

**American Foreign Policy**  
**PLSC 327**  
Monday and Wednesday, 9:25-10:50, DC226

**Instructor:** Benjamin Fordham

**Office hours:** by appointment via Zoom

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**Course Description and Purpose**

This course will examine the formulation of American foreign policy, considering both contemporary issues and important historical questions. It will cover not only the content of United States foreign policy at various points in time but also the sources of political conflict over it. The course will pay special attention to the formulation of grand strategy and the role of the United States in establishing and maintaining the contemporary world order. We will use a simulation of the Eisenhower administration's Project Solarium to gain a better understanding of the policymaking process and about the future of U.S. relations with China.

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 12.5 hours of course-related work or activity each week during the semester. This includes scheduled class lecture/discussion meeting times as well as time spent completing assigned readings, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

Within the political science major this course:

- Helps fulfill the requirement for 10 PLSC courses for political science majors.
- Fulfills the requirement of at least 1 course in international relations
- Helps fulfill the requirement for 6 upper-level courses (300- or 400-level)

**Learning Outcomes**

In this course, students will learn about the individuals, institutions, and broader social and political forces that have shaped the formulation and implementation of American foreign policy. They will also use and develop their writing, critical thinking, and group collaboration skills.

**Course Materials**

This course will use a variety of books, articles, and other material. With the exception of three books that we will read in their entirety, all of the materials are available through Brightspace. Please note that some of the PDFs are quite large. The three books we will read are:

- Blustein, Paul. 2019. *Schism: China, America and the Fracturing of the Global Trading System*. Waterloo, ON, Canada: Centre for International Governance Innovation.
- Ikenberry, G. John. 2012. *Liberal Leviathan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Whitlock, Craig. 2021. *The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

The Blustein book is available as an e-book through the Library. You will need to buy the other two books. All three are available for purchase at the campus bookstore and through other retailers.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

***Class Discussion.*** Over the course of the semester, there are 10 scheduled discussions of assigned readings. The dates of these discussions are noted in the course schedule below. Each discussion will begin with a question posted in the online discussion board in Brightspace, setting the stage for conversation in class. The discussion questions in the syllabus may change, or I may add additional questions, as the semester goes along. The discussion board will present the final version of each question. You should post an answer by 11:59 p.m. on the day before each scheduled class discussion. Late answers will not receive credit. I may ask you to summarize or elaborate on your answer in class. After you post your answer, you will be able to see other students' posts and respond to them online if you like, though you are not required to do so.

Two discussions are linked to books we are reading and on which you may be writing an essay. You do not have to submit a discussion board answer if you are writing an essay on the book. Each student is also permitted to miss 1 additional online discussion board question during the semester without penalty. If you do not miss any discussion posts other than the one on which you are writing an essay, I will drop your lowest grade. Your average grade on the remaining discussion posts will count for 20% of your final grade.

***Essay on either the Ikenberry or Whitlock book.*** Each student will write an essay of between 5 and 8 pages in response to a question about one of these two books. The essays should be submitted through Brightspace and are due by class time on the day scheduled for discussion, February 23rd for Ikenberry, and April 6th for Whitlock. The questions on which you may write essays are as follows:

Should upholding the liberal international order, as described in Ikenberry's book, be a priority for American foreign policy?

The United States government has a large policymaking apparatus, staffed by experts, with enormous resources at their disposal. Why was it unable to avoid the policy failures outlined in the Whitlock book?

This essay will be worth 25% of your overall grade for the semester.

***Midterm Exam.*** There will be an in-class midterm exam on April 11th, covering all the class material to that point in the semester. The exam will consist partly of multiple-choice questions, and partly of short-answer questions. It will count for 20% of your overall grade of the semester.

***Project Solarium simulation.*** Details about the simulation are contained in a separate document posted on the Brightspace. It contains two separately graded parts and one extra credit opportunity. The first part is participation, which will consist mainly in performing the duties and completing the assignment associated with your role. If you complete these duties and

assignments adequately and on time, you can expect an "A" for this part of the course. This will be worth 10% of your semester grade.

The second part is the work product associated with your role. This varies depending on the role, but there is more than one part to every role. The longer and more demanding part will be weighted more heavily. Please see the document explaining the simulation for specific details about this aspect of grading for each role. Overall, it will be worth 25% of your final grade.

Students will receive two points of extra credit on their final grade for the semester if they submit a memo evaluating the simulation and their participation in it. Details on the issues this memo should address are included in the document explaining the simulation. This memo is due by 5:00pm on May 13th, two days after our final class meeting.

**Grading Scale.** Your semester grade will be computed on a 100-point scale as follows: 94-100 = A; 91-93 = A-; 88-90 = B+; 84-87 = B; 81-83 = B-; 78-80 = C+; 74-77 = C; 71-73 = C-; 65-70 = D; 0-64 = F.

### Course Policies

**COVID-19.** Binghamton University follows the recommendations of public health experts to protect the health of students, faculty, staff, and the community at large. Safeguarding public health depends on each of us strictly following requirements as they are instituted and for as long as they remain in force. Health and safety standards will be enforced in this course.

Current rules require everyone to wear a face covering that completely covers both the nose and mouth while indoors. A face shield is not an acceptable substitute. If these requirements change, a campus-wide announcement will be made to inform the University. If you forget your face covering or it does not meet the requirements, you will be asked to leave the room immediately. You may not return until you meet the requirement. If a student does not comply with the requirement or my request to leave the classroom, I will immediately cancel the remainder of the class session and inform the dean's office, which will work with the Student Records office to issue a failing grade ("F") for the course regardless of when in the semester the incident occurs. The Dean's office will also inform the Office of Student Conduct. If a student's refusal to comply is a second offense, the Office of Student Conduct may recommend dismissal from the University.

Even with these precautions, breakthrough cases of COVID-19 are still possible. If you develop symptoms (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>), your top priorities should be getting medical treatment and avoiding further spread of the virus. Do not come to class. If you are on campus, call the Student Health Service for instructions at 607-777-2221. Once you are able, let me know about your situation. There is no need to ask the Student Health Service or your doctor for a note confirming your illness. I will take steps to help you make up the work you miss. I will do the same for other personal and family emergencies that may arise this semester. Please let me know about these issues as soon as you can. It is much easier for me to help you if I know about your situation before it critically affects your academic performance. I will not pry into the details any more than is necessary to assist you.

**Office hours.** I will hold office hours through Zoom, at least for the beginning of this semester. If you would like to meet with me, we will set up a time and I'll provide you with a Zoom link. If conditions change and I am able to hold office hours in person, I will establish regular times.

**Technology.** Although this is an in-person class, we will still use Brightspace, our new learning management system, for some purposes. I am new to this system, just as most of you are, so I may not be able to resolve technical issues you encounter. I encourage you to turn to the technical support the system provides:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>.

**E-mail.** I will use your university e-mail address for course announcements and other official purposes. Check this account at least once a day. I recommend setting your university e-mail account to forward messages to whatever e-mail address you use most often. I will respond to student messages in a timely manner but do not count on receiving an answer in less than 24 hours.

**Grade Appeals.** All grade appeals must be made in writing. If you believe a grade I assigned you is incorrect, you should write a brief memo explaining your concerns. I will review your concerns and respond to you in writing.

**Cheating and Plagiarism.** All work submitted as part of this course, including comments posted on discussion boards, must be original, with your sources cited. It is fine for you to introduce and use outside material that you think is relevant to the course but you should credit the original authors. You may use any citation system you like for this purpose. Violations of this rule will result in a failing grade for the course and will be submitted to the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee for further disciplinary action.

**Decorum.** I encourage you to express your views on the course material both in class and on the discussion boards. You are free to disagree with me or with your fellow students, just as others are free to disagree with you. In doing so, however, please refrain from personal insults or inflammatory rhetoric. Be respectful of one another and always remember that there is a real person on the other end of your comments.

### **Course Schedule and Assigned Materials**

The reading should be done prior to class on the class meeting. The semester will be divided into three parts: (1) historical strategic and foreign policy choices; (2) foreign policy organizations and instruments; (3) the Project Solarium simulation. There is a book associated with each part. Not every class meeting has an assigned reading.

#### **Part 1. Historical Strategic and Foreign Policy Choices**

##### **31 January: Foreign Policy, Grand Strategy, and the Early Republic**

Brands, Hal. 2014. *What Good is Grand Strategy?* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Introduction.

George Washington's Farewell Address, 1796

Excerpt from John Quincy Adams' Fourth of July Speech, 1821

The Monroe Doctrine, 1823

*Discussion question: There are many reasons to worry that policymakers efforts to construct a grand strategy to guide American foreign policy will fail. Should they still try to develop one?*

## **2 February: The Emergence of the United States as a World Power**

Irwin, Douglas A. 2017. *Clashing over Commerce*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 1-27.

The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, 1904

## **7 February: World War I**

Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, 1918

*Discussion question: What are the most important differences between the foreign policy outlined in Wilson's 14 Points and the policy that Republican presidents had pursued during the 1890-1914 period?*

## **9 February: World War II**

Ikenberry, G. John. 2011. *Liberal Leviathan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5.

## **14 February: The Cold War**

X [George F. Kennan]. 1947. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." *Foreign Affairs* 25(4): 566-82.

## **16 February: The Cold War, continued**

Block, Fred. 1980. "Economic Instability and Military Strength: The Paradoxes of the 1950 Rearmament Decision." *Politics and Society* 10(1): 35-58.

*Discussion question: Some observers, including George Kennan himself, worried that the Truman administration went too far in stressing the role of military force during the early Cold War era. Is this critique correct? Could the administration have done things differently?*

## **21 February: Hegemony after the Cold War**

Staniland, Paul. 2018. Misreading the "Liberal Order": Why We Need New Thinking in American Foreign Policy. Lawfare blog post.

Porter, Patrick. 2020. Wrestling with Fog: On the Elusiveness of the Liberal Order. War on the Rocks blog post.

## **23 February: Discussion of Ikenberry book**

Ikenberry, G. John. 2011. *Liberal Leviathan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

*Discussion/essay question: Should upholding the liberal international order, as described in Ikenberry's book, be a priority for American foreign policy?*

## **Part 2. Foreign Policy Organizations and Instruments**

### **28 February: The President and Congress**

#### **2 March: The State Department**

Pope, Laurence. 2014. *The Demilitarization of American Diplomacy: Two Cheers for Striped Pants*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. Chapter 2.

#### **7 March: Diplomacy and Foreign Aid**

Lancaster, Carol. 2007. *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3.

*Discussion question: Should the weakness of the State Department be taken into consideration when planning American foreign policy, as we are about to do in the simulation? Are there policies we should not rely upon because of it?*

#### **9 March: The Defense Department**

Dwight Eisenhower's Farewell Address, 1961

Gates, Robert M. 2020. "The Overmilitarization of American Foreign Policy: The United States Must Recover the Full Range of Its Power." *Foreign Affairs* July/Aug 2020.

### **14 March: No Class -- Spring Break**

### **16 March: No Class -- Spring Break**

#### **21 March: The Use of Military Force**

Fallows, James. 2004. "Blind into Baghdad." *The Atlantic* January/February 2004.

*Discussion question: What if anything should the United States do about the "overmilitarization" of its foreign policy?*

### **23 March: No Class -- International Studies Association Annual Meeting**

#### **28 March: The Intelligence Community**

Miscik, Jami. 2017. "Intelligence and the Presidency." *Foreign Affairs* 96(3): 57-64.

#### **30 March: Covert Operations**

Bevins, Vincent. 2017. "What the United States did in Indonesia." *The Atlantic*, 20 October 2017.

Brands, Hal. 2020. "China Rivalry May Put the U.S. Back in the Coup Business." *Bloomberg Opinion* 12 May 2020.

*Discussion question: If the Biden administration actually conducted a policymaking exercise like the one in our simulation, should its results be kept secret?*

#### **4 April: The National Security Council and the Policymaking Process**

Walt, Stephen M. 2018. *The Hell of Good Intentions*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. Chapter 3.

Gavin, Francis J. 2020. "Blame It on the Blob: How to Evaluate American Grand Strategy." War on the Rocks blog.

*Discussion question: Stephen Walt is quite critical of the foreign policy community. Francis Gavin argues that Walt is unfair to these people. Whom do you agree with more?*

#### **6 April: Discussion of Whitlock book**

Whitlock, Craig. 2021. *The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

*Discussion/essay question: The United States government has a large policymaking apparatus, staffed by experts, with enormous resources at their disposal. Why was it unable to avoid the policy failures outlined in the Whitlock book?*

#### **11 April: Midterm Exam**

#### **13 April: No class meeting -- Friday classes meet instead**

### **Part 3. Project Solarium Simulation**

#### **19 April: Project Solarium Simulation: review of roles and schedule**

Note that this is a Tuesday--Monday classes are scheduled to meet on this day  
Project Solarium Simulation explanation posted on Brightspace

#### **20 April: Discussion of Blustein book**

Blustein, Paul. 2019. *Schism: China, America and the Fracturing of the Global Trading System*. Waterloo, ON, Canada: Centre for International Governance Innovation.

*Discussion question: Were there additional concessions that the United States should have insisted upon when negotiating China's accession to the WTO?*

#### **25 April: Class work session on initial reports for simulation**

Initial reports due by noon on 26 April

#### **27 April: Class work session to coordinate final Task Force memos**

Task Force memos and Decision Group initial memos due 30 April

#### **2 May: Task Force Presentations and Questions**

#### **4 May: Class work session to discuss final written responses to questions and final policy**

Written responses to questions due by end of day, 4 May

Final Policy Statement from President due 6 May

**9 May: Responses to the President's Final Policy Statement**

Written version of responses from Decision Group due at end of day

**11 May: Class discussion of simulation**

*Discussion questions:*

*What was the most important thing the simulation revealed about formal policymaking exercises like Project Solarium?*

*What aspect of the simulation seemed most unrealistic?*