

INR 3102
THE U.S. AND WORLD AFFAIRS
Spring 2026

Dr. Richard Nolan
219 Anderson Hall
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:00 to 12:00 (or by appointment)
Telephone: 273-2368
Email: rnolan@ufl.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to enable students to understand the policies and objectives of the United States in its relations with others in an international system undergoing tremendous change. It is constructed to help students appreciate the elements of both continuity and change in U.S. foreign policy and to provide students with the basic tools for answering questions about the sources of U.S. foreign policy. Students then will better understand the complexity of international issues, including their interrelationships with domestic events. To achieve these ends students will **1)** evaluate the major approaches to analyzing and explaining U.S. foreign policy; **2)** review the history of U.S. foreign policy; **3)** investigate contemporary U.S. foreign policy and its relationship to world politics; **4)** apply these elements in a critical fashion to particular foreign policy issues currently facing the American government.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Steven W. Hook, John Spanier, and Andrea Grove, American Foreign Policy Since World War II, 22nd ed., (Washington: Sage/CQ Press, 2025)

COURSE STRUCTURE AND EVALUATION

This is both a lecture and a discussion course. Attendance is expected. The readings and written assignments are ways of expanding and analyzing the lecture material and they are the bases of class discussions. Much of the lecture material, and thus exam questions, transcends the literature covered in the text. Each student must choose a contemporary subject (relevant to current U.S. foreign policy) to pursue and complete through the newspaper project. Topics must be cleared with the instructor and chosen by the designated date. Each student must complete several short papers on articles and websites specified in the syllabus. Timely discussions are expected on the topics. Students will also complete two exams. Beyond the normal course readings, students are encouraged to access other prominent periodicals on a daily basis.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken frequently. Absence on attendance sheets and missed classes will cost the students. It is imperative that students make daily classes and commit to daily studies of the materials and lectures. There are no excused absences.

Exams: Students must take two exams, consisting of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. There are no makeup exams.

Newspaper Project: Students will follow their selected contemporary foreign policy issue throughout the semester. Each student will collect articles concerning their chosen topic from the New York Times over the course of the semester. Toward the end of the semester the student will submit a five-page (typed & double-spaced) synopsis of the newspaper's coverage of that issue. Students are encouraged to use the daily paper version of the New York Times and **not** its online version.

Do not turn this project in late. With the end of the term and all the papers this class and others will be turning in, I will be hard on late projects. The limit is five (5) typewritten double-spaced pages. There is no limit to the length of the portfolio of newspaper articles. The number of articles will be the determining factor there.

Provide reference citations for each article collected in chronological order and include them with the five-page paper. Students will submit a copy on Canvas and hard copy in class.

The substance of your paper **should not** include personal opinions about the topic covered in the newspaper articles. Do not merely recite the substance of each article in chronological fashion. (For example: don't go through the articles one at a time and list each's content.) Tell me about the newspaper's coverage of the topic. What is emphasized? What changes in the topic are related? Is U.S. policy on this topic in the process of changing or being defined? REMEMBER, your focus is on U.S. policy and U.S. official interests. Do not get bogged down in newspaper coverage of issues that do not discuss U.S. positions and interests.

It should be obvious from the articles what is to be included in the 5-page statement. Remember the purpose of the assignment is to get you reading the newspaper and following U.S. foreign policy and global affairs. The project is one way of insuring that you do so and in the process (having chosen a topic to follow daily) get a greater background on the question of interest to you.

Enjoy the task. Assembling this paper requires attention to details and observation skills more than it requires analytical skills. Think about the information the newspaper reports.

Paper Assignments: As indicated in the course outline, there are 5 papers which students must complete. Each is a one-page (typed and double-spaced) assignment. The papers will vary from synthesizing articles to reviewing web sites dealing with aspects of foreign policy. The specific assignments will be handed out in class and also presented on the class Canvas page. Your papers will be evaluated as to how well they demonstrate the relevance of the topics in the study of the course material. You will also be graded on the ability to write directly and critically.

Guidelines for the projects and papers:

No late papers. The due dates for these papers are clearly indicated in the syllabus.

Pay attention to your writing style. I do not want to mark up the pages of the assignments correcting spelling or grammar. for example: know the difference between the contraction of it is (**it's**) and the possessive pronoun **its**. Do not use contractions in an academic paper. Good organization and direct and clear presentation are necessary for successful papers.

Evaluation:	Newspaper Project	20%	Relevant Dates:
	Paper Assignments	15%	
	Attendance	5%	February 27 FIRST EXAM
	First Exam	30%	
	Second Exam	30%	April 22 SECOND EXAM

Paper Due Dates:

- #1 - Jan. 26
- #2 - Feb. 2
- #3 - Feb. 9
- #4 - March 9
- #5 - March 30

Grading Scale	A 90-100
	B+ 87-89.9
	B 80-86.9
	C+ 77-79.9
	C 70-76.9
	D+ 67-69.9

Newspaper Project DUE - April 13

All dates subject to change at instructor's discretion or other acts of nature.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Introduction: Thinking Theoretically About American Foreign Policy

(Weeks 1-2)

National Interest and International Systems

- Models of Foreign Policy Making
- Policy Choice and Priority: Power, Peace, Prosperity, Principles

American Traditions in Foreign Policy

- The Importance of Values
- Democracy and the American Experience
- Isolationism and Moralism

Idealism, Realism, and the Nexus of International Politics and Foreign Policy

- Rosenau's Pre-theory
- Idealism and Realism: Competing Influences in U.S. Decision Making

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Preface and Chapter 1**

II. Setting the Postwar Pattern: The Cold War

(Weeks 3-5)

The Cold War: Ideology, Tradition and Misperception

- World War II and Its Aftermath
- The Marshall Plan, Point Four, and NSC-68

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapters 2 - 3**

**** Paper #1 - Due Monday January 26****

See links on course Canvas site.

"The World Still Needs a Leader"

**"Clear and Present Safety: The United States is
More Secure than Washington Thinks"**

"Accepting Limits: How to Adapt to a Copernican World"

Global Commitments and the Cold War Consensus

- Eisenhower and the Problem of Means and Ends
- Kennedy and the Benefits of Brinkmanship

Defending the Perimeter: The Third World in the Cold War

- Globalism and Containment

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapter 4**

Vietnam and the End of Consensus

- Goal Continuity and the Vietnam Commitment
- Epoch of Decline? Domestic Elements of Power and Influence

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapter 4**

**** Paper #2 - Due Monday February 2 ****

See links on course Canvas site.

III. Changing the Cold War Pattern

(Weeks 6-7)

Nixon, Kissinger and Detente: Realism in a Changing System

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapter 5**

Carter's Idealist Dilemmas

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapter 5**

Reagan and the Rise and Fall of the Cold War

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapter 6**

**** Paper #3 - Due Monday February 9 ****

See links on course Canvas site.

"We Bow to the God of Bipartisanship"

"When Congress Stops Wars: Partisan Politics and
Presidential Power"

**** FIRST EXAM - February 27 ****

IV. Analyzing U.S. Post-Cold War Policy

(Weeks 8-10)

Bush: Ending of the Cold War (A New World Order?)

Video: "Frontline: Jan. 1996 - The Persian Gulf War"

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapter 7, Chapter 8**

Clinton: Rethinking U.S. Strategic Interests (Or Why We May Miss the Cold War?)

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapter 8**

National Interests and National Policies: Power as THE Priority?

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapters 9**

**** Paper #4 - Due Monday March 9 ****

See links on course Canvas site.

V. U.S. Defense and Welfare in an Interdependent World

(Weeks 11-16)

Bush II: Primacy and Preemption (Out of the Darkness and Into the Fog?)

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapters 10 & 11**

Video: "Frontline: Feb. 2003 - The War Behind Closed Doors"

**** Paper #5 - Due Monday March 30 ****

See links on course Canvas site.

"Preemption Paradox"

"We can Live with a Nuclear Iran"

Regional Relationships and Leadership Challenges: Obama and Biden and Trump

- Obama vs Trump: Leadership Styles and Ideological Dispositions
- Profile: U.S. - Russian Interests
- Profile: U.S. - China Relations

Reading Assignment:

Hook and Spanier, **Chapters 12 & 13 & 14**

Power and Principle in a World of Change and Continuity

Reading Assignment:

George Kennan's "On American Principles"

****SECOND EXAM - April 22 (Wednesday)****