“We know the future only by the past we project into it. History, in this sense, is all we have.”
— John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What can we learn from our recent past? How can we use history to understand the past, contemplate the present, and anticipate the future? How effective is historical analysis to resolve contemporary policy problems? What is counterfactual reasoning? Are counterfactuals useful to understand strategies adopted by states and their leaders? How to effectively employ historical analogies to understand the present? How can we effectively use primary sources obtained through archival research for policy analysis and research? What is oral history and how can we effectively conduct oral history interviews for research? How is an onsite archival repository different from (and similar to) a library, and how to ace archival research? These are some of the questions that this course will collectively examine and seek to answer.

The course will connect history with current policy problems to make sense of national strategies and grand strategies of states in the international system, leaders’ policy choices, and group dynamics at play in past events. It will integrate a conceptual analysis of the past with hands-on training in conducting archival research, oral history interviews and analyzing large corpus of textual data manually and through appropriate software. This course will conclude with a visit to John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, MA for a hands-on training in historical research (no additional cost anticipated). No background in historical research and/or history is required to take this course.

**Course Hub Outcomes**

**HUB CAPACITY: Social & Scientific Inquiry**

**AREA: Social Inquiry II**

Students will develop basic research and analytical skills predominant in the social sciences and the humanities to solve problems of the past for a deeper understanding of the present. These skills include understanding (a) causality and interpreting causality behind past phenomena, (b) use of effective analogies to effectively understand the past for a better concept of the present, (c) the role of counterfactual reasoning and its pitfalls, and (d) using empirical evidence (notably, primary sources) to formulate hypotheses about past phenomena relevant to international politics. Using their knowledge of the social sciences, students will engage with issues of contemporary policies in international politics, such as the creation of international organizations like the United Nations, state-building, borders, and conflicts.
HUB CAPACITY: Communication
AREA: Writing-Intensive

Students will write a seminar paper as the major writing assignment comprising 50% of their total grade. In addition, each student will write a peer-reviewed feedback on another’s seminar paper. At the beginning of the semester, students will be trained on how to read effectively using Patrick Rael’s ‘Predatory Reading’ handout, and regular class discussions will focus on students’ analysis of the assigned readings. Students’ analyses will be demonstrated through weekly response papers that are also part of the assignments for this course. This way, the students will gradually develop an understanding and appreciation of critical judgment of the course materials. The seminar paper assignment is ‘scaffolded,’ i.e. broken down into two steps allowing the students to obtain feedback on their early drafts before submitting the final memos. This assignment scaffolding technique will enable students to develop well-structured written arguments suitable in multiple situations, namely, critical appraisal of readings (weekly response papers), development of original arguments based on historical evidence (seminar paper), and offering constructive feedback on peers’ work (peer-review feedback).

HUB CAPACITY: Intellectual Toolkit
AREA: Critical Thinking

Students will be trained to develop the habit of making causal inference through both inductive and deductive reasoning: this will be undertaken by understanding the distinction of how the past is studied by social scientists (deduction) in comparison to how it is done by historians (induction). The discussion on ‘analogies,’ ‘causation,’ and ‘memory,’ for instance, will guide them to distinguish empirical claims of various historical events, and distinguish facts from interpretations derived from normative and evaluative judgments. Students will be evaluating the validity of arguments through weekly response papers on the assigned readings. They will evaluate the validity of their own arguments in the seminar paper and its peer review (for summer course: oral history interview, analysis paper and presentation), which form the main assignment for this course. The abovementioned learning outcomes will be measured through students’ ability to critically evaluate their own judgments on past phenomena based on the arguments they further in their seminar paper (or analysis paper for summer course), how they critically evaluate others’ arguments in the peer review of the seminar paper (or interpret the oral history interviews for summer course) and finally, how they use formal argument in the presentation of the seminar paper (analysis paper for summer course).

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will have achieved the following course learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate a strong basis of knowledge of what history is, and how it helps understand contemporary international politics
- Demonstrate an understanding of what the historical method is, and how it is related to but distinct from social science research using historical data
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct research and analysis by visiting an onsite archive in the city
- Develop the ability to use knowledge of the past to investigate contemporary policy problems
STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism is a serious offence and will not be tolerated. The undergraduate members of this class will follow the “Academic Code of Conduct” of Boston University, accessible here: https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/

All graduate members of this class will follow the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code can be found at http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/grs-forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/.

INSTRUCTIONAL FORMAT

This course will be taught as a weekly seminar. Each session will begin with an introduction by the instructor. This will be followed by a structured discussion led by the students based on a close and critical analysis of the assigned readings.

BOOKS & COURSEWARE

There is one required textbook for this course, which is by no means exhaustive. As a result, there are required readings to complement it. These readings will be made available to the students through Blackboard. The required text is below:


ASSIGNMENTS

Please note differences in expectations for 400 and 600 levels

1. Attendance & In-Class Discussions (20 points=10+10): Attendance is mandatory. Regular attendance in class is mandatory but merely showing up to class will not suffice. In order to do well, do your readings prior to class, ask clarifying questions in and outside of class, and contribute to in-class discussions of the course content. If a student cannot attend a session, they must email the instructor in advance in order to excuse themselves. Any more than two absences during the semester will result in a deduction in the participation grade by one letter grade. Students who must be absent from class for religious observance must notify the instructor as early as possible. *same expectations for 400 and 600 levels*

   Weekly Response Papers (30 points= 3x10): Students are required to submit prior to the beginning of each class a response paper in which they will analyze any one of the required readings of the day, and share what intellectual reactions the reading generated. What are its historical insights? Does s/he agree with the author? Why? Why not? These are some of the questions that the response essay will tackle. No response papers for Week 1, Week 7, Week 13, Week 14. Hence, there will be ten response papers during the semester.

   - Students at 400-level will write a 500-600-word response paper
   - Students at 600-level will write a 1000-1200-word response paper
2. **Seminar Paper (25 points), its Peer-Review (15 points) & its Presentation (10 points):**
The main deliverable for this course is the seminar paper with the word limit below excluding bibliography and footnotes. Students will work on this seminar paper throughout the semester.
- Students at 400-level will write a 4000-word seminar paper
- Students at 600-level will write a 6000-word seminar paper

This paper might be an:
- a) Exploration of an important historical question, involving a foreign policy/international relations issue, using primary sources,
- b) Examination of a key historiographical question/controversy in the history of international relations, -- e.g. the origins of the Cold War, nonaligned movement, the U.S. military role in Vietnam, etc. with the goal of evaluating the historical evidence, logic, and arguments, or
- c) Application of historical insight/historical lessons to a current/future policy question, including examining the use and abuse of historical analogies

**Timeline of seminar paper**
- First draft of the seminar paper is due by Week 8. The professor will provide detailed feedback at this stage.
- Final draft of the seminar paper will be due by Week 12. Peer reviewers will be assigned for each paper by that week as well. Each student will act as the peer reviewer for another student's seminar paper. Peer reviewers will send their 750-1000-word feedback to the professor before the seminar on Week 13, and to the authors on the morning of the scheduled presentation.
- Weeks 13 and 14 will be spent in 20 minutes presentation by the author of the seminar paper, followed by 10 minutes feedback by the peer reviewer, followed by 5 minutes’ response by the author, and 5 minutes of Q&A. There will be no make up for missing presentation and peer review.

**Summer version:** When the course is taught in summer, the seminar paper, peer review and presentation will be replaced by two oral history interviews conducted by the student, an analysis paper (1500 words for undergraduate students and 2500 words for graduate students), and its presentation in class. The distribution would be 30 (15+15) points for the two interviews, 10 points for the analysis paper, and 10 points for its presentation.
**Grading Criteria & Scale**

Explanation of grades and GPA at Boston University can be found by following this link:

https://www.bu.edu/reg/academics/grades-gpa/

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**Statement on Accessibility**

BU is committed to providing equal access to our coursework and programs to all students. In order to be sure that accommodations can be made in time for all exams and assignments, please plan to turn in your accommodations letter as soon as possible and no later than 14 days from the first exam/assignment. After you turn in your letter, please meet with your professor to discuss the plan for accommodations so we can be sure that they are adequate and you are supported in your learning. If you have further questions or need additional support, please contact the Office of Disability Services (access@bu.edu).

**Campus Resources for Students in Distress**

Please make use of BU resources to support yourself, friends and classmates when in distress:

http://www.bu.edu/helpinfo/pdf/10102_SHS.pdf

**Details of Class Meetings**

**Week 1: Introduction: Thinking Historically**

*Why study the past? How do we study the past? How to study the past most effectively? Why bother?*

  - Chapter 15: “International History and International Politics: Why Are They Studied Differently?” by Robert Jervis
  - Chapter 16: “International History: Why Historians Do It Differently than Political Scientists” by Paul W. Schroeder

  https://issforum.org/essays/essay-1-jervis-inaugural
**WEEK 2: ANALOGIES**

**What are historical analogies? Why are they so commonly used? Why are they so commonly abused?**


  - Chapter 5: Dodging Bothersome Analogues


**WEEK 3: CAUSATION**

**What is a causal relationship? When is it a correlation instead? What is the role of temporal, spatial, structural markers in causation?**

  - Chapter IV: Historical Analysis

  - Chapter IV: Causation in History

  - Chapter 2: Time and Space
  - Chapter 3: Structure and Process

**WEEK 4: VARIABLES**

**How to determine causal variables? How do historians identify and prioritize variables in comparison to political scientists, and why?**

  - Chapter 4: The Interdependency of Variables
  - Chapter 5: Chaos and Complexity

**WEEK 5: COUNTERFACTUAL REASONING**

*What is counterfactual reasoning? How does historical context interfere with counterfactual reasoning? What is the utility of counterfactuals in deriving causal relationships?*

  o Chapter 6: Causation, Contingency and Counterfactuals


**WEEK 6: MEMORY**

*Why is the national memory of the past sometimes distinct from its historical accounts? What role do traumatic events play in the national psyche?*

  o Chapter 1: Politics and memory in an age of apology
  o Chapter 3: Austria: the prodigal penitent

• Movie: Woman in Gold (2015)

**WEEK 7: PRIMARY SOURCES**

*How to gather historical data? How to organize historical data during collection? How to conduct oral history interviews? How to work with archivists?*
• Visit to Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University


  o Chapter 3: The Critical Analysis of Historical Texts
  o Chapter 5: Working with Documents

  o Chapter 1: A Case Study
  o Chapter 2: Legal Release Agreements

• Students are encouraged to browse the following primary source collections in their own time:
  o Foreign Relations of the United States volumes (FRUS): https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments
  o Digital National Security Archive (Documents access through ProQuest BU) http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/publications/dnsa.html
  o Wilson Center Digital Archive: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org

WEEK 8: FIELD TRIP TO JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY, BOSTON, MA
The library can accommodate up to 15 students at a time in their research room. Hence, advance notice will be required. If you cannot join the class on this field trip, or would prefer to do so on your own, please let the professor know as early as possible in the semester. You are encouraged to visit the JFKL’s digitized collection prior to your visit, especially National Security Files: https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKNSF.aspx

WEEK 9: CASE STUDY #1
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

What is role of international organizations in international politics?
What do the histories of the League of Nations and the United Nations reveal in terms of the role of IOs?

  o Chapter 6: “Empires, States and the League of Nations,” – Susan Pedersen


**WEEK 10: CASE STUDY #2
AUTORITARIANISM**

What role can history and historians play in predicting authoritarian trajectories?
How did early 20th century fascism operate on a global scale? What lessons can we draw for the present?


  - Chapter 9: “Fascist Internationalism” – Madeleine Herren

• History Hit by Dan Snow, Podcast:
  - Prof. Tim Snyder (25 mins.), 25 June 2018.
  - [https://www.acast.com/dansnowshistoryhit/authoritarianism-unfreedomwithprofessortimsnyder](https://www.acast.com/dansnowshistoryhit/authoritarianism-unfreedomwithprofessortimsnyder)
  - Dr. Christine Schmidt (10 mins.): 29 June 2018.
  - [https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/dan-snows-history-hit/e/55135051](https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/dan-snows-history-hit/e/55135051)

**WEEK 11: CASE STUDY #3
BORDERLANDS**

What are borderlands? How can we write histories of territories in the nooks and crannies of the modern nation-states? How can we effectively know the past when there are only skewed official histories?


  - Introduction: “A Doughty and Honorable Opponent”: Historicizing the Afghan-Pakistan Borderlands
  - Chapter 2: The “Opening of Sluice-Gates”: Plan Partition and the Frontier
**WEEK 12: CASE STUDY #4**
**THE COLD WAR**

*What is the global Cold War? How can we understand the ‘long peace’ beyond the ideological conflict between the two superpowers? In what other ways can we conceptualize 1945-1991? Why?*

  - Chapter 1: Starting Points
  - Chapter 2: Tests of War


**WEEK 13: PRESENTATIONS & PEER REVIEW**
**WEEK 14: PRESENTATIONS & PEER REVIEW**