

Week 12

Contemporary Challenges: US Foreign Policy in Russia – Ukraine

How has US policy to Russia evolved since the collapse of the Soviet Union? Could the full-scale invasion of Ukraine have been prevented? How are the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria linked?

- Peter Rutland, "US Foreign Policy in Russia" in M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 219-237
- Jeffrey Mankoff, "Russia", Chapters 1-3 in: *Empires of Eurasia*, pp 16-80

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Foreign Policy Concept, 2021.
- Weber, Yuval. "When War is Preferable to Peace: Russia, the Post-Cold War Settlement, and the Kremlin's Policy Toward Ukraine." *Journal of Post-Soviet Politics and Policy*, 2021.
- Ruth Deyermond, "The Trump Presidency, Russia and Ukraine: Explaining Incoherence," *International Affairs*, vol. 99, issue 4 (July 2023), pp. 1595-1614. At: <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/99/4/1595/7191374>
- Mona Yacoubian, "Ukraine's Consequences are finally spreading to Syria," *War on the Rocks*, January 10, 2023 At: <https://warontherocks.com/2023/01/ukraines-consequences-are-finally-spreading-to-syria/>
- Emma Ashford, Joshua Shifrinson, and Stephen Wertheim, "What Does America Want in Ukraine?" *Foreign Policy*, May 9, 2024 At: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/05/09/america-ukraine-forever-war-congress-aid/>

Week 13

Contemporary Challenges: US Foreign Policy in the Middle East

The United States has been trying to pivot away from the Middle East for more than a decade, but keeps getting drawn back in. Why? What role do Turkey and Iran play in the Middle East? What role do non-state actors play in US foreign policy?

- Toby Dodge, "US Foreign Policy in the Middle East" in: In M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 173-195
- Jeffrey Mankoff, "Turkey" and "Iran", Chapters 4-9 in: *Empires of Eurasia*, pp 81-206
- Amy Austin Holmes, *Statelet of Survivors: The Making of a Semi-Autonomous Region in Northeast Syria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapters 1 and 3
- Henri Barkey, "Erdogan the Survivor," *Foreign Affairs*, August 17, 2023. At: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/turkey/erdogan-nato-survivor-united-states>
- Sinan Ciddi, "It's Time to Reconsider Turkey's NATO Membership," *Foreign Policy*, December 6, 2023. At: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/06/turkey-nato-membership-alliance-russia-erdogan-sweden-syria/>

Week 14**US Decline or Primacy?**

- Christopher Layne, William Wohlforth, and Stephen G. Brooks, “US Decline or Primacy? A Debate.” in M. Cox & D. Stokes (eds.) *US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch 25
- Additional readings TBD.

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student’s grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

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](#)).

“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. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

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](#)).

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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 the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) 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.

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Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu.

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, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct 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.

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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 healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

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Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or 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.

Campus-Specific Policies

Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to howdy.tamu.edu and clicking on the "Directory Hold Information" link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.

College and Department Policies

College and departmental units may establish their own policies and minimum syllabus requirements. As long as these policies and requirements do not contradict the university level requirements, colleges and departments can add them in this section. Please remove this section if not needed.

Department of International Affairs syllabus statement on diversity, equity and inclusion

The Department of International Affairs is committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for all students, staff, and faculty. We welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations, languages, military experiences, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and/or work experiences (see diversity.tamu.edu/). We recognize a special responsibility to undertake particular efforts to include the participation and voices of those from historically underrepresented groups. In all of this, diversity alone is not the only goal; we also strive to hear, listen to, and incorporate new voices in our teaching, research, and service. We hold that embracing and supporting new perspectives, individuals, and ideas invigorates academic excellence and pushes our entire community forward. The Department of International Affairs and the Bush School expect everyone to demonstrate respect for different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by other members of our community and to engage in reasoned discussions. As a department of international affairs, within a university dedicated to the public good, a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is critical for preparing and ensuring the success of the next generation of leaders.

(adapted from Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver)