
POLS 3331: American Foreign Policy

University of Houston

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Course Info:

Spring 2021
Days and Time: MW 4:00–5:15 PM
Room Number: Online

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Course Description

What drives the foreign policy of the United States? What actors play key roles in policy formulation? What institutions influence their decisions? What has American foreign policy looked like since World War II? This course will touch on these questions and others, providing students with a thorough understanding of historical and contemporary U.S. foreign policy. During the course, students will gain familiarity with the history of foreign policy in the United States, the players involved in its formulation, and the process of policymaking, and will learn to think critically about the role of the United States in global politics.

The course is divided into two parts. The first traces review the history of U.S. foreign policy from the mid-20th century onward, with a particular emphasis on national security issues, terrorism, and the Cold War. The second part of the course takes a more in-depth look at the groups, actors, and institutions involved creating American foreign policy. We will look specifically at elected officials, members of the executive branch, the media, interest groups, and members of the mass public. In addition to the readings outlined below, students are expected to keep up with current events in the international arena, as we will frequently refer to these stories during class. Students are welcome to follow any news source they desire, so long as it provides sufficient coverage of international events.

You're taking this course during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2021. So things are going to be a little weird. Our meetings will take place at the scheduled class time using the Microsoft Teams software, and we'll do our best to maintain some semblance of normalcy. We can expect the semester to be unique in a number of ways, and we'll respond as well as we can to any challenges that arise along the way. You may run into technological problems, medical problems, or issues with online learning. If any of these (or anything else) should come up, **do not hesitate to email me.**

Grading Policies

Evaluations of student performance will be based on two exams, as well as class participation, a research paper, and a group policy debate at the end of the semester. As the dates for debates and exams are given in advance, students should be certain to schedule around them. **If you expect that you will not be able to make it to the exam, notify me in advance. Makeup exams will not be given without prior approval or a university-excused absence.** Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- **Exam #1 (30%):** The first exam will be held in class on **Wednesday, March 10th**, and will cover all material from the beginning of the course through Week 7. It will be a combination of identification, multiple choice, and short essay questions. In addition to the topics covered in the course, it may also include material about current events.
- **Exam #2 (30%):** The second exam will be held on the last day of class, **Monday, May 3rd**. It will be non-cumulative and will cover the material from Week 9 through the end of the course. Like the first exam, it will be a combination of question types, and may also include material about current events.
- **Research Paper (15%) and Policy Debates (10%):** Students will be given a choice of broad research topics, and assigned to teams based on their preferences. Within teams, each student will choose a sub-topic on which he/she will write a short essay (5-10 pages). In addition, each team will participate in a debate during the final weeks of the course, bringing to bear what they learn in class and what they learn from their research paper. While the debate and its preparation will be a joint effort, students will be graded individually on their research papers. We will discuss this component in greater detail as the semester progresses. The final paper is due on the last day of class (**Monday, May 3rd**).
- **Participation (15%):** Student learning improves in classes in which they are active participants. Discussion is a key component of learning. Unfortunately, the online nature of the course, when combined with the size of our class, is not conducive to active in-class discussion. Therefore, most of our discussion will take place outside of class on the Blackboard discussion boards. Students will be placed into groups, and each group will have access to a discussion forum. Each class session will conclude with several questions related to the topic, which will be placed into discussion threads. Students are asked to provide their own insights into these questions, and to interact with one another. This component of the grade will depend on both the quantity and quality of student contributions to class discussions. You should aim to post at least two to three high-quality responses each week. I reserve the right to give extra credit to students with consistent, quality comments throughout the semester. So more participation is always in your best interest.

You will receive a final grade on a 100-point scale, which will be converted to a letter grade in the following way:

Grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number. So a 79.5 becomes an 80, but a 79.4999 is a 79. This is effectively a free half-point, so please do not ask me to bump your grade up if you

A:	93–100%	C:	73–76%
A-:	90–92%	C-:	70–72%
B+:	87–89%	D+:	67–69%
B:	83–86%	D:	63–66%
B-:	80–82%	D-:	60–62%
C+:	77–79%	F:	<60%

are more than a half-point away from the next boundary. Grades that are more than half a point from the boundaries indicated above will *not* be rounded up. **No exceptions.**

College students are often worried about grades. If you are concerned that you will not do as well as you would like, please talk to me or your teaching assistant as soon as possible. We are both happy to help you to master the material and to improve your performance on exams and papers. However, *do not* come to me at the end of the semester to ask for extra credit. I do not offer individual extra credit opportunities. **Again, no exceptions.**

State Department Chat

If all goes according to plan, we will have a briefing from an individual at the U.S. Department of State during our week on diplomacy (Wednesday, March 31st) on the operation of the State Department. Unfortunately, my contacts cannot guarantee the topics and time slot will be available until a bit later in the semester, so it must presently be regarded as tentative. This briefing will take the form of a Zoom chat, where the official will talk to us about the workings of the department and related issues, following our discussion of the topic earlier in the week. There will then be time for questions and answers about the material that he or she covers. My experience is that these chats can be very useful for developing a firmer understanding of the material, and for connecting it to the real world, so please make sure to attend class on those days. **On that day, we will meet using Zoom, rather than Teams, and I will provide you with a link by email.** If the State Department is unable to deliver a speaker for the planned day, then I will inform you in advance, and we will adjust the syllabus accordingly.

Computer Problems

Hard drive crashes and fried motherboards are almost inevitable. In all likelihood, you will experience these problems at least once in your careers. But dead laptops and bricked hard drives are no longer the problems that they once were. Since this class involves outside work that you'll be doing on your home computer, *I expect you to maintain backups of your work.* If you don't already have an account with a cloud storage and syncing service, let me recommend Dropbox (<http://www.dropbox.com/>) or Google Drive (<http://www.google.com/drive/>). Using one of these (or a similar service) to back up your work will ensure that you will have access to it even in the event of a crash. Let me stress once more: **"my computer died just before I was going to turn in my assignment" is no longer a valid excuse.**

Readings

The required readings for each class are listed on the syllabus, below the topic to be covered. Students are expected to do the reading before coming to class. Reading assignments will come primarily from the course textbooks:

Hook, Steven W. and John Spanier. 2019. *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Twenty-first Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. (ISBN: 978-1-5063-8564-8)

Rosati, Jerel A. and James M. Scott. 2013. *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy* (Sixth Edition). Boston: Cengage. (ISBN: 1-133-60215-0)

These readings will be abbreviated **Hook** and **Rosati**, respectively, throughout the syllabus. During the course, we will also read book chapters, journal articles, historical documents, and analysis pieces from other sources. These readings will be available through Blackboard.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, the University of Houston strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. Students seeking accommodation in this course should contact the instructor after obtaining the appropriate documentation through the UH Center for Students with Disabilities.

UH CAPS Statement

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS (<http://www.uh.edu/caps>) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let’s Talk” program, a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html

Excused Absence Policy

Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important contributors to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy and Graduate Excused Absence Policy for reasons including: medical

illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Additional policies address absences related to military service, religious holy days, pregnancy and related conditions, and disability.

Recording of Class

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

Syllabus Changes

Due to the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through email, and modified syllabi will appear on the class Blackboard website.

Course Outline

Week 1. Course Introduction and Early American Foreign Policy

- ***Monday, Jan. 18 - Martin Luther King Day, No Class***
- ***Wednesday, Jan. 20 - Introduction and Syllabus***
 - Drezner, Daniel. 2012. "Why Presidents Love Foreign Affairs." *New York Times*, 20 September.
 - Thompson, Michael. 2012. "5 Reasons Foreign Policy Matters to American Youth." *Huffington Post*, 30 October.
 - Stokes, Bruce. 2016. "It's the Foreign Policy, Stupid." *Foreign Policy*, 5 January.

- Lohaus, Phillip. 2016. "Why Foreign Policy Should be a Millennial Priority." *The Catalyst*: 03.

Week 2. World War II

- *Monday, Jan. 25* - Early American Diplomacy
 - Kissinger, Henry. 1994. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Ch. 2
 - Rosati, pp. 13–26
 - [George Washington's Farewell Address](#)
- *Wednesday, Jan. 27* - Diplomacy During World War II
 - Hook, pp. 1–23
 - [The Atlantic Charter](#)
 - [Protocol of proceedings from the Yalta Conference](#)

Week 3. The Beginning of the Cold War

- *Monday, Feb. 1* - The Bipolar World
 - Hook, pp. 24–44
 - [The Truman Doctrine](#)
 - Kennan, George F. (as X). 1947. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." *Foreign Affairs* 25(4):566–582.
- *Wednesday, Feb. 3* - Containing a New Threat
 - Hook, pp. 45–58
 - Kissinger, Henry. 2015. "Reflections on the Marshall Plan." *The Harvard Gazette*.
 - [NATO Treaty](#)
 - [TWE Remembers: NSC-68](#)

Week 4. The 1950s

- *Monday, Feb. 8* - Crisis in Korea
 - Hook, pp. 59–72
 - Stack, Liam. 1 January 2018. "Korean War, a Forgotten Conflict That Shaped the Modern World." *The New York Times*.
- *Wednesday, Feb. 10* - The Post-Stalin Years
 - Hook, pp. 73–91

- Wolk, Herman S. August 1, 2003. "The 'New Look.'" *Air Force Magazine*.

Week 5. Vietnam and Detente

- *Monday, Feb. 15* - South America and Southeast Asia
 - Hook, pp. 92–99
 - Janis, Irving L. 1982. *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Ch. 2.
 - [The Tonkin Gulf Incident](#)
 - Paterson, Pat. 2008. "The Truth About Tonkin." *Naval History Magazine* 22(1).
- *Wednesday, Feb. 17* - Winding Down and Detente
 - Hook, pp. 100–114
 - [Nixon's Address to the Nation on Progress Toward Peace in Vietnam](#)

Week 6. The End of the Cold War

- *Monday, Feb. 22* - The Soviet Union Falls
 - Hook, pp. 115–132, Ch. 6
 - Aron, Leon. 2011. "Everything You Think You Know About the Collapse of the Soviet Union is Wrong." *Foreign Policy* 187:64–70.
- *Wednesday, Feb. 24* - The End of the 21st Century
 - Hook, Ch. 7–9
 - [President Bush's Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait](#)
 - [President Clinton's Speech on Kosovo](#)

Week 7. A New World With New Challenges

- *Monday, Mar. 1* - The Global War on Terror
 - Hook, Ch. 10–11
 - [President Bush Declares "War on Terror"](#)
- *Wednesday, Mar. 3* - And More Recently...
 - Hook, Ch. 12–14

Week 8. Midterm Exam

- *Monday, Mar. 8* - Review for exam

- *Wednesday, Mar. 10 - Exam #1*

Mar. 15–20: Spring Break

Week 9. The Role of the President

- *Monday, Mar. 22 - Presidential Power*
 - Rosati, Ch. 3
- *Wednesday, Mar. 24 - Presidential Management*
 - Rosati, Ch. 4

Week 10. Diplomacy

- *Monday, Mar. 29 - The State Department*
 - Rosati, Ch. 5
- **Wednesday, Mar. 31 - Discussion with State Department Officials**

Week 11. Defense and Intelligence

- *Monday, Apr. 5 - The Department of Defense*
 - Rosati, Ch. 6
- *Wednesday, Apr. 7 - The Intelligence Community*
 - Rosati, Ch. 7

Week 12. Congress and the Public

- *Monday, Apr. 12 - Congress*
 - Rosati, Ch. 10
 - [War Powers Resolution](#)
- *Wednesday, Apr. 14 - Public Opinion*
 - Rosati, Ch. 11
 - Jentleson, Bruce W. and Rebecca L. Britton. 1998. "Still Pretty Prudent: Post-Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42(4): 395–417.

Week 13. The Media and Policy Debates

- *Monday, Apr. 19* - The Role of the Media
 - Rosati, Ch. 13
- Wednesday, Apr. 21 - Policy Debates, Day 1

Week 14. Policy Debates

- *Monday, Apr. 26* - Policy Debates, Day 2
- *Wednesday, Apr. 28* - Policy Debates, Day 3

Week 14. Second Exam

- *Monday, May 3* - **Exam #2**
 - Final paper due today