

INR 4303
THE MAKING OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY
Fall 2025

Professor Richard Nolan

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:00 to 12:00 (or by appointment)

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to allow students to become familiar with, explore, and analyze the actors, issues, processes and political conditions involved in the making of American foreign policy. At a time when global circumstances are seemingly in a state of flux, when the relative status of American political and economic power is changing, and when new national priorities are replacing old ones, understanding the complexities of national policy making is a necessary challenge. Therefore, in this course students will identify and evaluate the strategic and political importance of various actors and groups (governmental and societal) in the making of U.S. foreign policy. To this end students will polish their analytical and communication (written and oral) skills.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Donald M. Snow and Patrick J. Haney, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Back to the Water's Edge*, 5th ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.

James M. McCormick, ed., *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, 7th ed., Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In order to facilitate your understanding of the complex interrelationships among actors and groups involved in the foreign policy making processes, each student will participate in a group research project and briefing presentation. Each group will investigate the role of the actors and groups that we will discuss in class. The actors and groups to be researched include the presidency, Congress, the Department of Defense (military), the CIA, public opinion, the media, interest groups, and the State Department. Each research **team** will present its briefing at the conclusion of each topic section. These briefings will be held when materials for the group/actors are covered. All students **must attend** every briefing. Some guidelines are included on the next page of this syllabus. **Individuals** will also submit 2 essays (3-5 pages) on topics assigned during the term.

There will be two exams. The exams will be of mixed format with multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The Second exam will **not** be cumulative. There are no makeup exams. There are no excused absences.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Group presentation	20%
Essay assignments	20%
First exam	30%
Second exam	30%

RELEVANT DATES

Essay assignment #1	September 15
First exam	October 20
Essay assignment #2	November 21
Second exam	December 3

Group Presentations:

Presidency	September 19
Congress	September 26
State Dept.	October 3
Defense Dept.	October 10
CIA	October 15
Media	October 27
Interest Groups	November 3
Public Opinion	November 10

****All dates subject to change by instructor depending on circumstances such as hurricanes, locusts, swamp fever, bad hair . . .**

Team Briefing Presentation Guidelines

Each briefing team will address the involvement/influence, etc. of their actor or group in the two policy issue areas - Operation Desert Shield and U.S. involvement in the NATO commitment to Bosnia (Operation Joint Endeavor). The presentations will give necessary background information, but they will stress the active involvement or influence of their actor or group in the decision making and policy implementation processes.

The two policy issues should be contrasted as to their contextual similarities and differences and as to the actor's or group's similar or different relevance in the decision making and policy implementation processes. Each group will provide the instructor with a **5 page synopsis** of their findings so the instructor can give the class members copies for their study folders.

The briefings should NOT exceed 30 minutes in order to give class members (and the instructor) a chance to ask questions.

Things to consider in addressing the role and influence of the actors or groups in the policy issue areas:

- What is the formal role of the actor or group in the foreign policy decision making process?
- What about the particular policy problem was most important to the actor or group?
- How was the actor or group active in the decision making process concerning the issue/problem?
- Was the actor or group prominent in the decision making outcome over the issue/problem area?
- Did the actor's or group's policy positions change over the course of policy deliberation and implementation?
- Did the actor's or group's involvement or influence increase or decrease over the course of deliberation and implementation?
- What is the overall evaluation of the actor's or group's record on the issue/problem area?
- Did the actor's or group's position or influence vary from one issue area to the other?
- What about the issues made the actor or group behave differently/similarly?

Essay Assignment Guidelines

In addition to team briefings, each student will complete short analytical papers (3-5 typed pages) that address a more specific question possibly related to their designated briefing group (i.e. Congress; media, etc.). More details will be provided when the assigned topics are given. Below are some additional factors to consider when writing these essays.

Properties of a Good Essay or Research Paper

A well-written, well documented essay or research paper has three basic parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

The introduction must include a thesis sentence which structures and focuses the paper on an assertion or a hypothesis about the relationship between concrete and/or abstract political objects.

The body of the paper must include arguments, assertions, or points which provide reasons why the thesis is true, and counter arguments against the thesis. The body also includes evidence to back up each reason or assertion. There is no absolute number of reasons required for supporting a thesis. The diagram below shows the thesis supported by three arguments with evidence for illustrative purposes only.

The conclusion generally summarizes the main supporting points and clarifies the functional or logical relationships between the evidence and the inferences made by the author.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#)." (The direct link is <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>.)

COURSE OUTLINE

(Aug. 21 - Sept. 5)

Introduction: Understanding U.S. Foreign Policy American Exceptions in World Affairs The Nexus of Theories: International Politics and Foreign Policy Models of Foreign Policy Making

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 1 and Chapter 3
McCormick Introduction, "The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy"
Chapter 18, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia"

LINK Graham Allison's "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis" and Stephen Krasner's "Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland)"

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1954423?&Search=yes&term=models&term=cuban&term=missile&term=crisis&term=conceptual&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dconceptual%2Bmodels%2Band%2Bthe%2Bcuban%2Bmissile%2Bcrisis%26wc%3Don%26dc%3DAll%2BDisciplines&item=3&ttl=724&returnArticleService=showArticle>

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1147761?&Search=yes&term=%22Are+Bureaucracies+Important%3F+%28Or+Allison+Wonderland%29%22&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3D%2522Are%2BBureaucracies%2BImportant%253F%2B%2528Or%2BAllison%2BWonderland%2529%2522%26x%3D12%26y%3D12%26wc%3Don&item=1&ttl=30&returnArticleService=showArticle>

(Sept. 8 – Sept. 12)

Foreign Policy as Politics

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 2 and Chapter 9
McCormick Chapter 1, "Liberal Internationalism: Why Woodrow Wilson Still Matters"
Chapter 11, "How National Security Advisers See their Role"

(Sept. 15 – Sept. 19)

The Presidency and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 4
McCormick Chapter 9, "Person and Office: President, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy"
Chapter 10, "Presidential Wars: Understanding Their Causes and Costs"
Chapter 24, "Obama's Decision-Making Style"

**** *Presidency Group Briefings FRIDAY – SEPTEMBER 19* ****

(Sept. 22 – Sept. 26) Congress and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 6
McCormick Chapter 12, “The Shifting Pendulum of Power: Executive-Legislative Relations on American Foreign Policy”
Chapter 16, “American Trade Policymaking: A Unique Process”

**** Congress Group Briefings FRIDAY – September 26* ****

(Sept. 29 – Oct. 3) The State Department and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 5
McCormick: Chapter 13, “American Diplomacy at Risk”

**** State Department Group Briefings FRIDAY – October 3 ****

(Oct. 6 – Oct. 10) The Defense Department and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 5
McCormick: Chapter 5, “American Veterans in Government and the Use of Force”
Chapter 14, “The Urgent Need for Defense Reform”

**** Defense Department Group Briefings FRIDAY – October 10 ****

(Oct. 13 – Oct. 15) The CIA and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 5
McCormick: Chapter 15, “Why Intelligence and Policymakers Clash”

**** The CIA Group Briefings WEDNESDAY – October 15 ****

(Monday, October 20) FIRST EXAM

(Oct. 22 – Oct. 27) The Media and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 8

McCormick: Chapter 7, “How Media Limit Accountability in Foreign Policymaking”

**** *The Media Group Briefings MONDAY – October 27* ****

(Oct. 29 – Nov. 3) Interest Groups and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 7

McCormick: Chapter 5, “The Israel Lobby”

**** *Interest Group Group Briefings MONDAY – November 3* ****

(Nov. 5 – Nov. 10) Public Opinion and the Making of American Foreign Policy

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapter 8

McCormick: Chapter 6, “Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict”
Chapter 8, “Foreign Policy Beliefs among Leaders and the Public”

**** *Public Opinion Group Briefings MONDAY – November 10* ****

(Nov. 12 – Dec. 3) Facing the Issue: More Considerations of Agenda Setting and Decision Making

Reading Assignment:

Snow Chapters 10, 11, 12

McCormick: Chapter 2, “Conservative American Realism”

Chapter 3, “Conservative Internationalism: An Alternative to Realism and Liberal Internationalism”

(Wednesday December 3) SECOND EXAM