Formulation and Conduct
of U.S. Foreign Policy

Basics

Instructor: Tobias Heinrich (`heinrict@mailbox.sc.edu` – `www.theinrich.net`)

Time and place: POLI 340, University of South Carolina, Fall 2016.

Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2.50–4.05am, Davis College 209.

Office hours: Thursdays, 10.30–11.30am. I will usually be available for a bit right before and after class as well. You can also schedule alternative times with me through email.

Outline

This course offers an analytical approach to the formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy. The goal is to learn to think about such policies by actively carrying out novel, unique research. Ideally, everyone wrestles with questions and issues that often are only spoken in lectures.

The course is also extremely focused via the conscientious omissions and choices with regard to the content. Most crucially, this is neither a course on diplomatic history, nor about whatever media outlets happen to be covering at this minute. Further, the course will not treat the United States' foreign policy as anything inherently exceptional, but rather as an important case among all states' foreign policies.

What does the course cover? Foreign policy of any state is presumed to come out of the interplay between various actors who seek to influence the statal policy over some issue. Using this perspective, we will consider (1) who these actors are, (2) which issues they might seek to affect, and (3) what the resulting statal policies might be. With a broad overview of these foundations in the first third of the course, we then carry out two research projects as large class exercises. The first is to produce a prediction about a question of students' choosing and evaluate systematically different scenarios related to it; the second is to compare public statements and actual actions in foreign policy.

If you actively and meticulously participate in this course, you will learn

- how to coherently think in a structured way through political issues and how policy toward it gets made;

- about a broad range of activities of U.S. foreign policy;

- how to predict the outcomes of complex political interactions;

- consider issues of design in answering questions of interest;

- to think more like a (social) scientist and much less like a journalist or talking head.

Date of this syllabus: August 17, 2016.

Required Materials

All materials (journal articles, book chapters, and some news articles) will be provided via email or Blackboard.

An important note on the readings: The course will rely at times on some complicated material that may involve difficult statistics and game theoretic models. I do not expect you to fully understand these sections of papers; however, the expectation is that you are able to get what the addressed issue is, what the previous work thought on the topic, what the novel take of the paper is, and what the implications are. How the author reaches the conclusions is not that important in the context of this class. At times, lectures will walk you through details of the readings.

Grades and Grading

Your grade will be comprised of several contributions. The details for each assignment will be provided in class when the assignment is given. These are:

- **Test 1** covers ideas about science, social science, and research. Like the other tests, it will be given on Blackboard. [It is given on September 1 and is due September 6, 1pm.]

- **Test 2** is about actors and issues in foreign policy. [September 22 – September 27, 1pm]

- The topic of **Test 3** is about prediction-making (ie. Project 1). [October 25 – October 27, 1pm]

- **Test 4** covers the statistical approach for testing hypotheses (ie. Project 2). [November 17 – November 22, 1pm]

- There will be frequent-ish **Quizzes**, generally consisting of 3–4 short questions. The grade for the quizzes will be the average of your best five quizzes.

- The **September Questions** are your chance to formulate questions of interest to you. Importantly, these question will be used to produce the bases for the two in-class projects. Between September 6 and 22, you have to submit six pairs of questions; each of the pair counts equally. The grade for all questions is the average of your three best ones. The questions are due within 24 hours of the end of class.

  - A well thought-out question that applies concepts and ideas from that day of the class to an issue of interest. Solid questions get 100, sloppy ones 50, and an absence 0.
  - A question that can be looser, a mere wondering about what will happen down the road. 100 for a submitted question, 0 for an absence.

- *To be voted on whether this will be graded:* For Project 1, small groups of students have to develop **Actor Profiles** that cover (probably) two actors in the context of the event that we want to predict. The write-up and the corresponding data entry have to be submitted by October 20, 1pm.

Everything in this class will be graded on a scale of 0-100 and each contribution has a weight of 2 to compute the (weighted) average grade. Each of the four tests will be administered via Blackboard and can be taken at a time of your choosing (before the due date).

Note: As **Test 1** is the first time that (longer) work is graded in this class, students have a simple, no-questions-asked option to downweight **Test 1**. If a student declares via email to the instructor that he/she wishes to have **Test 1** count only half, then the grade of **Test 1** will only have a weight of 1 in the calculation of the final grade. This has to be declared before **Test 2** (September 22) is handed out, and the decision is not reversible.

There will be no extra-credit at all, and no make-up options will be given except when an USC office certifies that such accomodations are warranted (e.g. illness).

I will use the following grading scale to map the final grade-points to letter grades. A 92-100, B+ 87-91, B 80-86, C+ 77-79, C 70-76, D+ 67-69, D 60-66, and F 0-59. Standard rounding rules apply. If you choose to turn in your work late, then you will lose five points each and every 12 hours. Further, tests may get curved; how this happens is at the discretion of the instructor.

Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code and should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone elses work, will result in a zero for the work, possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University. Don't do it.

You are expected to be in class on time and be there every time as attending class is an integral part in learning the material. That said, no attendance will be taken so that there is no formal, direct disadvantage. The exception to this is that if you miss so many classes that you have less than five quizzes in the books, then your grade will be affected. Similarly, if missing class means that so many of your **September Questions** are poor, then your grade will be affected. I firmly believe that missing classes will adversely affect your learning and thereby your grade in indirected ways.

Reading the assigned material and attending class are crucial and not substitutable for each other. Some material in the readings are starting points for the content of the lectures; others will be dissected meticulously in lectures. There will also be lectures without any previous grounding in readings. Your learning and thereby your grade will require close attention to lectures and readings.

Politics is inherently a social phenomenon, and thereby discussions about it are as well. I encourage every student to voice objections, questions, critique, and dissatisfaction with the presented material as well as to instructor's and other students' views on the material. There are only three prerequisites: the comments have to be thought-out before voiced, be respectful, and must not aim to disrupt the course for disruption's sake.

Last, in light of debates around "micro-aggression", let me clear: I cannot rule out that class discussions will challenge students' pre-existing beliefs; I would argue that I would fail my job if discussions did not challenge pre-existing beliefs. Consider this syllabus an omnibus trigger warning for the entire semester.

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email `sasds@mailbox.sc.edu`, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.

The syllabus may be changed by the instructor. If unclear about anything, just ask and ask early. Don't hesitate.

Course Schedule

Part I: Preliminaries

The initial part of the course sets the stage for everything that follows. Students will learn the demarcation of topics as well as the approach that will be taken throughout. It also explores the questions what foreign policy is anyways.

August 18: Howdy, y'all. And what are we doing here? Also: Setting up a first group project on the question, "What is foreign policy?"

August 23: A lecture on what won't be covered in this course.
August 25: Answers to "What is foreign policy?" Presentations of the results from the group project. Setting up group project for the question, "What do you already know about studying foreign policy?"

August 30: What is science? What is social science?
September 1: Answers to "What do you already know about studying foreign policy?" *Test 1 is given on Blackboard.*

Part II: Actors of (and issues in) foreign policy

This part of the course introduces some of the major actors and issues in U.S. foreign policy. Students will learn how to assess what drives the actors in foreign policy, and gain an understanding how the actors would approach issues.

September 6: The executive. *Test 1 is due by 1pm.*
September 8: The legislative.

September 13: The courts.
September 15: The bureaucracy.

September 20: The people and the media.
September 22: The interest groups and firms. *Test 2 is given on Blackboard.*

Part III: Project 1 – Predicting the Future!

This section helps students to know the future. Relying on the framework by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, we combine assumptions taken from public resources and from what we generally know about actors to forecast the future. Which outcome we will predict in class will be determined by

a vote.

September 27: Making predictions. Deciding on the topic. *Test 2 is due by 1pm.*

- Michael A.M. Lerner and Ethan Hill, "The New Nostradamus" in Good Magazine.
  URL: `http://preview.tinyurl.com/p4axrqe`.

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "A Prediction for the Future of Iran" at TED.
  URL: `http://preview.tinyurl.com/p75ktum`.

September 29: Defining and refining what we want to predict.

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Predictioner's Game*, Chapter 4 on Blackboard.

October 4: The ability to influence the future: what one wants, can do, and would bother to do; Part I.

- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Predictioner's Game*, Chapter 5 on Blackboard.

October 6: The ability to influence the future: what one wants, can do, and would bother to do; Part II.

October 11: In-class work data collection.
October 13: No class as it's Fall Break.

October 18: How are we predicting the future? Is our prediction fragile?
October 20: Buffer class. *Actor profiles in a PDF are due, and data has to be entered in the Google Form by 1pm.*

October 25: Looking at our predictions! *Test 3 is given on Blackboard.*

Part IV: A detour. Or: a breather.

October 27: (Statistically) Predicting international conflict under each presidential candidate's presidency. *Test 3 is due by 1pm.*

Part V: Project 2 – Words and deeds!

This second project uses data analysis to investigate the old words/deeds discrepancy. In class, we will vote on a policy area that we will study. Part of the project is to consider issues of measurement and data collection.

November 1: "If you talk the talk, you have to walk the walk." True or false? Setting up our research question.
November 3: Making the research question specific. Defining variables.

November 8: No class as it's General Election Day.
November 10: In-class work data collection.

November 15: Analyzing our data.
November 17: Buffer class. *Test 4 is given on Blackboard.*

November 22: Buffer class. *Test 4 is due by 1pm.*
November 24: No class as it's Thanksgiving.

December 1: ... and it's a wrap! Last day of class.