

American Foreign Policy

PSCI 131 001

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Objectives This course is designed as a workshop (or seminar to use the more conventional term in the social sciences) focused on developing your critical reading and writing skills in the areas of international relations and contemporary history. The workshop ideal, where participants take charge of their learning, engaging with each other and the instructors in a process of knowledge creation through practice, inquiry, deliberation, criticism, and problem solving, comes up against the institutional reality of the introductory lecture course format. This format traditionally means large enrollments filling two, fifty minute-long meetings in a room with fixed seating, and a smaller, fifty minute-recitation section each week. Teaching in this format means the expert talks and the novice listens and poses brief questions. We will need to remain conscious of this apparent constraint and try to work around it. It can be done.

You will work on producing four finished pieces of analytical writing in two styles. These are complementary assignments that, combined, will enhance your understanding of the nature, purpose, and future of U.S. primacy or hegemony or global dominance. This is the issue, arguably, at the core of debate today about American foreign policy.

The first is a set of book reviews, leading up to a comparative review essay, as found in the *New York Review of Books* (<http://nybooks.com/nyrev/>) and in other general publications devoted to politics and the arts such as the *Boston Review*. This kind of essay is also ubiquitous in newspapers, journals of opinion and international affairs, and in the professional publications of various fields and disciplines, such as the *American Historical Review*, the *American Political Science Review*, *World Politics*, in law journals, and the like. The point is to familiarize you with this form of intellectual production and to let you practice this art yourselves. Why practice it? Writing reviews will, arguably, make you better readers of them. The skills involved are also ones that you will use often in the future. Most of you will go on to graduate and professional schools or take positions in organizations where you will have to read and synthesize complex arguments and information for yourselves and others.

The second type of writing you will work on this semester is a policy brief or position paper. The recitation sections this semester will be organized as a series of think tanks where members define and pursue research projects. A policy brief typically requires the kind of research and synthesis that you undertake in a conventional term paper in a class—it is an analytical exercise—but it presents its findings in a somewhat different, succinct (*brief*) form as a series of policy options for a typical audience of decisionmakers in government, business, or the third sector. The president and his cabinet depend on policy briefs, but so do officials of development agencies and in Human Rights Watch. It assumes that the reader has limited time to make a practical decision.

Truth in Advertising This version of PSCI 131 is a harder course than most 100-level PSCI classes. It demands more of you than does a lecture class. You will be expected to attend all meetings, having read the assignment, and will be called on to discuss the materials. Students who work best in the conventional lecture and exam setting or who put a premium on road-tested and smooth-running classroom experiences may want to consider taking PSCI 131 at another point or with a different instructor.

Grades Your grades will be based on the writing assignments and on your attendance and participation in class. Percentages indicate the weight of each component in the determination of your final grade. Reviews 1 (15%) and 2 (15%) are short, 1000-word assignments that may be incorporated in part in the final 3-4000-word comparative review 3 (25%). Assignment 4 is the policy brief (30%). Your participation (15%) in class and in section will be equally weighted, with one exception.

Given the size of the class and number of assignments, we are unable to devote much time to editing your work. We therefore encourage you to read and critique each other's paper drafts prior to handing them in for a grade. We would also encourage you to study the style of writers you admire, and to get hold of a copy of a writing guide, for example, Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*.

All papers have to be machine-printed and double-spaced (24 points between lines) using a 12-point font. Please make sure that a page number appears on each page, and at the end of the text please include a word count (most word processing programs can calculate this for you). Due dates for all written assignments are specified in the syllabus.

Save all written work in both hard copy and on disk! You will continue to develop these texts throughout the semester. It is important that all citations and references in your written work be complete, and that you follow a consistent style. Many examples of full text citations are found in the syllabus and in the texts and notes of all the books we are reading this semester. If you are unclear about how and why to cite a work fully, please see one of the instructors.

Books We will use the following books, all of which are available from the Penn bookstore or via the web (e.g., amazon.com, half.com): Seymour M. Hersh, *Chain of Command* (Harper Collins 2004); Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, *America Unbound* (Brookings, 2003); John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Harvard, 2004); George Packer, *Assassins' Gate* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); and Stephen Walt, *Taming American Power* (Norton, 2005).

One More Thing If you do not do so already, please keep up with the *New York Times* or equivalent print source for day-to-day developments in U.S. foreign policy.

Preliminary Schedule of Sessions, Topics and Assignments

Any time we read a new author (beginning with Tony Judt on 1/12) please do some research to find out who s/he is and what s/he does and is known for. We want to develop textual and contextual knowledge about those who take positions on the questions about which the class is centrally concerned. I will call on students to introduce the author as well as the argument.

When you read, note any names or concepts that you don't understand or recognize rather than ignore them. As you continue reading, note too those ideas and names that continue to occur. What do they signify? Develop your understanding cumulatively.

Finally, the best way I know to nail an argument and retain it in your mind is to write a short, 50-100 word précis or abstract of the text after you have finished it. You will be able to make use of these in discussions both early and late in the semester (when you otherwise will have forgotten the argument) and in your final review essay.

I

Introduction

1/9 The Organization and Argument of the Class

The main goal of these first three weeks is to develop a provisional understanding of the ongoing debate about the broad nature of U.S. Foreign Policy as conceived in the essays and op ed pieces. Here are some questions to consider: What are these writers contesting? Are their ideological biases (left, right, conservative, liberal, radical, etc.) obvious and do they affect the analysis? Can we distinguish between empirical and normative dimensions of the debate (what *is* the case versus what *ought to be* the case)? How are we to resolve these matters? Can we? And why does it matter?

1/11 The Birth, Death and Resurrection of Empire in American Culture

R Tony Judt, "Dreams of Empire," *New York Review of Books*, 51, 17 (November 4, 2004)

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/17518?email>

Judt is using the framework of a comparative review to advance an argument of his own. What is it and how does he see the different books he reviews in relation to his argument?

Note you can access this one of two ways. Directly from the site (pay \$3.00) or through the Penn library portal, which allows you access to it for free, even from a remote site as long as you have a Pennkey i.d. To access using the Penn system begin at the home page, click on the link for E Resources, and search for New York Review of Books. Hey, this ain't rocket science.

1/16 MLK Day – NO CLASS

Search the web or the library for (and read) something Martin Luther King wrote on U.S. Foreign Policy. Be prepared to report on it in the next class.

1/18 Liberal Empire and its Alternatives

R G. John Ikenberry, "Illusions of Empire," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2004)

<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040301fareviewessay83212a/g-john-ikenberry/illusions-of-empire-defining-the-new-american-order.html>

What is the difference between empire and hegemony according to Ikenberry?

Michael Walzer, "Is There an American Empire?" *Dissent*, Fall 2003

<http://www.dissentmagazine.org/menutest/articles/fa03/walzer.htm>

1/23 Mapping Positions I

R Max Boot, "American Imperialism? No Need to Run Away from the Label," *USA Today*, May 5, 2003

http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2003-05-05-boot_x.htm

David Hendrickson, "The Curious Case of American Hegemony: Imperial Aspirations and National Decline," *World Policy Journal* 22, 2 (Summer 2005): 1-22

<http://worldpolicy.org/journal/articles/wpj05-2/hendrickson.html>

Michael Ignatieff, "The American Empire: The Burden," *New York Times Magazine*, January 5, 2003.

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/burden.htm>

Anatol Lieven, "The Empire Strikes Back," *The Nation*, July 7, 2003.

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/empire/analysis/2003/0707strikes.htm>

1/25 Mapping Positions II

R Noam Chomsky, "Dominance and its Dilemmas," *Boston Review*, October 2003

<http://www.chomsky.info/articles/200310--.htm>

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The American Empire? Not So Fast," *World Policy Journal*, 22, 1 (Spring 2005)

<http://worldpolicy.org/journal/articles/wpj05-sp/schlesinger.html>

John Hillen, "Mechanics of Empire," *Orbis* 49, 1 (Winter 2005)

<http://www.fpri.org/orbis/4901/>

John Grey, "Mirage of Empire," *New York Review of Books*, 53, 1 (January 12, 2006)

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18611>

II On The Ground

1/30, 2/1, 2/6, and 2/8 Chain of Command

The next four sessions of the class are devoted to developing an in-depth and critical understanding of Seymour Hersh's *Chain of Command*. The book is divided into 8 sections. Read two sections for each class (thus sections I and II are to be read for the January 30 class). In addition, make sure to read the introduction (in the front) and the acknowledgments (in the back) before coming to class on 1.30.

We have two main goals for this part of the class. 1. We want to understand and critique the book on its own terms. Hersh is an investigative journalist rather than a scholar or theorist. We need to extract an interpretation—of what is "the road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib" an instance--from a genre or style that is ostensibly dedicated to careful, objective reporting of the facts rather than to advancing a general interpretation. We need to step back and tease out the argument about U.S. policy that is implicit in Hersh's book. 2 At the same time, it may be that the implicit interpretation is as much a consequence of the genre or approach or method than of the facts as these are reported. The problem might be one of not seeing the forest for the trees. If so, we clearly need to go beyond what he reports and what he concludes from his reporting.

2/13 First Book Review Due

Write a 1000-word review of Hersh's *Chain of Command*. Your review should include the following. 1. A title that captures the essence of your argument and critique. 2. An introductory "hook" that leads to a summary of your main point about Hersh. 3. A succinct account of what *Chain of Command* is about. 4. An assessment of its strengths. 5. The critique elaborated. 6. A concluding statement. **DUE IN CLASS.**

Note: Make sure that you write the review as if for publication for someone unfamiliar with the book, not as an informal commentary addressed to Vitalis or to your T.A.

III

Unilateralism and Exceptionalism

2/15, 2/20, 2/22, 2/27 *America Unbound*

These four sessions of the class will cover the second text for the semester, *America Unbound*, by Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay. Hint: Review the op ed piece we read by them earlier. We will discuss three chapters each class (so Chapters 1-3 for 2.16). Again, read the acknowledgements first in order to develop crucial contextual knowledge about the authors.

IV

A Historian's Perspective

3/1, 3/13, 3/15, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*

These three sessions, across the spring break divide (week of March 9), are devoted to the set of lectures by the Yale historian of foreign policy, John Lewis Gaddis. Read chapters 1 (short) 4 (the first lecture) and 5 (short) for the 3.1 class. Chapters 3 (lecture 2) and 4 (lecture 3) will be discussed in the subsequent sessions.

3/20 Comparative Review of *America Unbound* and *Surprise, Security and the American Experience* Due

Write a 1000-1200 word comparative book review of *America Unbound* and *Surprise, Security and the American Experience*. You now have a number of comparative reviews on which to model yours. You should use the essay form to advance an argument that develops from the pairing of the two books. You still need to review both, succinctly, and let the reader know what is most important about each, but you should draw out the significance or value added when the two are read side-by-side. **DUE IN CLASS.**

V

Structural Impediments to American Empire

3/22, 3/27, 3/29 *Assassins' Gate*

We will spend four sessions on George Packer's, *Assassins' Gate*. Packer is a journalist like Hersh, but who searches elsewhere for answers and who has a clearly different perspective. It is 12 chapters long so we will deal with 3 chapters per class. Note however that you have an assignment due on Monday April 3.

4/03 Policy Briefing Paper due in Class

Discussion of and expectations for this assignment will take place in your sections. Plan to attend class in order to fill out SAS course evaluations and turn in your papers

4/05 Assassins' Gate continued

4/10, 4/12, and 4/17 *Taming American Power*

Walt's (a political scientist and IR theorist) book is 5 chapters long plus an introduction, so we will tackle 2 chapters each class. You need to begin to think about the readings comparatively and in relation to the beginning arguments about the nature (and future) of U.S. hegemony. These discussions should be oriented toward your final assignment due to your T.A. no later than 4.24.

4/19 Last Class: The Arguments Rehearsed and Reconsidered

Your final assignment is a comparative review, along the lines of the Tony Judt essay we read during the first week of class. The review should discuss the last two books in greatest depth, while considering the other works you have read for the class to the extent that they are appropriate. The objective is to develop an argument of your own about the nature of U.S. foreign policy. One possibility is to consider the comparative usefulness and limitations of the books in making sense of the course of U.S. affairs and the kind of order likely to follow in the last half of the decade.

You need to assess the adequacy of the idea of empire (or hegemony) for making sense of U.S. foreign policy. In doing so you have a built in framework for thinking comparatively about the books and the extent to which they contribute to an adequate account of the nature and course of international order today. Alternately, you may decide that these books, to different extents, undermine the claims of the most vociferous critics of the Bush administration. If so, you again have an organizing framework for your essay.

You may make use of at least some of the text you have already written, although you are not required to, in a way that makes sense and that sustains the main argument of your essay. You may well end up revising one or more of your earlier accounts.

Finally, consider concluding your essay with some suggestive observations about post-9/11 and post-Iraq war concerns, clarifying the extent to which and in what ways the books under review help in making sense of the near future. **DUE BY APRIL 24.**