SS473: American Foreign Policy

Course Syllabus
WHY STUDY AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY?

For the duration of your Army career, you will be an instrument of American foreign policy. This course is designed to help you understand how your role as a military professional fits into broader efforts by the United States—both military and non-military—to promote its interests and values. We will utilize both political science research and historical case studies to investigate long-term patterns in American behavior, as well as the various factors that shape the ends and means chosen by our civilian leaders. Ultimately, this will equip you with an analytical framework for thinking through and responding to the unexpected challenges that lay ahead.

COURSE OVERVIEW

SS473 examines the development, implementation, and consequences of American foreign policy. It analyzes the actors that craft and influence policy, concentrating both on formal government institutions—such as the president, Congress, and the foreign policy bureaucracy—and external sources, such as public opinion, interest groups, and the media. The course examines key events in American foreign policy history through the lens of constraints and “policy choice.” What choices did U.S. foreign policy makers confront? What policies did they choose to implement and why? What were the consequences of those decisions? Students will ultimately apply these lessons as they evaluate historic foreign policy decisions.

Part I of the course frames the analysis of American foreign policy. We will study the interests and values that have consistently motivated American foreign policy throughout history. We will then review a variety of domestic decision-making models and international relations theories, and we will conclude by examining the instruments of American foreign policy.

Part II of the course examines the formal and informal institutions of American foreign policy. We will examine congressional and presidential authority in the policymaking process; the dynamics of policymaking within the executive branch; and the effects of public opinion, interest groups, and the media on policy outcomes.

Part III consists of a series of case studies that examine American foreign policymaking after World War II. We will study the creation of the “western system,” the development of America’s policy towards the USSR and how various administrations implemented “containment.” This block is primarily a discussion of applying means to ends, and emphasizes the political options available to American leaders as well as the political constraints within which these decisions were made.

Part IV marks a shift from the bipolar strategies of containment to the “New World Order” following the collapse of the Soviet Union. We will examine the Bush administration’s response to 9/11, the Obama administration’s subsequent retrenchment, and the Trump administration’s “America First” agenda. For each case study, we will examine the external, societal, governmental, and individual sources that contributed to key policy outcomes.
Part V features an examination of contemporary foreign policy challenges facing the United States.

COURSE GOALS:

Goal 1: Cadets will explain the theoretical foundations, principles, and values that influence American foreign policy.

Goal 2: Cadets will understand the domestic determinants, institutions, and processes of American foreign policy.

Goal 3: Cadets will be able to apply critical thinking skills and analyze current challenges in American foreign policy.

Goal 4: Cadets will improve their analytical reasoning and oral and written communication skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is organized as a seminar, which means that daily participation is essential to understanding the readings and developing your knowledge of American foreign policy. This is also a writing intensive course—you will be evaluated frequently on both the style and substance of your written work.

Grades will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WPR1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Lesson 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPR2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Lesson 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Lesson 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMEX</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Lesson 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard Posts</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEE</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,250</td>
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**WPRs** – At the conclusion of block 1 and block 2 WPRs will be administered. These will consist of short essay questions (300-400 word responses) and a critical analysis essay (500 words). Each WPR is worth 100 points.

**Research Paper** – Students in SS473 are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the domestic determinants, institutions, and processes that shape American foreign policy. This paper is an opportunity to conduct in-depth research and analysis regarding a historic US foreign policy.

Students will select an historic foreign policy for study no later than lesson 5. This can be a unilateral executive action, treaty, an act of Congress, or a historic crisis. Previous topics include the annexation
of Texas, passage of the Neutrality Act (1935), the Iranian Hostage Crisis, or other such actions. The topic must be approved by your instructor, and no two students may write on the same topic.

This research assignment goes beyond a mere summary of the historic policy and asks you to assess the efficacy and implications of your selected policy. Consider the following questions when designing your research paper: what political science theory can I use to analyze this policy or action? What models exist to predict legislative or executive behavior? What is the role of informal institutions such as interest groups, media, and think tanks? What are the tools of foreign policy that were employed? What models exist to explain the use of these tools? What is the relevance to contemporary American politics? See your instructor for assistance.

The research must include a minimum of 5 primary and 4 secondary sources. Course readings may be used, but they are not required. I strongly recommend that you consult memoirs, speeches, personal paper collections, declassified memos, and other primary sources to better understand how various actors viewed these issues. Students are encouraged to meet with their instructor to discuss sources and the research paper outline.

Your final paper must be double spaced, Calibri 12 pt font. Use Chicago Style footnotes and bibliography. There is no word limit. Submit your paper via e-mail and provide a hard copy to your instructor.

**SIMEX** – Students will participate in a simulation exercise designed to demonstrate the challenges of shaping U.S. foreign policy.

**Blackboard Posts** – During the first week of class, students will be assigned a discussion group consisting of 4-5 students. Discussion groups will be assigned responsibility for 6 specific lessons. The purpose of discussion posts is to stimulate conversation prior to class and to better examine the concepts in question. Each student in the designated group will post a 500 word response to the assigned readings to a public blackboard site available to all students. Furthermore, each student must respond to at least two other posts for full credit. I will monitor, and comment, on this thread. Students are free to comment on any of the assigned readings for that class period, and are not required to summarize the entirety of assigned reading. Consider the following format for online posts: 1 paragraph summarizing the key concepts of the text, 1 paragraph relating that text to previously assigned readings, current events, or outside authors, and 1 final paragraph offering your commentary on the text.

**Class Participation** – For us to achieve the quality of discussion appropriate to an advanced elective, your preparation is critical. You are expected to complete the assigned readings and come to every lesson ready to fully engage in all class activities. Furthermore, you are responsible for all of the material on the syllabus even if it is not discussed in class. If it is obvious that you have not prepared adequately, you may be dismissed from class and you will lose participation points for that day.

**TEE** – This class will culminate in a Term End Evaluation. Time/date TBD.
GRADES – To complete SS473 successfully, you must demonstrate achievement of the course objectives. The grading scale for the Department of Social Sciences is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Achievement</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Subjective Interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>Mastery of concepts. Can apply concepts to new situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
<td>Solid understanding of concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
<td>Strong foundation for future work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9</td>
<td>Acceptable understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.9</td>
<td>Questionable foundation for future work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Proficiency</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.9</td>
<td>Doubtful understanding. Weak foundation for future work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>67-69.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;67</td>
<td>Failed to demonstrate understanding.</td>
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RE-GRADES – If you feel that an assigned grade on a major graded event – an assignment worth 15% or more of the overall course grade – does not reflect the quality of your work, you may appeal using the following procedures: First, address your concerns with your instructor. If you still feel that you deserve a different grade, submit a formal re-grade request consisting of a one-page memorandum to the course director within seven days of the assignment return date. This memorandum should explain, in a concise manner, why you think you should have received a different grade. The course director will then assign your work to be graded by two other instructors, and your new grade will be an average of the three evaluations – it may be higher, lower, or identical to the one originally received.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS:


* You must purchase paperback copies of these books rather than electronic copies
SCHEDULE OF READING AND ASSIGNMENTS

BLOCK I: FOUNDATIONS AND TRADITIONS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Lesson 1: Nation or Empire? January 10th

The Declaration of Independence (blackboard)

George Washington’s Farewell Address (blackboard)


Lesson 2: Interests and Values – January 14th

The Monroe Doctrine

The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine

Woodrow Wilson’s 14 points


Lesson 3: Foreign Policy Theories and Frameworks – January 18th


Lesson 4: Force and Diplomacy – January 23rd


*Guest Speaker: Russ Singer, US Department of State*

Lesson 5: Finance and Economics – January 25th


*Paper Topics Due*

**Lesson 6: The Hamiltonian Way – January 29th**


*Discussion Group #1*

**Lesson 7: Missionaries of Democracy: Wilsonianism – January 31st**


*Discussion Group #2*

**Lesson 8: The Jeffersonian Tradition – February 5th**


*Discussion Group #3*

**Lesson 9: The School of Andrew Jackson – February 7th**


*Discussion Group #1*
Lesson 10: WPR – February 11th

BLOCK II: INSTITUTIONS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Lesson 11: The President and Congress Part I – February 15th


*Discussion Group #2

Lesson 12: The President and Congress Part II – February 20th


War Powers Resolution of 1973 (read sections 4-5, skim the rest)


*Discussion Group #3


National Security Act of 1947 (skim)

* Discussion Group #1
**Guest Speaker, LTC Galui

Lesson 14: Civil Military Relations and American Foreign Policy – February 26th


Selected Letters from President Lincoln to his generals (blackboard)
*Discussion Group #2

Lesson 15: Informal Institutions and American Foreign Policy – February 28th


*Discussion Group #3

Lesson 16: WPR #2 – Foreign Policy Institutions – March 5th

BLOCK III: POST WAR POLICY CHOICES

Lesson 17: The Post-War “Western System” – March 7th

Clausewitz, Carl von. On War. 584-93. (blackboard)

* Discussion Group #1

Lesson 18: Origins of the Cold War and Containment – March 19th

*Discussion Group #2

**Lesson 19: The New Look – March 21st**


*Discussion Group #3

**Lesson 20: Flexible Response – March 25th**


*Discussion Group #1

**Lesson 21: Détente – March 28th**


*Discussion Group #2

**Lesson 22: The End of the Cold War – April 1st**


*Discussion Group #3

**BLOCK IV: LONE SUPERPOWER**

**Lesson 23: New World Order – April 5th**


* Discussion Group #1

Lesson 24: 9/11 and the Bush Doctrine – April 9th


* Discussion Group #2

Lesson 25: Retrenchment? April 11th


* Discussion Group #3

Lesson 26: America First? April 15th


“National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” December 2017. (Intro and Conclusion)


*Research Paper Due*
Lesson 27: National Security Council SIMEX – April 19th

Scenario readings from the model diplomacy website
*2 page policy memorandum due in class

BLOCK V: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Lesson 28: Foreign Policy and Trade – April 23rd


Lesson 29: Militarization of Aid – April 25th


*Guest Speaker: MAJ Duncan Walker

Lesson 30: Lean Forward or Pull Back? April 30th


TEE: date, time, and location to be determined