**Political Science 455 (Honors) US Foreign Policy**

**Spring 2019 Professor Volgy**

**Wednesdays, 3:30-6:00 Social Sciences 311**

**SYLLABUS**

**Office Hours**: Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:00-2:30, and by appointment.

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**Course Organization and Rationale**

This course proceeds in four stages. First, we will investigate the actors involved in the making of US foreign policy. Second, we will examine alternative theoretical conceptions and approaches to foreign policy. Third, we will examine a number of foreign policies, within the context of these actors and explanations. Finally, you will be asked to write a paper that integrates these different stages into a coherent examination of one U.S. foreign policy of interest to you.

We will be looking at US foreign policy at an unprecedented time: the changeover from the Obama to the Trump Administration. Such changes are not novel in the history of US foreign policy. In fact, transitions of such type are the norm in democracies. What makes this an unprecedented time is that it is the first in memory when an incoming President lacks both any experience in government, and certainly any experience in the handling of U.S. foreign policy. Additionally, the incoming President had made campaign commitments, both in domestic and foreign policy (“to drain the swamp”), that are at variance not only with the outgoing administration, but as well with his own party. Through this course, we will be able to trace a) what, if any, fundamental changes are being made to the actors who direct foreign policy; b) the conceptual structure(s) that drives foreign policy; and c) any actual changes to extant foreign policy. ***So, an implicit (and explicit) dimension to everything we will do in this course will be to focus on these changes as they unfold before us***.

(For illustrations of Trump’s views on foreign policy, see two interview with the New York Times, one as a candidate at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/us/politics/donald-trump-transcript.html> and as president elect: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/us/politics/trump-new-york-times-interview-transcript.html> )

**How to Get to our Goals**

We will do so several ways. Part of the work involves reading, and the assignments are noted below. There is a “text” of sorts, Cox and Stokes, *US Foreign Policy* (2nd edition). It is not available in the book store because I realized that Amazon can sell it to you at a much cheaper rate (make sure you purchase the second edition). In addition, I’ve added additional articles that are also required reading and I will distribute those in class.

Much of our efforts will involve seminar work: Since this is an honors seminar, a substantial part of our responsibilities will revolve around our classroom discussions. I expect all of us to come to class, **well prepared** to discuss the week’s subject matter. The responsibility in all seminars belongs jointly to the faculty member and the student. I expect that I will learn from you and you will learn from each other as much if not more than what you will learn from me. ***To do so requires not only doing the readings in advance of the seminar, but thinking critically about their contents, and coming to the seminar ready and prepared to discuss them.***

In addition, I will ask you to sign up for a series of “assignments” where you will be asked to take over the course (in groups of twos), and expand on our discussion with an application to the changes going on in Washington. I will have a sign-up sheet the first class session to give you plenty of time to prepare for your sessions.

Finally, a substantial portion of this seminar will be devoted to not only analyzing the knowledge of others, but in creating our own knowledge base. Each of you will be asked to write an original paper, focusing on an aspect of the core theme of the seminar. To do a good job, we will talk about social science methods and you will be expected to dirty your hands with actual data and its analysis.

**Expectations**

***Class participation*:** This is an upper division honors seminar based on the discussion method. Therefore, I expect that you will come to class well prepared. By this, I mean that not only have you read the materials that are due for that day but also that a) you will have thought about them; and b) you are ready to discuss them. I have limited the readings so that you will not be reading a large volume for any given session; in turn, I expect that you will read what is assigned closely, and critically.

\*\*\*\*\* Specifically, you are asked to do the following with respect to the readings:\*\*\*\*\*

1. You need to read each assigned reading closely, and critically. By critically, I’m asking you to ask yourself at each major argument: Why is this? What evidence is there for this assertion? Can I think of an example that weakens this argument? To what extent is the argument refuted or contradicted by what we’ve discussed/read earlier? How good is the quality of evidence being used?
2. You need to take notes BEFORE COMING TO THE SEMINAR on both the key concepts/issues/ideas in the readings and on your criticism of them;
3. Your notes should be sufficiently thorough and clear to allow you to use them to: a) respond to questions/challenges/issues raised in class about the readings; and b) as the source with which to review the readings later without going back to the actual readings;
4. If you have to start looking back at the actual readings when class is taking place, you have not done a good enough job of taking notes!
5. Consult your notes BEFORE coming to class; this allows you to prepare for our class discussions. Think about the day’s subject before class starts!
6. Keep current with current events regarding US foreign policy. I anticipate that the foreign policy world will be changing dramatically (or not) as we proceed through the course. A good way to do this is to read the *New York Times* daily (electronic version).

These basic points will allow you to do a good job in discussing the materials in class; they will allow you as well a strategy of getting the most out of the readings we have. It is a strategy all graduate students use in the social sciences.

***Examination policy:***There is a mid-term exam, scheduled for Week 8 (March 2nd ). There is a time and place for a final exam, but the ***final is*** ***optional***: ***I have the option*** of requiring you to take it if our class discussions do not turn out as well as I expect and I’m having trouble evaluating you on your in-class performance. Otherwise, ***if I make it optional***, ***you may choose to take it*** if you feel that taking it would compensate for deficiencies either on the mid-term, class participation, or on the paper that is due.

I assumed that you will plan your schedule according to the schedule for the exams, and will take these exams on the assigned dates. If you cannot, for any reason, attend the midterm or the final (assuming that you wish to take it or if I choose to make it non-optional), you must notify me at least one week **prior** to the exam. I will not give make-up exams unless your failure to take the exam involved an extremely unusual hardship or unavoidable circumstance.

***Attendance policy:*** I consider what goes on during class to be a crucial component of this course. Just as importantly, this is a seminar rather than a standard course, and as in graduate seminars, missing a class is a serious “no-no”. Missing class will mean that it will be virtually impossible for you to do well in the course. Therefore, it is assumed that you will come to every class. While attendance is generally on the honor system, I reserve the right to take attendance on occasion.

So, for honors seminars, the policy is simple: COME PREPARED and THINKING ABOUT THE WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT; COME ON TIME; COME EVERY WEEK, and while in class, ENGAGE the topic every week.

***Plagiarism***: I’m assuming that as honors students you are well aware of the University’s policies regarding plagiarism. In the academic world, stealing the work of others, or failing to give full credit where it is due (and not using full citations), is a capital, criminal offense, punishable—if not by guillotine—by expulsion from the course, and depending on the severity of the crime, from the University. If you don’t know what plagiarism is…or you are in doubt at any point in your work…feel free to ask before it is too late.

**GRADES:** Grades are unavoidable, even in honors seminars. In this one, the final grade will be based on the following:

***Exams*:** the midterm (and the possible final exam) will count for 30% of the course grade.

***Final paper****:* this paper is designed to synthesize what you’ve learned, and apply it to an important, substantive case in international politics; it will be worth 40% of the course grade.

***Class participation****:* I am serious about the discussion format for this course. Therefore, the **quality** of your class participation will be worth 30% of the course grade. This also includes the sessions you will lead. During all class periods come prepared to discuss the materials and to raise critical objections to the materials.

**CHOICES for grading: *In most graduate seminars there are no exams, only work in the seminar and on the paper. If you wish, I can give you that option, but it will have to be up to the class to so choose. If you choose that option, then your grade will be as follows: 45% participation in the seminar; 55% on the paper. We will talk about this the first day of class.***

**Seminar Paper:**

You are being asked to write a paper at the end of the semester, on a key phenomenon in U.S. foreign policy. Your choice of topics is up to you, but with two suggestions: First, before proceeding, you clear the topic with me, and in the paper you will need to justify the topic/puzzle as a salient issue for international politics. Second, there is always a default option: What will be, and what should be the role of the United States in international politics? You may choose this option if you can’t find another, more salient puzzle to pursue. But you will need to justify this one as well, and the justification needs to be based on a theoretical framework that provides a broad explanation about how U.S. foreign policy works.

The purpose of this paper is to give you an opportunity to synthesize and apply the materials—both theoretical and empirical—we developed in the course. You will need to have a good command of U.S. foreign policy (and this of course depends on the theoretical approach you choose to understand it), and data to back up your assertions and/or hypotheses.

This assignment becomes manageable as long as you do two things: First, make a determination about what will be your topic of choice, very early in the semester. You can then use it as a skeletal device on which to hang alternative theoretical perspectives; second, at the end of each week’s seminar, you think about how the topic, our discussions, and how our common readings can apply to your paper.

I will evaluate your paper on the following criteria:

* How well did you synthesize and apply our readings and discussion to the topic?
* How well did you integrate data/observations with your theoretical perspective in your essay?
* How creative and insightful were you in developing your answer, while keeping within the bounds of what can be realistically expected in the emerging new US administration?

**DATE TOPIC and READINGS**

**Week 1**

(January 9) **Introduction to course: objectives and requirements**

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**Week 2**

(January 16) ***Who Are the Actors That Make US Foreign Policy?***

**READINGS**: Cox and Stokes, Chapter 7

DeYoung, Karen (2015) “How the Obama White House Runs Foreign Policy”. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-the-obama-white-house-runsforeign-policy/2015/08/04/2befb960-2fd7-11e5-8353-1215475949f4_story.html>.

Coyne, C. (2011) “The Political Economy of the Creeping Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 1.

Bacevich, A. (2011) “The Tyranny of Defense Inc.” *Atlantic Magazine*, Jan/Feb.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/01/the-tyranny-of-defense-inc/308342/>

Tenpas et. al. (2018). “Tracking Turnover in the Trump Administration.” Brookings, <http://brook.gs/2FKYknT>

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**Actors (continued): Congress, the Media and Public Opinion**

**READINGS:** Cox and Stokes, Chapter 10

Berinsky, A. (2007) “Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites and American Support for Military Conflict,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol.69, No. 4.

Baum (2013) “The Iraq Coalition of the Willing and (Politically) Able…” *American Journal of Political Science*

“Public Uncertain, Divided Over America’s Place in the World” at <http://www.people-press.org/2016/05/05/public-uncertain-divided-over-americas-place-in-the-world/>

Optional: Jacobs and Page (2005) “Who Influences US Foreign Policy?” *APSR*

Trumbore and Dulio (2013) “Running on Foreign Policy”. *Foreign Policy Analysis*

Also, for data on recent public opinion toward U.S. foreign policy, see: <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/issue/public-opinion> and

<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/4>

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**Week 3 Actors (continued)**

(January 23)

**READINGS:** Colgan (2013). “Domestic Revolutionary Leaders and International Conflict.” *World Politics*.

On the role of inexperienced presidents and their advisors see <https://profsaunders.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/nosubstitute3.pdf>

Optional:

Donald Trump’s Foreign Policy appointments:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-administration-appointee-tracker/database/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_appointments_of_Donald_Trump>

And a comment by The Economist[[1]](#footnote-1)

Paletta, D. (2016) “Where Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump Stand on Foreign Policy Issues”, *Wall Street Journal*. <http://graphics.wsj.com/elections/2016/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-on-foreign-policy/>

Hirsch, M. (2016) “Why George Washington Would Have Agreed With Donald Trump,” Politico. http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/05/founding-fathers-2016-donald-trump-americafirst-foreign-policy-isolationist-213873

Saunders (2016) “What President Trump Means for Foreign Policy” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/09/what-a-president-trump-means-for-foreign-policy/?utm_term=.97db75ef3af7>

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**Week 4**

(January 30)

**READINGS**: Bueno de Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics*, pps. 157-170

Groves, 2015. “Principal-Agent Problems…,” *International Journal of Political Science and Development*.

**Your turn**: How have the key actors changed after the 2016 elections? What is the likely impact on US foreign policy and in what areas?

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**Week 5**

(February 6) **NO Class; I’m in New York for a research workshop**

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**Week 6**

(February 13) **Explanations of US Foreign Policy: Realism**

**READINGS**: Cox and Stokes, Chapters 1,23

Schmidt, B. & Williams, M. (2008) “Bush Doctrine & the Iraq War: Neoconservatives vs. Realists.” *Security Studies*. April: 191-220.

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**Explanations of US Foreign Policy**: **Liberalism and NeoConservativism**

**READINGS:**

Ikenberry, G. John (2009) “Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemma of Liberal World Order.” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 7, pp. 71-87.

Cox and Stokes, Chapter 21

Brook, Yaron and Epstein, Alex (2007) “Neoconservative Foreign Policy: An Autopsy.” The Objective Standard. (Summer). [https://www.theobjectivestandard.com/issues/2007-summer/neoconservative-foreign-policy/#](https://www.theobjectivestandard.com/issues/2007-summer/neoconservative-foreign-policy/)

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**Week 7**

(February 20) **Explanations (continued): Decision Making Models**

**READINGS**:

(Rational Model) Bergen, P. (2009) “The Account of How We Nearly Caught Osama bin Laden in 2001”, *New Republic*. December. <https://newrepublic.com/article/72086/the-battle-tora-bora>

(Bureaucratic Model) Marsh, K. (2013) “Obama’s Surge: A Bureaucratic Politics Analysis of the Decision to Order a Troop Surge in the Afghanistan War.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* (February).

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**Explanations (continued): Constructivism, Identity, and Global Leadership**

**READINGS**: Cox and Stokes, Chapters 11, 2, 23

Corn, David (2016) “Donald Trump Says He Doesn’t Believe in ‘American Exceptionalism’”.http://m.motherjones.com/politics/2016/06/donald-trump-americanexceptionalism

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**Week 8**

(February 27) **Explanations (continued): Strategic/Elite Survival Theory**

**READINGS**: Bueno de Mesquita, “Selectorate Theory.” In *Principles of International Politics*.

Siverson and Bueno de Mesquita. 2017. “The Selectorate Theory and International Politics,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory*

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**Midterm Exam**

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**Week 9**

(March 6) **NO CLASS: Spring Recess**

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**Week 10**

(March 13) **Is There a Grand Strategy to US Foreign Policy?**

**READINGS:** Feaver (2009) “What is Grand Strategy and why do we need it?”

White House (2015) “US National Security Strategy.”

Drezner (2011) “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?”

Miller (2012) “Global Politics and Strategy…Five Pillars.”

(optional) Ferguson (2016) “Donald Trump’s New World Order.” *The American Interest*

**Your turn:** Is there a grand strategy for the new administration? If so, in what way may it be different from the Obama grand strategy?

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(March 20) **Geography based Foreign Policy (The Middle East)\***

**READINGS:** Cox and Stokes, Chapter 12

Charountaki (2014) “US Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice: From Soviet Era Containment to the Era of Arab Uprising(s).” American Foreign Policy Interests.

\*In looking at regions, read and keep in mind Cox and Stokes, Chapter 9

**Your turn**: How is our policy toward the Middle East likely to change? Why?

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**Week 12**

(March 27) **NO CLASS: International Studies Association Annual Conference**

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**Week 13**

(April 3) **Geography: Europe (European Union)**

**READNGS:** Cox and Stokes, Chapter 13

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**Geography: Russia**

**READINGS:** Cox and Stokes Chapter 14

Monaghan (2013) “Russia’s Grand Strategy.”

**Your turn:** How is our policy toward Europe (including Russia likely to change? Why?

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**Week 14**

(April 10) **Geography: Asia and the Famous Pivot**

**READINGS:**  Cox and Stokes, Chapter 15

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**Geography: Africa**

**READINGS:** Cox and Stokes, Chapter 17

Pham (2014) “The Development of the US Africa Command and its Role in America’s Africa Policy…” *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*

**Your turn**: Can you anticipate substantial foreign policy changes toward Asia and Africa? Why?

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**Week 15**

(April 17) **Issue Focus: Security Policy (Deterrence)**

READINGS: Cox and Stokes, Chapter 8

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**Issue Focus: Security Policy (Terrorism)**

**READINGS**: Cox and Stokes, Chapter 19,

Olidort (2016). “Theology and Foreign Policy,” Foreign Affairs <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-03-29/theology-foreign-policy>

**Your turn**: How is US foreign policy toward terrorism likely to change? Why?

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**Week 16**

(April 24) **Issue Focus: Managing the Global Economy?**

**READINGS:** Cox and Stokes, Chapter 18

Lew (2016) “America and the Global Economy: The Case for US Leadership.” *Foreign Affairs*

*(optional)* Milner and Tingley (2011) “Who Supports Global Economic Engagement? The Sources of Preferences in American Foreign Economic Policy.” *International Organization*

Trump’s appointments on trade and the economy:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-names-pete-navarro-to-head-house-national-trade-council-1482353955>

**Your turn**: How is U.S. foreign policy toward the global economy likely to change? Why?

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**Issue Focus: Dealing with the Environment**

**READINGS:** Cox and Stokes, Chapter 24

Trump’s position on climate change:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/us/politics/donald-trump-climate-change.html?_r=0>

and <http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/11/what-does-trump-think-about-climate-change-he-doesnt-know-either/508541/>

**Your turn**: What changes should we anticipate in U.S. foreign policy regarding global climate change? Why?

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**Week 17**

(May 1) **Wrap Up and Discussion of Final Exam**

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**Final Exam:**

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**Additional Resources:**

Cockburn (2016) “The New Red Scare.” *Harpers*.

“Global Trends, 2030.” A Publication of the National Intelligence Council

Hooker (2014) “The Grand Strategy of the United States.”

Hooker (ed.) (2016) *Charting a Course: Strategic Choices for a New Administration*. National Defense University Press.

Martel (2012) “Why America Needs a Grand Strategy.” The Diplomat

McDougal (2010) “Can The United States Do Grand Strategy? FPRI

Miller (2012) “Global Politics and Strategy.” *Survival*

Norpoth and Sidman (2007) “Mission Accomplished: The Wartime Election of 2004.” *Political Behavior*

Norrlof and Wohlforth (2016) Is US grand strategy self-defeating? Deep engagement, military spending and sovereign debt.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*.

Pentagon (2014) “Quadrennial Defense Review.”

State Department (2015) “Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review”

Stratfor (2011) *The Geopolitics of the United States*.

“U.S. National Security Strategy, 2015.” U.S. White House

“U.S. National Security Strategy, 2017.” U.S. White House (available on my web page)

The annual budgets of the United States: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Overview>

Stratfor 2017 “2017 Annual Forecast” (on the possibility of a Turmp Grand Strategy)

For discussions and analyses of the effects of U.S. trade agreements, see:

<https://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/ec201406a.pdf>

<http://www.cfr.org/trade/naftas-economic-impact/p15790>

<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42965.pdf>

<http://papers.nber.org/tmp/37109-w21906.pdf>

<http://www.epi.org/publication/standard-models-benchmark-costs-globalization/>

<http://papers.nber.org/tmp/13487-w21027.pdf>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/12/12/business/economy/tariff-man-origin-story.html>

1. **From the Economist (December 24, 2016): “**As the Trump era dawns in America, the composition of the cabinet and inner circle taking shape around Donald Trump is too ideologically incoherent to define the next president’s policy agenda. There are bomb-throwers and hardliners…and an alarming number of men who see no harm in threatening a trade war or two. But it also has figures from the oak-panelled, marble-pillared heart of the Republican establishment. When it comes to national security, Mr Trump’s nominee to run the Pentagon is a retired general, James Mattis, who has called Russia’s annexation of Crimea a “severe” threat and accused President Vladimir Putin of wanting to “break NATO apart”. His pick to run the State Department, Rex Tillerson, is CEO of an oil firm, ExxonMobil, who argued against sanctions imposed on Russia after the Crimean invasion. It is equally easy to imagine headlines, years from now, that call President Trump a revolutionary who took America down the path to hard-edged nationalism, as it is to imagine a hapless incompetent paralysed by factional in-fighting and plunging poll ratings. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)