**THE COURSE**

**Overview**

This course examines the global challenges and opportunities confronting the United States and the efforts of US policy-makers to craft a grand strategy that adequately addresses them. It covers key historical junctures in the development of American Grand Strategy, from the early Republic to the present, concentrating on post–World War II to the present. The class will examine both the theory and the practice of grand strategy, and it will consider both defenses and critiques of the choices US leaders have made.

While carrying over much of the approach from prior years, we are making two significant changes. One is to give greater attention to the role of race in American foreign policy — an issue long there, its importance has been accentuated by recent events. Another is that, given COVID-19, we will teaching the course fully online. We are working at making this format as effective as possible. We need each member of the class to commit to doing so as well, including ideas you may have about online techniques and formats. Conditions permitting, we may also be able to have one-on-one in-person meetings.

This semester will be unlike any other at Duke. We are committed to being flexible and accommodating when it comes to the syllabus. We ask that you communicate with us as far in advance as possible, and for your understanding as we all navigate uncharted waters.

**Learning Objectives**

This class is designed to be the capstone course for advanced undergraduates who have had extensive preparation in international relations, international security, and American foreign
policy. It is also designed to be an interdisciplinary seminar for graduate students, especially those in political science, history, and public policy.

Our principal objectives are fivefold:

1. Develop an analytic framework and historical context for understanding contemporary US foreign policy.
2. Enhance your capacity to evaluate competing analyses — theories, historical interpretations, political arguments — about US foreign policy.
3. Discuss how US foreign policy has affected race issues at home and how race has affected foreign policy, historically and contemporaneously.
4. Strengthen your policy analysis and scholarly research, writing, and oral communication skills.
5. Foster a learning community that helps achieve these other objectives and builds relationships of value beyond this course.

AGS Events

The American Grand Strategy program will (virtually) bring to Duke a range of visiting speakers. Attendance will be open to a wider group but is expected for students in the AGS course (with reasonable frequency). Pay attention to email notices about upcoming speakers.

For speakers in AGS events or other relevant Duke series that have direct bearing on our course’s materials, we will ask each student to share their responses to the event with seminar once in the semester. You should be prepared to not only summarize what was said, but also to link it directly with what we have covered in the class thus far and also to share your own critical analysis. This will be factored into your participation grade.

Foreign Policy Café

Every other week, one of the professors will host an informal half-hour discussion session on current events and major questions in American foreign policy. These will meet the weeks of:

24 August 5 October
7 September 19 October
21 September 2 November

Specific dates and times will be confirmed later on, in order to enable as many students as are interested to participate. These sessions will be voluntary and will have no bearing on your grade in the course.

If of interest, we will also hold an informal session on careers and graduate-school opportunities in foreign policy and national security.

Communication & Getting Together

The professors make extensive use of email to communicate with the class and so every student is expected to check his or her Duke email at least once a day. Email is a much better way of
getting ahold of us than our office telephones. Students should be familiar with the email and other communication tools built into Sakai.

We are committed to being as accessible as possible under the circumstances, whether to discuss the course or other topics. Sadly, this semester we will not have much (if any) opportunity to run into one another on campus, in our offices, at an AGS event, or elsewhere. Our office hours (taking place on Zoom) are noted above, and we are also available by appointment.

To help us get to know you, we will have one-on-one meetings with every student during the first two weeks of the semester.

In general, we hope all students will communicate with us and each other. If students have ideas as to how we can foster the sense of community which has historically been one of this course’s strong suits, please let us know how we can support that.

**RESPONSIBILITIES & GRADING**

Students taking this course should expect to be graded rigorously. While we do not adhere strictly to a curve, you should expect the normal distribution of grades to be something approximating the following: A-range grades reserved for exceptional work, B-range grades reserved for students who perform consistently and well throughout the semester, and C-range and below grades reserved for students whose work is lacking in quality, consistency, or both. If a final course grade is at the cusp (e.g., between A- and B+), progression over the semester will be taken into account.

The course includes undergraduates, Masters and Ph.D. students. The main difference in course requirements is on the final paper; Ph.D. students will have a different assignment (see below). Your final grade will be comprised of the following portions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduates &amp; MA Students</th>
<th>Ph.D. Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class contribution (30%)</td>
<td>Class contribution (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar paper (20%)</td>
<td>Seminar paper (20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper (35%)</td>
<td>Final paper (50%)</td>
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<td>Final paper presentation (15%)</td>
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Each assignment will be graded on a 100-point scale and weighted as above.

In all your work you are expected to be familiar with and abide by all rules and norms for academic integrity, particularly those established in the Duke Community Standard: https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/conduct/about-us/duke-community-standard. The Duke Library also provides helpful research guidelines for research, including for avoiding plagiarism: http://library.duke.edu/research/guides/citing/. Plagiarism is a serious violation and will be treated as such.
CLASS CONTRIBUTION

Class contribution refers to the preparation, participation, and quality of input each student gives to the course. We teach this course as a seminar, encouraging, relying on, and requiring consistent, committed, and creative student engagement. We read a lot. We write a lot. We discuss a lot. Expectations are for attendance at all classes and for consistent, intensive and creative engagement. That means doing the reading as assigned, reading each other’s final papers as part of your preparation for class, introducing your own thinking into discussions, and generally “digesting” not just “ingesting” the materials. While personal styles vary, all students are expected to be active participants in the course. This is not necessarily measured by “quantity” — quality matters too, including demonstration of analytic thinking, engaging in constructive critiques (of lectures, readings, student papers), and others.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

All submissions are to be made electronically via email as Word documents (12-point conventional font, double-spaced) and not as PDFs as we will grade and comment electronically. Papers exceeding the specified maximum lengths will be penalized.

Any paper submitted any later than the specified deadline (both date and time) will incur a 10% penalty, and another 10% for every further 24-hour period it is late.

Clear and concise prose is essential to effective presentation and analysis. Students will be graded not simply on the content of their papers, but also on the clarity with which they convey that content. Accordingly, all papers should be edited and proofread thoroughly before submission.

Plagiarism, cheating, or any other academic misconduct will automatically result in failing the course and being referred to the appropriate academic dean for disciplinary proceedings.

Students should be familiar with the Duke Community Standard and uphold it: I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors; I will conduct myself honorably in all my endeavors; and I will act if the Standard is compromised.

We expect every student to be familiar with academic standards concerning plagiarism. For more information, see: https://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism. Penalties for such violations can be severe and follow you long after you leave Duke — it is never worth the risk.

SEMINAR PAPER

20% of your final grade.
Due 5:00pm on the Sunday preceding the relevant session emailed to the professors.

For the eight classes from 1 September to 20 October, one or two students will prepare an analytical seminar paper focusing on one of the prompts/questions listed along with each
session’s assigned readings below; you are free to choose whichever one you find most engaging.

The purpose of this paper is chiefly analytical. You should convey main points the authors make but rather than just summarize the readings, your job is to marshal the evidence they provide — along with some supplemental research you do — in order to make an argument which engages the question posed. The paper does not have to touch on every single reading, rather, you should focus on those which bear directly on the question you are addressing.

While this is not primarily a research paper, supplemental research is expected for this assignment for value-added and widening the horizon of our discussion in class beyond the assigned reading. You should think about what new evidence you can bring to bear on the question at hand: primary sources (e.g. the Foreign Relations of the United States series), memoirs, or other analyses (i.e. secondary sources — the supplementary reading for each week would be a good place to start).

After the first class, we will ask you to indicate your first and second choices of week to cover over email. For weeks with two students writing, you will coordinate between yourselves as to who will answer which question.

Paper should not exceed 2,500 words. excluding bibliography, citations and any charts, tables, etc. Any professional citation method and bibliography format may be used, so long as used consistently and properly: http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/.

The paper is due at 5:00pm the Sunday before the relevant class.

Paper-writers will present to the class in ways that help lead and facilitate class discussion. Presentation quality will factor into the grade for this assignment.

**UNDERGRADUATE & MASTERS FINAL PAPERS**

*50% of your final grade: 35% for the written paper and 15% for the presentation.*

These are research papers with the objective of developing policy recommendations. You will need to delve into the history of an issue as well as the range of theories, strategies, and arguments that bear on the current policy debate. On the basis of your research and analysis you will recommend a policy for the United States to follow.

These are individual papers coordinated as a group for class presentation. There are four main policy areas into which students will be grouped:

1. Russia
2. Climate Change
3. China
4. The Middle East

Within these groups, students will choose particular issues. For example, within the Russia group, one paper could be on Ukraine, another on hacking, one on relevant nuclear issues, etc.
For China, papers could deal with the South China Sea, trade, North Korea, etc. For the Middle East, consider issues such as Syria, Israel-Palestine, relations with Saudi Arabia, etc. For climate change, you might address opening access to the Arctic, the debate over the Paris agreement, food or water scarcity, etc.

The key is a “Goldilocks” delineation of a topic: not too big to deal with, not so small as to not warrant detailed and lengthy treatment — just right. We will discuss this more in class, and you should work with Professors Jentleson and Miles to make sure your chosen topic is the right size.

**Topic Selection**

*Sign up in the week following the class on Tuesday, 25 August.*

We will ask you for a first choice and a second choice. There will be 3–4 students in each group with a mix of undergrads and Masters students. We will try to accommodate first choices within these parameters.

**Paper Proposal**

*Due Sunday, 13 September at 5:00pm (or sooner) emailed to the professors.*

The proposal has two components:

1. Define the central focus of the paper and provide an initial discussion of the policy debate (750 words).
2. An initial annotated bibliography of at least six major sources. Annotated means a brief description of the utility of each source for your research. Major means the kind of sources that can provide the building blocks for the whole project: e.g., books, scholarly and policy journal articles, government documents, think tank and NGO studies, not newspaper or newsmagazine articles (you eventually will use these, but they are not major sources). Remember that Googling is not the best way to do policy research. See also: [http://guides.library.duke.edu/international-relations](http://guides.library.duke.edu/international-relations).

Proposals will be graded a ✓+, ✓, or ✓-. Those earning a ✓+ will have a clear and focused topic statement; political analysis sufficiently well informed for this stage; and a bibliography which includes quality sources, fits major sources guideline above, and is well and meaningfully annotated. The proposal grade would be taken into account as a tie-breaker for an overall course grade falling at a margin. More importantly, the more thought and effort you invest now, the more helpful our feedback and dialogue can be.

**Final Products & Presentations**

*Due the Sunday before the class during which you and your group will present at 5:00pm, emailed to the professors and whole class.*

Each group will have half of one class period to present on 27 October and 3 November, approximately 1 hour. Presenting means teaching and conveying important information, but also stimulating and leading discussion. We will reward in-class presentations that are well organized,
effective as teaching bringing out key points and stimulating discussion, and manage well the allotted time. Your papers will be the assigned reading for the week.

Your paper should be…

1. Well-researched, meaning that it builds a strong research base drawn from a mix of quality sources (which does not necessarily correspond to what comes up most readily on Google and other non-specialized search engines).
2. Brings to bear concepts and other material from the rest of the course, as appropriate.
3. Analysis that digests, not just ingests, shows strong command of relevant policy debates while also presenting student’s own insights and arguments.
4. Provides relevant data, quantitative and/or qualitative, and uses the data effectively, particularly so as not to assert without substantiation.
5. Makes clear, well-supported and viable policy proposals: no need for purist or absolutist answers, but no fence-sitting either. As part of this, takes on the strongest arguments, theories, and doctrines on the other side.
6. Professionally presented, including use of tables and figures as enhances your paper, and proper use of citations (whichever of the standard formats you prefer) and bibliography. Any professional citation method and bibliography format may be used, so long as used consistently and properly. See: http://library.duke.edu/research/citing.
7. Well written: Write, rewrite, and rewrite again.

Papers are not to exceed 5,000 words, excluding bibliography, citations and any charts, tables, etc. Any professional citation method and bibliography format may be used, so long as used consistently and properly: http://library.duke.edu/research/guides/citing/.

**PH.D. FINAL PAPER**

*40% of your final grade.*

The Ph.D. students have two options for their final papers:

1. An original research paper (roughly 30 pages) on a topic approved by Professors Jentleson and Miles. This paper must primarily rely on qualitative methods, befitting a course cross-listed with the History Department and co-taught by a diplomatic historian.
2. A thematic bibliographical literature review (roughly 30 pages) based on primarily qualitative material on a topic of the student’s choice approved by Professors Feaver and Miles.

For either option, students are encouraged to use this assignment to make progress on their dissertation projects.
Topic and Outline

Due Sunday, 13 September at 5:00pm (or sooner) emailed to the professors.

In at most 1,000 words, define the central focus of the paper (i.e. research question), situate it in the literature, and describe your research design.

Final Product

Due Sunday, 15 November at 5:00pm emailed to the professors.
SEMINAR SCHEDULE & READINGS

The reading load is fairly heavy. There is no single text for this course, nor is it feasible to buy all the books and journals used in the course. For those interested in pursuing a weekly topic further, we also provide recommended further readings.

One book is required for the course; we recommend purchasing it:


Other readings are on the course Sakai website. As you do the readings, whether you are writing a seminar paper that week or not, think about the prompt questions provided below. For some sessions we also provide a kick-off discussion question.

On Thursdays, we will send out a scene-setter (usually in the form of a short video recording) to help you think about the next week’s readings, offer some context for them and the session as a whole, and suggest some more issues and big debates you might bear in mind as you prepare.

18 Aug. **What is Strategy and Grand Strategy?**

**Prompt**

In addition to getting to know one another and the general topic of strategy and grand strategy, we will have two kick-off discussions. Come to class prepared to engage on the following questions. (No formal written submission is required, but be prepared to make your case in class discussion.)

1. If the next president asked you what the top two foreign policy or national security issues are, what would they be and why?

2. How has US foreign policy affected race issues at home? How have race issues at home affected US foreign policy?

**Readings on Strategy and Grand Strategy**


**Readings on Race and Foreign Policy**


**Further Reading**


Kick-Off Discussion Question

Who do you think has been the greatest American foreign policy/national security grand-strategist, whether policy official, scholar, writer, or other?

Prompts for the Readings

What were the principal goals of US foreign policy prior to the twentieth century?

How true to democratic principles were US policy-makers?

Core Readings


**Further Reading**


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**1 Sept. The World at War**

**Prompts**

Was Wilsonianism as pro-democracy as often claimed?

Why did the United States stay isolationist until Pearl Harbor?

What was US grand strategy coming out of World War II?

**Core Readings**


Further Reading


8 Sept.  

Present at the Creation

Prompts

Could the Cold War have been avoided, and Stalin kept a US partner, were it not for unforced US errors?

Was the early Cold War era really a “golden age of bipartisanship”?

Containment was the right strategy for the Soviet threat in Europe, but extending it to the Third World was a mistake. Do you agree or disagree?

Core Readings


Further Reading


15 Sept. **Nuclear Deterrence, the Arms Race, and Project Solarium**

**Prompts**

Did nuclear weapons fundamentally revolutionize international politics?

Nuclear deterrence strategy had its supporters and its critics. What is your assessment?

Is the “Solarium for X” model of solving public-policy problems widely and responsibly applicable?

**Core Readings**


Further Reading


22 Sept. **The Vietnam War**

Prompts

Why, according to the different authors — and you, did the United States go to war in Vietnam?

Why did the United States lose the Vietnam War? Was it winnable but not won? Was it unwinnable from the get-go?
Core Readings

Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake* (Little, Brown, and Company: 1972)


– Intro., pp. 1–18.


Further Reading


29 Sept. Détente

Prompts

Why did the United States and China negotiate the 1971-72 “opening”? What are some lessons about statesmanship and negotiating with adversaries from this case?

Was détente a noble failure, well-intentions but naive and, in terms of results, largely disastrous?

Core Readings


**Further Reading**


**6 Oct. The End of the Cold War**

**Prompts**

Did Ronald Reagan have a grand strategy?

Of the storied pair, who deserves greater credit for ending the Cold War, Reagan or Gorbachev?
Did the United States win the Cold War, or did the Soviet Union simply lose it?

Core Readings


– Intro., “Grand Strategy and the End of the Cold War.”

– Chap. 5, “New Departures: The Beginning of the End of the Cold War.”

– Concl., “Winners and Losers.”


Further Reading


**13 Oct. The Unipolar Moment**

**Prompts**

Fukuyama’s “end of history” and Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” offer two different visions of the post–Cold War world. Analyze both conveying where you agree and disagree.

Why was unipolarity just a “moment?”

Why did 9/11 occur?

**Core Readings**


**Further Reading**


Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11* (Public Affairs, 2009).


20 Oct. **The Iraq War & Obama**

**Prompts**

Why, according to the different authors — and you, did the United States go to war in Iraq?

What is your evaluation of the Obama foreign policy?
**Core Readings**


**Further Reading**


27 Oct. **Group Project Presentations**

Groups will be assigned this date.
3 Nov.   **Group Project Presentations**

Groups will be assigned this date.

10 Nov.   **Twenty-First Century American Grand Strategy**

**Prompts**

Focusing on at least two of the readings, what are the competing visions for twenty-first century American grand strategy? What are their respective strengths and weaknesses? Where they disagree, with whom do you agree and why?

As a democracy, is the United States simply unable to do grand strategy, bound to lurch between partisan shifts?

**Core Readings**


