

# American Foreign Policy

PSCI 398 301

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Office Hours: M 10:30-12

**Objectives** This seminar is dedicated to developing your critical reading and writing skills in the areas of international relations and contemporary (comparative) history. A seminar requires a great deal from participants. You are expected to take charge of your learning, engaging with each other and the instructor in a process of knowledge creation through practice, inquiry, deliberation, criticism, and problem solving. You will produce three pieces of analytical writing. These are complementary and cumulative assignments that, combined, will enhance your understanding of the nature, purpose, and future of U.S. hegemony or global dominance. This is the issue, arguably, at the core of debate today about American foreign policy.

The first style of analysis 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.

**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 (20%) and 2 (25%) are short, 1000-word assignments that may be incorporated in part in the final 5000-word comparative review 3 (35%). Participation (20%).

All papers should be written 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). The due dates for all written assignments are given in the syllabus. Since we are working in two different cities and assignments are due on days other than Thursday, you may have to submit some of your work to me via email as attachments.

Save (and back up) all written work. 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 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: The Birth, Death and Resurrection of Empire in American Culture**

#### **1/12 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?

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?

#### **1/19 Liberal Empire and its Alternatives**

We need to develop a framework for thinking systematically and comparatively about these readings. Try the following exercise for a provisional accounting: categorize each of the authors in terms of more disposed and less disposed to support the current so-called unilateral moment. For both pro- and anti-unilateralists try to determine the grounds on which the writer bases his support or opposition. I would propose two broad (ideal) distinct grounds: 1. pragmatic or interest based arguments and 2. idealistic or normative arguments. Do these distinctions work in categorizing these writers and their arguments?

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?**

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](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>

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 1/26 and 2/2 *Chain of Command*

The next two 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 four sections for each class (thus sections I thru IV are to be read for the January 26 class). In addition, make sure to read the introduction (in the front) and the acknowledgments (in the back) before coming to class.

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.

**Book Review *Draft* Due to your reader by Friday 2/3 and *Final Version* Due to me via attachment on Monday 2/6.**

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.

***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.***

## III Unilateralism and Exceptionalism

### 2/9 *America Unbound*

This week's class will cover the second text for the semester, *America Unbound*, by Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay. Again, read the acknowledgments first in order to develop crucial contextual knowledge about the authors.

## IV A Historian's Perspective

### 2/16 *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*

This week is devoted to the set of lectures by the Yale historian of foreign policy, John Lewis Gaddis.

### 2/23 Vitalis Delivering Infinite Wisdom at Oxford. No Class

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 via attachment by Sunday February 26**

### **3/9 SPRING BREAK**

## **V**

### **Structural Impediments to American Empire**

#### **3/16 Assassins' Gate**

We will spend two weeks 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 6 chapters per class.

#### **3/23 Vitalis in San Diego Delivering Even More Wisdom. No Class**

#### **3/30 Assassins' Gate continued**

#### **4/6 Taming American Power**

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.

#### **4/13 [double session] and 4/20 Workshops for your Final Review Essay**

Your final assignment is a comparative review. The review should discuss the five books and other works you have read for the class to the extent that they are appropriate, while laying out 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 IN CLASS IF YOU PRESENTED ON 4/13, AND DUE VIA ATTACHMENT ON SUNDAY 4/23 IF YOU PRESENTED ON 4/20.**