

THE AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICYMAKING PROCESS

Monday, 1:30-4:00

Spring 2009

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OBJECTIVES

This course explores the theory and practice of U.S. foreign policymaking, focusing on the process by which international economic and security decisions are actually made. That process is currently in transition, of course, with President Barack Obama committed both to substantial substantive change and greater transparency. And we can only speculate, of course, about how the impressive individuals he has assembled to pursue his domestic and international agendas will interact as they seek to advance his fortunes, those of their nation, and their own.

But certain things we do know. The deepening global economic crisis has underscored the fading of the distinction between matters “domestic” and “international.” If history is any guide, officials and institutions in the Obama administration and Congress will be driven to compete for influence at home even as they seek it abroad, and the decision making process will be shaped at least as much by personalities and political/societal trends as by institutional and constitutional prerogatives.

To encourage specific understanding about the actual practice of US foreign policymaking, the course presents a mix of historical cases and analyses of the policy process in general (models, the executive branch, Congress). After a “warmup” centered on the new administration, and two weeks on models and institutions, we will move to examination of economic and national security policymaking in specific Presidential administrations, beginning with those of John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. Students will examine the roles of key officials, the relationships among them, and how they addressed major international security and economic issues. In so doing, we will explore repeatedly the relevance of theory to understanding of what actually happens. Readings will include contemporary documents, retrospective accounts by participants, and academic analyses.

Subsequent editions of this syllabus, course notices, and other relevant materials will be posted on Blackboard (elms.umd.edu), a web interface open to all students taking the course. As backup, the syllabus and other course information will also be posted on Professor Destler’s website at: <http://www.publicpolicy.umd.edu/faculty/destler/courses.htm>.

REQUIREMENTS

(1) **Writing Assignments:** Students will write *two* memos and one short paper on a single policy episode of their choice. This must be an actual issue addressed by a post-1945 President and his senior advisors, in one of the administrations treated in the course. Pertinent examples include decisions to impose sanctions against Japan on automobile trade in 1995, abandon support of the dollar in 1971, proceed with the Bay of Pigs operation against Fidel Castro in 1961, negotiate on nuclear weapons with North Korea in 2005, begin or end the Gulf War in 1991, withdraw from Lebanon in 1984, drive down the dollar in 1985, go to war in Iraq in 2003, agree to permanent normal trade relations with China in 2000, etc.

- ** The first memo is an *information memo*: it should provide the necessary background concerning the issue, including all the relevant factors needed to arrive at a decision. It may be addressed to an individual or a decision group (eg, National Security Council).
- ** The second will be a *briefing* and *advocacy* memo, addressed to a particular senior official, typically a Cabinet member or agency head. This should be written to prepare her/him for a meeting (whether historically real or assumed) at which the issue will be decided. This memo should take the information provided in the first memo as given and focus on preparing the agency head for the decision-making meeting by:
 - (a) describing the state of play on the issue within the Administration;
 - (b) suggesting the position the agency head should take;
 - (c) presenting a strategy to enhance the prospect that the issue will be decided as your memo recommends.
- ** Alternatively, this second memo can be written for someone outside the Executive Branch, e.g., a congressman concerned with the issue or the head of an NGO or private business with interests at stake. In that case, the memo should describe the state of play on the issue within the Administration and Congress, recommend a specific policy choice, and present a strategy for getting that choice adopted.
- ** In all cases, students should *assume the role of* a staff aide to the senior official to whom the memo is addressed, writing *as if* working for that official *at the time the issue was being considered*. You should not, therefore, include information that was not available until after the decision was reached.
- ** Ph.D. students taking the course may opt to write a full-length research paper instead.

All memos should be no more than three pages in length (Courier 12 point, single-spaced, double-spaced between paragraphs), within 1" margins. The *first* memo should be revised in response to feedback from the instructor and resubmitted as an attachment to the second memo,.

- ** The *third* writing assignment is a short paper (about 5 pages, double-spaced, NTE 1700 words) that relates the issue and the decision process thereon to at least one theoretical proposition drawn from course readings. Further instructions will be provided.

The due dates for the written assignments will be February 27, March 27, and April 24. Together they will constitute **60 percent** of the base grade.

(2) There will be a *Policy Exercise* during the first two weeks of April. Each student's participation will be evaluated, and this will count for **15 percent** of the final grade.

(3) The course will end with a *Take-home Final Examination*. Students will need to draw upon information learned in the course to respond, under a tight time constraint, to "an urgent request from the Obama administration." This will count for **25 percent** of the base grade.

3) **Class Participation**, based on timely completion of readings and reflection on their contents. This course will rely heavily on student discussion and dialogue with the professors. The philosophy is that we all learn better by active engagement than by being talked to. Discussion-based teaching helps to foster critical thinking and to internalize learning through an interactive process. But it requires active and full student participation.

Students with strong seminar participation will have points added to their base grade. Those who fail to participate or who gross exhibit ignorance of the topics being discussed, will have points subtracted. Since the difference between, say, an A- and a B+, is small, participation will often have an important impact on a student's final grade.

READINGS

The following two books contain substantial required reading for the course. Students should purchase them. The first will be sold directly at the first course meeting, at an author's discount. The second should be available in ample supply on *amazon.com*, etc., or at local bookstores.

Ivo H. Daalder and I. M. Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office: Profiles of the National Security Advisers and the Presidents They Served: From JFK to George W. Bush* (Simon and Schuster, 2009).

Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, SECOND EDITION!!, (Addison Wesley Longman, 1999).

Hopefully, almost all of the remaining readings will be posted on, or available through, **Blackboard**. Every effort will be made to avoid producing the rather cumbersome course reading paks that were standard features in prior years. Instructions will be provided for securing readings for which Blackboard cannot be used due to copyright restrictions.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION, ACTORS AND PROCESSES

January 26: ***Introduction: The Security Complex and the Economic Complex***

Reading (optional): I. M. Destler, “A Government Divided: The Security Complex and the Economic Complex” in David A. Deese, editor, *The New Politics of American Foreign Policy* (St. Martin’s Press, 1994), pp. 132-47.

February 2: ***Past and Present***

Reading: Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, chaps. 1 and 9.
 Bob Woodward, “10 Take Aways From the Bush Years,” *Washington Post*, January 18, p. B01. **Blackboard**
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/14/AR2009011402791_pf.html.

Questions or Answers, gathered by each student individually, about how the Obama administration is conducting—or plans to conduct, or is likely to conduct—American foreign policy.

February 9: ***Models of Policymaking***

Readings: Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*. In order to get a minimum sense of the argument and the paradigms, read at least pp. 1-26, 143-47, 163-85, 255-63, 294-313, and 379-405. Skim other parts for illustrative examples, links to the broad policymaking and IR literatures, and fascinating interpretations of this classic crisis. And for the actual resolution of the crisis, you will surely want to read pp. 325-66—if not for this week, then when we discuss the Kennedy administration..

RECOMMENDED (and relevant the third paper assignment): Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games,” *International Organization*, Vol 42 (Summer 1988), pp. 427-60. **Blackboard**

February 16 ***President and Congress*** [this session may need to be rescheduled]

Readings: Alexander George and Eric Stern, “Presidential Management Styles and Models,” in Alexander and Juliette George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, (Westview Press, 1998), pp. 199-210. **[P]**

Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann, “When Congress Checks Out,” *Foreign Affairs*, Nov/Dec 2006, pp. 67-82. **Blackboard**.

Ornstein and Mann, “The Hill is Alive With the Sound of Hearings,” *foreignaffairs.org*, March 27, 2007.

Public Law 93-148, November 7, 1973. **Blackboard**

Items to be added from Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick, *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy* (fifth edition).

Case: Vincent Auger, *The War Powers Resolution and U.S. Policy in Lebanon* (C, Pew Case 358—purchase on web: [http://www.guisd.org/.](http://www.guisd.org/))

PART TWO: PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIONS

February 23 ***Kennedy Administration: National Security Policymaking***

March 2: ***Nixon Administration: National Security***

March 9: ***Nixon Administration: Trade and Economic***

[March 16-20: Spring Break]

March 23: ***Reagan and Bush (Sr.) Administrations: Trade and Economic***

March 30: ***Clinton Administration: Trade and Economic***

April 6 & 13: ***Policy Exercise***

April 20: ***Reagan and Bush (Sr.) Administrations: National Security***

April 27: ***Clinton Administration: National Security***

May 4: ***George W. Bush Administration: National Security***

May 11: ***To Be Determined***