

**POLS 2998W**  
**Political Issues: U.S. Foreign Policy**

Dr. Miles M. Evers

**Twitter:** @mevers90

**Email:** [miles.evers@uconn.edu](mailto:miles.evers@uconn.edu)

**Twitter:** @mevers90

**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 11am - 1:30pm

**Description**

This course explores contemporary relations between the United States and the world. The primary goal is to give students conceptual and critical tools to understand and analyze how international relations theory, U.S. government, and current events fit together to produce U.S. foreign policy outcomes in the modern era. It is designed to develop students' capacity both to explain the foreign policy-making process in the United States, and to better understand the underlying patterns, logic, and implications of American foreign policy in the world at large. Students will explore the institutions and processes that guide foreign policy formation and implementation and uncover the policy challenges for the U.S. in the 21st century, like international trade, artificial intelligence, terrorism, and the rise of China.

One important goal of the course is for students to continually reflect on the core questions that animate U.S. foreign policy. These include:

- What is the relationship between IR theory and foreign policy?
- How is U.S. foreign policy formulated and implemented?
- What are principal issues and beliefs that underlie U.S. foreign policy?
- What should U.S. foreign policy be towards different geographic regions?

**Objectives**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Explain the major actors and processes involved in U.S. foreign policy
2. Apply these insights to contemporary policy issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
3. Build on their knowledge in more specialized and/or advanced courses

**Requirements**

**Class Meetings:** The lectures for this course will review some of the major points and themes across the literature for the course. However, students will be expected to contribute heavily to class discussions, with most discussions being led by students' commentaries, reviews of the literature, and inquiries. These meetings will occur in-person once per month on Fridays from 1-4:00pm on the following dates: January 24, Feb. 24; Mar. 24, and Apr. 24.

**Readings:** Readings are an essential part of this course. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings. There is one required textbook, which you can order online from your preferred book seller. Additional readings may be required and will be made available through the readings link on Husky well in advance of class.

- Jentleson Bruce W. 2014. *American Foreign Policy : The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century* Fifth ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

### Time Commitment

You should expect to dedicate 3 to 5 hours a week to this course. This expectation is based on the various course activities, assignments, and assessments and the University of Connecticut's policy regarding credit hours. More information related to hours per week per credit can be accessed at the Online Student website.

### Assignments

Active Reading	35%
Active Learning	15%
Memo 1	25%
Memo 2	25%

**Active Reading (35%):** Engaging with the readings is critical to succeeding in the course and will be evaluated using the Perusall tool, a community reading forum where students can annotate the assigned readings and comment and discuss each others' annotations. You will (privately) receive a score based on your engagement with each reading. This score will be based on your annotations, completion of the reading, time-spent actively, and engagement with your classmates.

**Active Learning Exercises (15%):** There will be three active-learning exercises conducted during the in-person sessions throughout the semesters. These will take the form of a National Security Council simulation on an emergent issue in U.S. foreign policy. Your grade will be based on completion.

**Memos (50%):** Throughout the semester, you will write two memoranda (7pp, double-spaced) to the next American president. Each memo should include: a one-page executive summary up front, a description of the problem and its significance to the United States, an overview of various policy options, a recommendation, a potential critique of your recommendation, and then defense against that critique. We will address how to write effective memos in class. For examples on the style of writing, you might look to the Brookings "Memos to the President" series which contains several policy memos written in 2009: <http://www.brookings.edu/about/projects/presidential-transition/memos-to-the-president> Drafts of these memoranda will be distributed to me for feedback, and then revised for a final grade.

**Memo 1** - In the first memo, you will act as the head of the foreign policy transition team charged with helping a hypothetical president-elect prepare for his or her new role in the foreign policymaking arena. Your memo should focus on advice and recommendations to the president-elect on how to manage the policymaking process and deal with the politics of U.S foreign policy effectively. Thus, you should consider key policymaking problems and challenges and key structures, processes, and actions to meet those challenges. Do not approach the memo with a "laundry list" mentality to try and check off every single area but instead, carefully consider the most critical things you wish to highlight to a president-elect. Here are some examples but you are free to choose any topic in consultation with me.

Should the President-elect...

- Work with Congress to repeal or reform the AUMF?
- Construct a more centralized or diffuse advisory system?
- Appoint cabinet members based on their party membership, professional experience, or ideology?
- Hold regular press conferences about their foreign policy decisions?
- Prioritize economic, security, or social issues?
- Publicly defend their nominees from criticisms during the vetting process?
- Allow executive agencies to continue their operational plans from the outgoing administration?

- Prioritize the presidential daily briefing or seek alternative sources of intelligence?

Memo 2 - In the second memo, you will act as a member of the National Security Council charged with helping the President decide on a course of action for an issue in American foreign policy. You must use either an internationalist or a realist understanding of international politics as a basis for your recommendation and then defend your recommendation against the other positions' critique of it. This memo will involve research and careful thought. You must first master the details of a specific policy problem, and then think theoretically about how different policymakers would approach it. Here are some examples but you are free to choose any topic in consultation with me.

Should the United States . . .

- withdraw its support for NATO's Article 5 if members do not spend 2% of their GDP on defense?
- sign the International Criminal Court, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, or any particular international treaty?
- increase foreign (non-military) aid to Nigeria (or any other particular country)?
- decrease the number of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea or Japan?
- re-impose sanctions on Myanmar because of its ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya minority?
- reverse its decision to provide lethal military aid to Ukraine to help Kiev resist Russian incursions? Or accelerate the provision of military aid?
- rethink its posture of "strategic ambiguity" toward Taiwan?
- pressure Israel to halt settlements in lands envisioned as part of a Palestinian state in a "two-state solution"? Or reconsider the U.S. decision to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel?
- allow the CIA to engage in torture and assassination?
- sanction Saudi Arabia for murdering a journalist?

You should focus on a particular issue, such as "should the United States sign the ICC," or "should the United States increase economic aid to Pakistan and not a general question, such as "should the United States sign human rights treaties or should the United States increase its economic aid abroad?"

## **Writing Intensive**

As a writing intensive course, a significant portion of class will be dedicated to the mechanics of writing in political science. This means that writing will not only be assigned, but also taught.

## **Due Dates and Late Policy**

All course due dates are identified in the course calendar and blackboard. Deadlines are based on Eastern Time; if you are in a different time zone, please adjust your submittal times accordingly. Late assignments will incur a full letter grade deduction for each day over the due date. *I reserve the right to change dates accordingly as the semester progresses. All changes will be communicated in an appropriate manner.*

## **Feedback and Grades**

The best option for discussing course material and assignments is to email me. I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades in a timely manner. In general, I will do my best to respond to all student questions within 24 hours, and return course assignment within a week. Please keep in mind that I will not respond to emails after 5 PM or anytime on the weekends.

In the event that a student wishes to dispute their grade on an assignment, the following procedure may be used. First, students must wait at least 48 hours after the assignment has been handed back. Second, students can email me to set up an appointment. This email should include a separate, typed summary of why they believe the grade is unfair. After meeting in person to discuss the assignment, I

will then reevaluate the grade. However, revised grades may be higher or lower than the original, and this new grade will be final.

To keep track of your performance in the course, refer to My Grades in HuskyCT.

### **Student Authentication and Verification**

The University of Connecticut is required to verify the identity of students who participate in online courses and to establish that students who register in an online course are the same students who participate in, complete the course activities and assessments, and receive academic credit.

Verification and authentication of student identity in this course will include:

1. Secure access to the learning management system using your unique UConn NetID and password.
2. Students may be required to verify their identity through Online proctoring, Video Conference with ID check, etc.

### **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to act in accordance with the Student Conduct Code as well as the Guidelines for Academic Integrity at the University of Connecticut. I expect students to take this course seriously and to behave in a mature, appropriate manner during class. Students are allowed to use laptops and tablets for notetaking only. It is very obvious when students are distracted by other activities, and if students are caught repeatedly abusing this privilege then they will lose the ability to use their devices in class.

### **Students with Disabilities**

The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with

## Course Outline:

### ***Pt. 1: What is U.S. foreign policy and how is it formulated and implemented??***

Week 1 (Jan 20\*) - Building Policy Out of Theory  
Week 2 (Jan 27) - Empire at Home and Abroad  
Week 3 (Feb 3) - The President versus Congress  
Week 4 (Feb 10) - Defense versus Diplomacy  
Week 5 (Feb 17) - The Blob versus Public Opinion

### ***Pt. 2: What are the principal issues and beliefs that underlie U.S. foreign policy?***

Week 6 (Feb 24\*) - Strategic Challenges  
Week 7 (Mar 3) - Economic Challenges  
Week 8 (Mar 10) - Domestic Challenges  
Week 9 (Mar 17) - Spring Recess

### ***Pt. 3 What should U.S. foreign policy be towards different geographic regions?***

Week 10 (Mar 24\*) - China and Southeast Asia  
Week 11 (Mar 31) - Russia and Eurasia  
Week 12 (Apr 7) - Iran and the Middle East  
Week 13 (Apr 14) - Canada and Latin America  
Week 14 (Apr 21\*) - Nigeria and Africa

## Course Schedule:

### **Pt. 1: What is U.S. foreign policy and how is it formulated and implemented?**

#### Week 1 - Jan. 20 (In-Person) - Building Policy Out of Theory

\*In-person from 12pm - 4pm\*

\*Writing Effective Memos workshop\*

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 1: The Strategic Context: Foreign Policy Strategy and the Essence of Choice," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Mearsheimer, John J. "Realism" in *American Foreign Policy*.

#### Week 2 - Jan. 27 - Washington Insiders

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 2: The Domestic Context: The Three Branches and the Process of Choice," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Allison, Graham T. "Bureaucratic Politics: *Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis*," in *American Foreign Policy*.

#### Week 3 - Feb. 3 - Washington Outsiders

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 3: The Domestic Context: Interest Groups, Media, and Public Opinion," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Holsti, Ole R. "*Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus*," in *American Foreign Policy*.

#### Week 4 - Feb. 10 - Isolationism vs. Internationalism

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 4: The Historical Context: Great Debates in American Foreign Policy, 1789–1945," in *American Foreign Policy*.

LaFeber, I Walter. "*The American 'New Empire'*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

#### Week 5 - Feb. 17 - Embracing Internationalism

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 5: The Cold War Context: Origins and First Stages," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Mr. X [George Kennan], "*The Sources of Soviet Conduct*," in *American Foreign Policy*.

### **Pt. 2: What are the principal challenges that underlie contemporary U.S. foreign policy?**

#### Week 6 - Feb 24. - Strategic Challenges

\*In-person from 12pm - 4pm\*

\*Memo 1 Rough Draft due on HuskyCT by midnight\*

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 7: Grand Strategy for a New Era: (I) Power and Peace" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Kupchan, Charles A. "Multipolarity: *No One's World*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

#### Week 7 - Mar. 3 - Economic Challenges

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 8: Grand Strategy for a New Era: (II) Prosperity and Principles" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Stiglitz, Joseph. "Globalization: *Making Globalization Work*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Week 8 - Mar. 10 - Domestic Challenges

*\*Memo 2 Final Draft due on HuskyCT by Feb. 26 midnight\**

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 9: *Post-Cold War Foreign Policy Politics: Politics beyond the Water's Edge*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

National War Powers Commission, "Domestic Institutions and War Powers: *President, Congress and War Powers*," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Week 9 - Mar. 17 - Spring Recess

**Pt. 3 What should U.S. foreign policy be towards different geographic regions?**

Week 10 - Mar. 24 - China and Southeast Asia

*\*In-person from 12pm - 4pm\**

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 10: Asia's Rising Strategic Importance: Relations with China and in the Asia-Pacific Region" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Lieberthal, Kenneth, and Wang Jisi. "U.S.-China Relations: *U.S.-China Strategic Distrust*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Week 11 - Mar. 31 - Iran and the Middle East

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 11: *War, Peace, Terrorism, Democracy: Old and New Challenges in the Middle East*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Bush, George. "Bush Doctrine on Pre-Emption: *Pre-Emption and National Security Strategy*," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Week 12 - Apr. 7 - Russia and Eurasia

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 12: *Old Friends, Old Enemy: Twenty-First-Century Relations with Europe and Russia*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Primakov, Yevgeny. "U.S.-Russia Relations: *Russia in a Polycentric World*," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Week 13 - Apr. 14 - Canada and Latin America

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 13: *The Americas: Relations with Latin America and Canada*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Cárdenas, José R., Larry Birns, and Frederick Mills. "Debate on U.S. Cuba Policy Pts. 1-2" in *American Foreign Policy*.

Week 14 - Apr. 21 - Nigeria and Africa

*\*Memo 2 Rough Draft due on HuskyCT by midnight\**

*\*In-person from 12pm - 4pm\**

Jentleson, Bruce W. 2014. "Chapter 13: *Africa: Persisting Old Issues, Pressing New Ones*," in *American Foreign Policy*.

Obama, Barack. "U.S.-Africa Relations: *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*" in *American Foreign Policy*.

\* *Final Drafts of Memos 1& 2 are due 05/15 by midnight on HuskyCT\**