Formulation and Conduct of U.S. Foreign Policy

Basics

Instructor: Tobias Heinrich (`heinrict@mailbox.sc.edu` – `www.theinrich.net` – Gambrell 333)

Time and place: POLI 340, University of South Carolina, Fall 2017.

Class: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2.20–3.35pm, WMBB Nursing 127.

Office hours: Since no-one ever comes to an office hour, this will be dynamic. I will usually be available before and after class, and you can also schedule times with me through email.

Teaching assistant: Christopher Eddy (`eddyc@email.sc.edu`). Office hour Wednesdays, 4.00-5.00pm in Gambrell 353.

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 are often only spoken in lectures.

The content is also extremely focused via the conscientious omissions and choices. 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 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. After a broad overview of these foundations in the first half of the course, we will carry out a research project as a large class exercises. This latter activity will serve as an application of the materials from the first half of the course.

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

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- how to coherently think in a structured way through political issues and how policy toward them 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.

Required Materials

All materials (journal articles, book chapters, news articles) will be provided via email or on 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 on a technical level is not that important in the context of this class. At times, lectures will walk you through details of the readings.

Grades and Grading

The grade will be comprised of several contributions. The details for each assignment will be provided in class when the assignment is given. Some overview nonetheless:

- **Test 1** covers ideas about science, social science, research, and basic concepts of political science. Like the other tests, it will be given on Blackboard. [Given on September 18, 4pm and is due September 20, 1pm. Weight is 5.]

- **Test 2** is about actors and issues in foreign policy. [Given on October 25, 4pm and is due October 30, 1pm. Weight is 8.]

- The topic of **Test 3** is about everything we've done. [Given between November 27 and December 4; details to be determined. Weight is 8.]

- There will be frequent **Quizzes**, generally consisting of 3–4 short questions. The grade for the quizzes will be the average of the best 70% of quizzes. [Weight is 7.]

- The **Actor Thoughts** are your chance to formulate questions of interest to you. Between September 20 and October 25, you can submit up to two thoughts or questions relating (mainly) to each previous lecture. The questions are due within 24 hours of the end of class. The grade is the average of your ten best ones. A well

thought-out question is one that applies concepts and ideas from that day of the class to an issue of interest. Solid questions get 100 and sloppy ones 50. [Weight of 4.]

- In our prediction project, you will develop the attributes for one **Major Actor** in a small. The evidence and rationale behind your choices need to be written up and subsequently presented (and defended) in class. [Weight of 3.]

- Alone or in pairs, the attributes for one **Minor Actor** have to be written up as part of the prediction project. [Weight of 2.]

Everything in this class will be graded on a 0–100 scale and carries a weight as indicated above. The final grade is simply the weighted average of all grades.

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 to have **Test 1** count only half, then the grade of **Test 1** will have only half of the original weight in the calculation of the final grade. This has to be declared before **Test 2** is given, and the decision is not reversible. And no, this not available for any other assignment.

There will be no extra-credit at all. There are plenty of opportunities in the class to better one's grade. Unexcused absences from a presentation entail an automatic zero for the associated grade (ie. the write-up).

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 ten points each and every 6 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 else's 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 exceptions to this are that if you miss many quizzes, then your grade will be affected; and if you miss a class for which you are scheduled to (co-)present, you get a zero. I firmly believe that missing classes will adversely affect your learning and thereby your grade in indirected ways. A casual inspection of grades in previous iterations of this course suggests that this is indeed the case.

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 be 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. Also, foreign policy inevitably touches upon "unpleasant" issues (torture, war, corruption, etc.) 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 28 Howdy, y'all. And what are we doing here? Also: Setting up a first group project on the question, "What is foreign policy?"
August 30 A lecture on what won't be covered in this course.

September 4 No class as it's Labor Day.
September 6 More on what won't be covered in this course.

- The National Security Law Podcast, "The AUMF: All You Ever Wanted to Know

(and Plenty You Didn't), Episode 27. URL: `http://preview.tinyurl.com/yd8jn4xc`. This can get quite wonky; listen to tw

September 11 Answers to "What is foreign policy?" Presentations of the results from the group project. Also: Setting up group project for the question, "What do you already know about studying foreign policy?"
September 13 What is science? What is social science?

September 18 Answers to "What do you already know about studying foreign policy?"

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 of how the actors would approach issues.

September 20: The executive.

September 25: The legislative.
September 27: The people and the media.

October 2: People, legislators, and the executive.
October 4: The bureaucracy.

October 9: The interest groups and firms.
October 11: The courts.

October 16: Actors controlling money.
October 18: Buffer session, recapping.

October 23: A complex issue and many actors, Part I.
October 25: A complex issue and many actors, Part II.

Part III: Project – Predicting the Future!

This section will prepare 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.

October 30: Making predictions. Deciding on the topic.

- 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`.

November 1: Defining and refining what we want to predict.

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

November 6: Presenting actors, Part I.
November 8: Presenting actors, Part II.

November 13: The ability to influence the future: what one wants, can do, and would bother to do.

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

November 15: Assessing our actors' power. Debating and voting on who's got the power.

November 20: Looking at our predictions!
November 22: No class as it's Thanksgiving.

November 27: Buffer session.
November 29: Buffer session.

December 4: Buffer session.
December 6: ... and it's a wrap! Last day of class.