

**PLSC 486P**  
**United States Foreign Intervention**  
Fall 2020

Synchronous online meetings on Mondays, 1:40-4:40

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**Office hours:** Monday and Thursday, 11:00-12:30pm  
at Zoom link provided on myCourses site

**Course Description and Purpose**

This seminar will focus on U.S. efforts to control political outcomes in other states. American policymakers have employed a wide range of military, economic, and diplomatic means to do this. Some efforts have been secret while others have been highly visible. Some of these interventions have achieved their goals, but many others have failed, and nearly all have had unforeseen consequences. The course will examine a range of interventions in depth, as well as considering broader explanations for intervention decisions and their consequences.

Much of this course will be conducted synchronously online at the scheduled course meeting time. To simplify matters, there is a single recurring Zoom meeting for all class times throughout the semester. The link is posted as a permanent announcement on the myCourses page for this class along with a separate recurring link for office hours. Before the synchronous meeting, there will be a preliminary discussion in writing on message boards for each week on the myCourses site.

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.

This course helps fulfill the N (Social Science) and W (Writing) general education requirements. 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)
- Helps fulfill the requirement for 2 senior seminars (400-level)

**Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will acquire a deeper knowledge of the history of United States foreign intervention since 1945. They will understand the various policy instruments that the United States has used in these interventions. They will be able to construct informed arguments for and against foreign intervention, both orally and in writing.

**Course Materials**

This course will use a variety of text, video, and other sources, many of which are available free of charge through the myCourses page. Students will have to get access to several items which I am not able to post on the myCourses page. First, will read the following three books in their

entirety. I have ordered them from the campus bookstore but you can obtain them from other sources as well.

- Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. 2012. *Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan*. New York: Penguin Random House.
- Rabe, Stephen G. 2005. *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Taffett, Jeffrey F. 2007. *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America*. New York: Routledge.

We will also watch all 10 episodes of the PBS documentary series "The Vietnam War" by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. This is currently available for streaming from PBS or through Amazon Prime. It may also be available in DVD form from the library or other sources.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

**Participation in weeks 2-12.** Your participation is essential to the success of this seminar. It is important that you complete the assigned reading and participate in class discussion. The discussion will occur in two forms. You should participate in both.

1. During the week before each Monday's synchronous online discussion, there will be a discussion board devoted to that week's readings. I will post several discussion questions on this board to get us started. Each student should post an answer to at least one of these questions, or a question of their own about the course material for that week. You should also post at least one comment on other students' questions and comments. These comments and questions should be posted no later than 9:00am on the Monday of our online class meeting.
2. We will discuss the assigned readings for each week during the Monday synchronous session. The discussion board will serve as a starter for our class discussion. Every student should be ready to explain and elaborate on the questions or answers he or she posted.

Attendance at the online meeting each Monday afternoon is required. Please contact me in advance if you will not be present. The first week of the semester is an introduction, there will be no class meeting during the week of Thanksgiving, and the final two weeks will be evaluated differently, so there are 11 weeks of online and in-person discussion. Your lowest weekly participation grade will be dropped. Your participation for the remaining 10 of these 11 weeks is worth 6% of your final grade, for a total of 60%.

**Final Paper.** Each student will write a paper for one of the final two weeks of the semester. This paper should take the form of a policy memo for the President of the United States for dealing with the problem discussed in the reading for that week. Guidelines for these memos are somewhat different depending on the week.

- For the week of 30 November, you should imagine yourself writing a memo to President Obama's National Security Adviser, Susan Rice, in the fall of 2013. It should address the

issue of whether the United States should intervene in some way in the Syrian civil war at that time. Everyone else is weighing in on the issue, and Rice wants to know what you think. As the reading suggests, there really was a debate going in the administration about intervention in the fall of 2013. You can use material from this debate but cite your sources. Your memo should set out the goals the United States should pursue with respect to the Syrian civil war. It should explain the policies the United States adopt to pursue these goals. It should then anticipate and refute some likely objections to your argument.

- For the week of 7 December, you should imagine that you are working on the staff of the incoming National Security Adviser to the winner of the 2020 election. The National Security Adviser read the *New York Times Magazine* article assigned for this week during the summer and is concerned. He or she has asked you to assess the implications of climate change in Mexico and Central America on the United States. Your memo should set out the biggest problems the United States is likely to face if the projections in the article are correct. It should then explain whether intervention of some kind is needed to deal with these problems. If so, you should explain what options are most promising. If not, you should explain why no such program is needed. You should then set out some likely objections to your position and explain why the United States should nevertheless adopt your policy.

Your memo should aim for a length of 8-15 pages. The length of your paper will not be a consideration in grading it. The paper is due no later than 9:00am on the Sunday before our class discussion on the topic you chose. Submit it through the Turnitin.com assignment link in the myCourses page. The paper will be worth 26% of your final grade.

**Participation in weeks 14-15.** The final papers will structure our discussion during the final two weeks. You should be prepared to summarize and discuss the recommendations in your paper. Those writing these papers will need to do additional research to support their arguments. Those not writing papers that week should still do the assigned reading and be prepared to ask questions about their recommendations those writing papers offer. Your participation in the discussion during each of the final two weeks will be worth 7%, for a total of 14%

### **Course Policies**

**COVID-19.** This is obviously not a normal semester. We will all need to help one another to navigate the difficulties we will face. If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, your top priorities should be getting medical treatment and avoiding further spread of the virus. 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. 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 of your situation beyond its effect on your work for this course.

**Technology.** Because this is an online class, students will need to have access to a device that permits access to the myCourses page and use of the Zoom software we will employ in our synchronous meetings. You will also need to know how to use the hardware and software. The

university has resources to help you if you need it. They are set out here:

<https://www.binghamton.edu/students-online/>.

**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 please 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 extend credit to the original authors when you do so. 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 possible further disciplinary action.

**Decorum.** I encourage you to express your views on the course material both on the class discussion boards and in our online meetings. 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. This isn't Twitter.

### **Tentative Schedule**

The dates and reading assignments may change during the semester. If so, I will make an announcement by email. Each week, I will offer some suggestions on the order you should read or watch the course material for the following week.

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Topic and Discussion Materials</b>
<b>31 August</b>	<b>Introduction</b> This syllabus!
<b>7 September</b>	<b>Intervention and Foreign Policy</b> Kuperman, Alan J. 2015. "Obama's Libya Debacle: How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure." <i>Foreign Affairs</i> 94(2): 66-77. <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/24483483">www.jstor.org/stable/24483483</a> . Hamid, Shadi. 2016. "Everyone says the Libya intervention was a failure. They're wrong." <i>Vox</i> . <a href="https://www.vox.com/2016/4/5/11363288/libya-intervention-success">https://www.vox.com/2016/4/5/11363288/libya-intervention-success</a> Friersdorf, Conor. 2016. "Did Libya Prove War Hawks Right or Wrong?" <i>The Atlantic</i> , 29 July 2014. <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/07/did-the-war-in-libya-prove-the-interventionists-right-or-wrong/375211/">https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/07/did-the-war-in-libya-prove-the-interventionists-right-or-wrong/375211/</a> Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 1

**14 September    Where Do U.S. Foreign Policy Goals Come From?**

Leffler, Melvyn P. "National Security." In Melvyn P. Leffler, ed., *Safeguarding Democratic Capitalism: U.S. Foreign Policy and National Security, 1920-2015* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 317-36.

Rosenberg, Emily S. 1994. "Economic Interest and United States Foreign Policy." In Gordon Martel, ed., *American Foreign Relations Reconsidered, 1890-1993* (New York: Taylor & Francis), 37-51.

Ellsberg, Daniel. 1972. "The Quagmire Myth and the Stalemate Machine." In Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster). 42-135.

Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 2

**21 September    Military Intervention in Afghanistan**

Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. 2012. *Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan*. New York: Penguin Random House. (entire book)

Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 3

**28 September    Decisions Against Military Intervention**

May, Ernest R. 2002. "1947-48: When Marshall Kept the U.S. Out of War in China." *The Journal of Military History* 66(4): 1001-10.

U.S. Department of State. 1967 [1949]. *The China White Paper*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Introduction and Letter of Transmittal.

<https://archive.org/details/VanSlykeLymanTheChinaWhitePaper1949/mode/2up>

Halberstam, David. 1972. *The Best and the Brightest*. New York: Ballantine Books. pp. 102-120, 379-92.

Herring, George, and Richard Immerman. 1984. "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: 'The Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited." *The Journal of American History* 71(2): 343-363.

Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 4

**5 October        Foreign Aid I**

Taffett, Jeffrey F. 2007. *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America*. New York: Routledge. pp. 1-93.

Afoaku, Osita G. 2000. "U.S. Foreign Policy and Authoritarian Regimes: Change and Continuity in International Clientelism." *Journal of Third World Studies* 17(2): 13-40.

Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 5

- 12 October**      **Foreign Aid II**  
 Taffett, Jeffrey F. 2007. *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America*. New York: Routledge. pp. 95-197.  
 Mejia, Daniel. 2016. Plan Colombia: An Analysis of Effectiveness and Costs. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Mejia-Colombia-final-2.pdf>  
 Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 6
- 19 October**      **Sanctions**  
 Crawford, Neta C., and Audie Klotz. 1999. *How Sanctions Work: Lessons From South Africa*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 14.  
 Ioffe, Julia. 2017. "Why Does the Kremlin Care So Much About the Magnitsky Act?" *The Atlantic* 27 July 2017.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/07/magnitsky-act-kremlin/535044/>  
 Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 7
- 26 October**      **Covert Action in British Guiana**  
 Rabe, Stephen G. 2005. *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. (entire book)  
 Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 8
- 2 November**      **Covert Action in Cuba and Elsewhere**  
 Schoultz, Lars. 2009. *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. Chapters 4-7.  
 Mazzetti, Mark. 2013. "A Secret Deal on Drones, Sealed in Blood." *New York Times*, 6 April 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/07/world/asia/origins-of-cias-not-so-secret-drone-war-in-pakistan.html>  
 Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 9
- 9 November**      **Counterinsurgency and the Wars in Vietnam and Iraq**  
 U.S. Department of the Army. 2006. Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency. Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army. Introduction and Chapter 1.  
[https://legacy.npr.org/documents/2008/may/counterinsurgency\\_manual.pdf](https://legacy.npr.org/documents/2008/may/counterinsurgency_manual.pdf)  
 Gentile, Gian. 2013. *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*. New York: The New Press. Introduction and chapters 1, 3, 4, and the Afterword. (Available as e-book through BU Library catalog.)  
 Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, "The Vietnam War," episode 10

**16 November Humanitarian Intervention**

Power, Samantha. 2002. *A Problem From Hell*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 10.

Dobbins, James, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel Swanger, and Anga Timilsina. 2003. *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2003. Accessed August 9, 2020.

[www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mr1753rc](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mr1753rc). Chapters on Bosnia and Somalia.

PBS Frontline. 1998. "Ambush in Mogadishu."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6fMLoVATck>

**\* No Meeting During the On-Campus Exam Period, November 22-24 \***

**30 November Non-Intervention in Syria**

Fisher, Max. 2016. "Syria's Paradox: Why the War Only Ever Seems to Get Worse." *New York Times* 26 August 2016.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/27/world/middleeast/syria-civil-war-why-get-worse.html>

Tabler, Andrew. 2018. "How Syria Came to This." *The Atlantic*, 15 April 2018,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/syria-chemical-weapons/558065/>

Filkins, Dexter. 2013. "The Thin Red Line." *The New Yorker*, 6 May 2013.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/05/13/the-thin-red-line-2>

Filkins, Dexter. 2019. "The Moral Logic of Humanitarian Intervention." *The New Yorker*, September 16, 2019.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/09/16/the-moral-logic-of-humanitarian-intervention>.

**7 December Climate Change and Intervention?**

Lustgarten, Abrahm, with photographs by Meridith Kohut. 2020. "The Great Climate Change Migration." *New York Times Magazine*, 23 July 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>.