

Political Science 231: United States Foreign Policy

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Harry Targ: professor

Office: BRNG 2230

Phone: 494-4169

E-Mail: Targ@Purdue.edu

Office Hours: MWF 10:30-noon

(See me and we can make other arrangements also)

Introduction

The seventeen years since the dawn of the new century have been very painful for citizens of the United States and the world. Terrorism, usually occurring outside the United States, was experienced in tragedy on September 11, 2001 against domestic targets. The US responded with an air and ground war against Afghanistan for harboring terrorists. In March 2003, the US launched a war against the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq for a variety of reasons. Since launching that war, Iraqis have experienced poverty and despair while US and other military and diplomatic personnel have been targets of violence initiated by Iraqis opposed to foreign occupation. Most US forces, by virtue of treaty agreement, have left Iraq but recently some have been sent back to train the Iraqi military. The Obama administration has continued a US military presence in Afghanistan, already the country's longest war. Turbulence continues in the Middle East in Syria, Libya, Yemen, as well as the Persian Gulf. The United States has escalated a drone war against alleged ISIS targets as the cauldron of violence increases throughout the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and North Africa.

US/Iranian hostility until recently has remained at a fever pitch. During the fall, 2013 the Obama administration opened up negotiations with Iran on issues involving alleged Iranian nuclear weapons construction. Members of Congress in both parties sought to add new sanctions against Iran but an agreement was signed with Iran in which that country would promise not to build nuclear weapons. However, instability in Ukraine has threatened a renewed Cold War between the United States and Russia. The United States has "pivoted" to Asia, with possible increased tensions with China. Now a crisis exists in reference to nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. Paralleling 21st century foreign policy crises and war has been a recession beginning in 2007, the deepest since the Great Depression of the 1930s, followed by a slow growth recovery since 2011. Finally, there are growing movements to address climate change and other forms of environmental devastation.

The war in Iraq created divisions among the American people over whether it was justified to begin with and whether we should have developed a strategy for a speedy end to US military involvement there. Next to the economy, anger at the Iraq war policy motivated voters to cast their vote for President Obama in 2008. The wars of the 21st century have also stimulated important debate about whether the United States should continue to have over 700 bases in at least 38 countries and oversee the economics and politics of the world.

The Bush administration wars on terrorism, Afghanistan, and Iraq led to huge increases in military spending, a massive global military presence, the curtailing of civil liberties at home, and the prospects of future wars against other US enemies based upon the doctrine of “preemption.” Many of these programs remained in place in the Obama years.

Meanwhile, on a day-to-day basis the international economy has stimulated growing wealth for some while three billion people live in poverty (malnutrition, homelessness, disease, illiteracy) and the gaps between rich and poor peoples and countries continue to increase. Growing economic problems have encouraged the rise of a worldwide anti-globalization movement, Arab spring, and the Occupy Movements across the United States. In Latin America elections led to governments that opposed US-backed free trade policies. In the United States itself over 25 per cent of the working poor earn less than a living wage and the starkness of inequality and racism are portrayed virtually every day on TV screens. Critics of US foreign policy, going as far back as the famous Riverside Church speech of Dr. Martin Luther King on April 4, 1967, have drawn links between increased military spending and inadequate support for uplifting living conditions at home. Now, in January 2018, a new administration is in with an, as yet, unclear vision of United States foreign policy.

It is imperative now more than ever that citizens of the world be informed about international relations and the US role in them. Since peoples and nations are products of their pasts, it is equally imperative to have a consciousness of the past as it relates to the present and affects the future. *This course is about the past as context for understanding the United States role in the world today.* It will demand serious reflection on that role and whether it is and has been a positive or a negative one for the world (or some of both). While serious reflection is a requirement of the course, agreement with the instructors and/or the readings is not.

Background

Henry Luce, founder of the publishing empire of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines, wrote in 1941 that the twentieth century was to be “the American Century.” Once the United States, in conjunction with the former Soviet Union and Great Britain, led the way to the defeat of fascism and militarism in Europe and Asia, he wrote, it could begin the process of promoting democracy and market economies everywhere. This vision of the United States as “the beacon of hope” for humankind would find its way into the foreign policy pronouncements and political rhetoric of virtually every president since the end of World War II. Former President Clinton rekindled the vision of the American Century when he proclaimed the US commitment to fight “rogue states” and to create “market democracies” around the world. Former President George W. Bush declared that the United States represents what is good in the world. Commentators claimed that he had a vision of the God-given responsibility of the United States to bring freedom to the world. President Obama also claimed that the United States has a special role to play in the world. He and others from both political parties refer to the US as the “indispensable nation.” That language continued into the 2016 presidential election season. Candidate and President Trump spoke of “making America great again” a rebranding of the assumptions of American Exceptionalism.

Many analysts of US foreign policy believe that the United States has been motivated in its participation in international relations by altruism, by the vision of democratic values, and free markets. Other analysts, however, claim that US foreign policy, like the foreign policy of all big powers, has been based upon the drive to maximize power and interest, not moral values. Finally, there are those who claim that the US has been an imperial power ever since the “new nation” swept across the North American continent, seized land held by its original inhabitants, and massacred those Native Americans who resisted the seizure and occupation of land. For these writers, the United States imperial vision turned global with the industrial revolution after the Civil War. By the 1890s the US began constructing an informal empire (from Cuba to the Philippines) that ultimately has stretched all across the globe. From this last point of view, US foreign policy since World War II, with the struggle against the former Soviet Union and communism, to wars in Korea and Vietnam, to military and covert interventions in Guatemala, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Chile, and Nicaragua, to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq constitute the continual drive for US empire, largely to maximize economic gain.

The wars of the 21st century have raised again debates about the uses and purposes underlying US foreign policy as the United States declared its intentions to unilaterally fight a war on terrorism all across the globe and launched wars on Afghanistan and Iraq.

Has the United States been (and is it) driven by a broad humanitarian vision, crass national interest, or by profit and empire? Along with describing what US policies were in the past, are today, and are likely to be in the future, the course will address the issue of root causes of US policy and the value question: What should US policy be? This is not merely an academic question because it goes to the heart of what the United States' place in the world is and what it ought to be. And these are the fundamental questions that should engage not just students of foreign policy but everybody.

The Course

Political Science 231 is designed to do two things. First, through readings, lectures, videos and discussion a basic portrait of US foreign policy in the second half of the twentieth century will be sketched. This was the period of the US rise to the status of a super power beginning in the “Cold War,” when intense conflicts on many fronts existed between the United States and the former Soviet Union. It is during this period that the US engaged in an arms race with an adversary, participated in large wars in Korea and Vietnam, established military and covert interventionist forces all across the globe, constructed military and economic institutions that drew many nations into alliance with it, and generally established itself as the leading economic and military power in the world.

The Cold War came to a shocking conclusion in 1991 when the former Soviet Union disintegrated. For the last decade of the 20th century the United States established its global prominence in a post-Cold War international system. And since September 11, 2001 that prominence has been challenged again, raising a host of new questions and problems about the role of the United States in the world. The major events and policies of these last 60 years, from the dawn of the Cold War to the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to the wars

on Iraq and Afghanistan to the policies of the Obama and Trump administrations, will be examined in detail.

Second, through the descriptions of the major United States foreign policies from World War II to the present, students will have information to at least provisionally judge which of the underlying interpretations of US policy make the most sense (if any do). While the instructor has his own views on this point, students must decide for themselves which arguments seem most convincing.

Concretely, then, the course will consist of lectures on the development of United States foreign policy from the end of World War II to the present. As the schedule below indicates, materials will be presented chronologically by presidential administration beginning with President Truman and ending with President Trump. Readings assigned for each week roughly parallel the lecture materials presented that week. The combination of listening to lectures and reading the texts will together provide a rich description of what happened, why it happened, and why policy makers said policy was the way it was. Also several videos describing phases of the Cold War from the prestigious documentary series prepared by CNN will be shown. Students will be encouraged to comment on the videos and the issues raised by them.

Since most issues and policies discussed in this course are controversial and since issues of critical importance to United States foreign policy today will surface over the course of the semester, time for discussion, debate, and expressions of disagreement would be valuable. Students will be encouraged to raise questions or to comment on lecture and/or reading materials or to raise issues of relevance to foreign policy today even though class size precludes extended discussion. Also the instructor encourages discussion during office hours and other times of mutual convenience. In total, the class will consist of lectures, discussion, videos, and readings.

Students will take a midterm and a final examination and will be asked to write one short (5 page) commentary on reading assignments (due in week fourteen). The midterm will cover materials for roughly the first half of the semester and the final examination the second half. In each case, exams will consist of 25 multiple choice questions drawn from lectures, readings, videos, and discussion and a general essay question. There will be at least one question derived from each lecture so absences may negatively affect exam performance. *In addition, absences in excess of 5 will yield a one-half grade reduction.*

Power point outlines of semester lectures, videos, and samples of old exams will be available on Blackboard Learn.

Final grades will be based upon the midterm (33%), the final exam (33%), the essay (33%), and class attendance.

TEXTS: (Available at Von's Bookstore, 315 State Street, West Lafayette)

Stephen Ambrose and Douglas Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, Penguin, 2011.

Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change From Hawaii to Iraq*, Times Books, 2006.

Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War*, Metropolitan Books, 2010.

LECTURE TOPICS

Week (Estimates only)

1. Competing Interpretations of the Cold War; Economic Foundations of US foreign policy
2. Truman Policies and the Onset of the Cold War; The Bomb to the Korean War
3. Anti-Communist Ideology at Home and Abroad; Eisenhower policies of "Liberation" and "Massive Retaliation;"
4. Europe; Policies toward countries of the "Global South"-Vietnam, Iran, Guatemala
5. JFK and US/Soviet confrontations; Kennedy in the Global South; Vietnam
6. LBJ and Vietnam
7. Nixon and Détente; Nixon, Vietnam, Africa, and Chile
8. Carter Administration, continuing détente: Cold War returns (**Midterm approximate date October 5, 2016**)
9. Reagan foreign policy and the Reagan doctrine
10. Reagan Military Spending; US policy in Central America, Southern Africa, the Middle East
11. Bush Administration and the end of the Cold War: Panama and the Gulf War
12. Clinton administration, "rogue states," "humanitarian interventions," "promoting market democracies;" Globalization and Neo-liberalism
13. 9/11, the War on terrorism, the Bush Doctrine
14. Wars on Afghanistan and Iraq: The United States and the Middle East, Venezuela and Cuba (**short essays due approximately December 5, 2016**)
15. The Obama Period: Consensus and Conflict, Public Opinion, anti-war movements and United States foreign policy

READINGS (by weeks)

1. Ambrose chapters 1-3
2. Ambrose chapters 4-7;
3. Ambrose chapters 8-9; Kinzer, 1-108
4. Ambrose chapter 10; Kinzer, 111-169
5. Ambrose chapters 11-13;
6. Ambrose chapter 14, Kinzer, 170-216;
7. Ambrose chapter 15, Kinzer 219-259;
8. Ambrose chapters 16-17, Kinzer, 260-322
9. Ambrose chapters 18-19
10. Ambrose chapter 20
11. Ambrose chapter 21
12. Andrew Bacevich
13. Andrew Bacevich

14. Andrew Bacevich
15. Review for Final Examination