American Governance: Foreign Affairs, Politics, & Presidents  
(focus on the 20th Century and modern-day presidency)

Instructor: Walter S. Montaño  
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Office Hours: By appointment, or before class (5:30-7:00 p.m.)

The course meets Wednesday evenings from 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Course Objectives:

This is a four-credit course meeting once a week, two-three hours per session, aiming to provide an overview of American presidents in the 20-21st centuries and how they made important decisions while crafting U.S. foreign policy. The course will cover specific presidential campaigns worth noting, as well as the individuals who helped construct the modern-day American foreign policy establishment. How politics relates to U.S. foreign affairs is very important to understand, therefore, concepts such as isolationism, Manifest Destiny, American ‘imperialism’ vs. isolationism, and national self-interest will be covered. The waning days of the current war on terror (specifically in Afghanistan and most recently in Iraq) will be discussed in great detail (in comparison to Vietnam) throughout the semester making the course material more relevant.

We will attempt to come to terms with the following: 1) who and what has shaped U.S. foreign policy, in other words, the primary players throughout history who have molded U.S. international relations; 2) understanding how an ever-growing presidency has affected our standing in the world; 3) how much power a president truly possesses; and, 4) what one can learn from the accomplishments and mistakes of presidents past. Other topics the course will dissect are the media’s impact on the presidency, and presidential elections surrounding the Office over the years. Foreign Affairs, Politics, & Presidents in the 20th Century will aim to address many such questions in addition to an array of controversial subjects in U.S. foreign policy in the last century (the use of the atom bomb, drones, pre-emptive invasions, etc.). Time permitting, the course will include a guest speaker, a local field trip or two, and conclude with a thorough analysis of the Obama administration and its potential legacy in foreign affairs. Though we will refer to Obama’s first, and now second, term often.

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance is required as is diligent preparation for class sessions. Students will be expected to attend all class sessions (unless you have cleared it first with the instructor), participate in class discussions, complete all readings, and submit assignments on time. The class has two mandatory writing assignments consisting of a short book review (5-7 pages) and a take-home mid-term. The book review will focus on fairly recent scholarship regarding a presidential administration or foreign policy challenge in
the 20th (or 21st) century. Students will present their reviews to the class in a 10-15-minute presentation/discussion. An in-class Final Exam will take place on the final day (1 May).

**Final grades will be assessed as follows:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review and presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Required Readings for the Course:**

- Other readings provided by the instructor (consisting of articles & book excerpts)

**Other Recommended Reading**

- David Halberstam, *The Best & the Brightest* (1973)

**Course Outline:**

I. **Wednesday, 23 January 2013**
   
   Introduction: The Impact of the Presidency on the American Mindset. *How has the Office grown since George Washington’s time? Is the office too powerful? Who stands out in American memory today as the unofficial founder of American foreign affairs? What is the American Foreign Policy Tradition?*

II. **Wednesday, 30 January**
   
   The Origins of American Diplomacy as seen in Jefferson’s time. The 19th Century – American Moralism and Manifest Destiny. William McKinley’s surprising presidency and the U.S.’s first rise to global prominence. Please be sure to read: Gould (McKinley) + assigned article(s)
III. Wednesday, 6 February
The ever-changing Office of the President – The lasting impact of Theodore Roosevelt and his energetic office. American Imperialism...Making the hemisphere/world safe for 'democracy'? Taft’s Dubious Administration.

Distribute List of Books for Book Reviews
Read: Gould (T. Roosevelt, Taft) + Graubard (T.R.) + assigned article(s)

IV. Wednesday, 13 February
The ‘revolutionary’ election of 1912. The U.S. vs. Mexico. The legacy of World War I, the League of Nations, and Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points. The impact of a president in absentia.

Select which book you will review (Due Wednesday, 3 April)
Read: Gould (Wilson) + Graubard (Taft, Wilson) + Polsky (Wilson)

FIELD TRIP (in lieu of class on 20 February)
@ 11 a.m. on Saturday, 16 February –
at the Woodrow Wilson House
(In Washington’s Dupont Circle – 2340 S Street, N.W.)

V. Wednesday, 27 February
Read: Gould (Harding, Coolidge, Hoover); Graubard (Harding, Coolidge, Hoover)

VI. Wednesday, 6 March
World War II: An Exercise in Craftsmanship and the Art of Persuasion. The War and the use of Television, Radio, and the Media. FDR’s Magisterial Legacy… setting all the precedents.

Take-Home Midterms Distributed (Due in ONE week!)
Read: Gould, Graubard, and Polsky (FDR); assigned articles

** Spring Break!! **
VII. Wednesday, 20 March


**Midterms Due!**

Read: Gould and Graubard (Truman); Gaddis (chapter 1); assigned articles

VIII. Wednesday, 27 March


Read: Gould (Eisenhower, Kennedy); Graubard (Eisenhower, Kennedy); Gaddis (2 & 3); + assigned articles

IX. Wednesday, 3 April


**Book reviews Due! Presentations begin**

Read: Gould, Graubard, and Polsky (Johnson, Nixon); Gaddis (4)

X. Wednesday, 10 April


XI. Wednesday, 17 April

Reagan vs. the Soviet Union: Détente’s Demise. *An Evil Empire or Declining Power?* The Reagan Doctrine and Reaganomics. Small wars revisited (Grenada, Libya, Lebanon…Panama, Somalia…);

*Bush I and the First Gulf War.*

Read: Gould and Graubard (Reagan, Bush I) Polsky (4-5); + assigned articles
XII. Thursday, 24 April
Read: Gould and Graubard (Clinton, W. Bush, Obama); Polsky (6-10) + assigned articles

XIII. Wednesday, 1 May -- In-Class Final Exam

General Topics to Consider for your Book Review

- American Exceptionalism/American Empire
- The Atomic Bomb
- The Cold War
- The World Wars
- U.S.-Latin American relations
- U.S.-East Asia relations
- U.S.-Middle East relations
- U.S.-Europe relations
- Congress vs. the Executive
- Diplomacy
- First Ladies

* Covert Operations/Intel.
* Presidential Power/War
* Presidency vs. the press
* The Vice Presidency
* any Individual pres. admin.
* The Modern Presidency
* Elections and politics
* Culture and the presidency
* The Passive Presidency
* War on Terrorism