

History 251

U. S. FOREIGN POLICY

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Spring 2008

11 a.m. TTh

This course surveys the past century of United States foreign policy. After a brief look at Wilsonianism and the aftermath of World War I, we examine U.S. policy in World War II, the origins of the Cold War, Vietnam, the end of the Cold War, and the war in Iraq. Although our primary focus is traditional statecraft, we'll also consider other dimensions of international relations, including cultural aspects and race. The relationship between foreign policy and domestic politics is a recurrent theme - especially relevant during this fluid presidential primary season.

The class is a mixture of lectures and discussion. Active participation in discussion, based on careful reading and analysis of the assigned readings, are essential. Some additional readings may be assigned; they'll be available on ERES.

There are three writing assignments, each of which counts one-third of the final grade. The assignments are six-page essays, which are based on the readings, lectures, and discussion about the assigned topics. Outside research is welcome but not expected. As an alternative to the final essay, you may do a special project; that may be on a subject of your choice, but please discuss it with me in advance. Participation in discussion will help improve the final grade.

I welcome the chance to consult with you during office hours and by appointment. My office is Rice 305 and my usual hours are 12:30 to 2 p.m. TTh. Additional office hours will be announced from time to time. Email is also welcome, but there's no substitute for personal discussion.

Required texts

Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, Harvard University Press, 2001.

Dennis Merrell and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*, vol. II, 6th ed., Houghton Mifflin, 2005. (In syllabus as M&P).

J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt & Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan*, University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Class Schedule

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| Feb. 5, 7 | Introduction: Thinking about the History of U.S. Foreign Relations

M&P, chap. 1 |
| Feb. 12 | Wilsonianism

M&P, pp. 42-69, skim pp. 35-41 |
| Feb. 14 | U.S. Entry into World War II

M&P, chap. 4 |
| Feb. 19, 21 | U.S. Policy in World War II

M&P, chap. 5
Borstelmann, chap. 1
Alain Locke, "The Unfinished Business of Democracy [1942]" on ERES |
| Feb. 26, 28 | The Atomic Bomb

Walker, all
M&P, pp. 190-192 |
| March 4, 5 | Symposium on Oberlin alumni international AIDS work (March 4, 7 p.m., March 5, 12 noon)

Attendance recommended |

March 4, 6 **The Contemporary U.S. War in Iraq**

[This subject appears out of sequence so that we may take advantage of a visit by Robert Drogin, author of *Curveball*. Further arrangements for his visit will be announced.]

M&P, chap. 14
Additional readings to be announced

March 11 First Essay Due at Class Time

March 11, 13 **The Origins of the Cold War, I**

M&P, chap. 6

March 18, 20 **The Origins of the Cold War, II**

Geoffrey Roberts, "Sexing Up the Cold War: New Evidence on the Molotov-Truman Talks of April 1945," *Cold War History*, 4 (April 2004), on ERES
Additional readings to be announced

March 25, 27 **No Class - Spring Break**

April 1, 3 **Film Screening: *The Lives of Others***

Borstelmann, chaps. 2-3

April 8, 10 **Korea and Containment**

M&P, chap. 7

April 15, 17 **The Cultural Cold War**

[Special session with Tim Scholl, professor of Russian]

M&P, chap. 9
Borstelmann, chap. 4
Additional readings to be announced

April 15 Second Essay Due at Class Time

April 22 **Cuban Missile Crisis**

M&P, chap. 10

April 24 **Race and Reciprocity in U.S. Foreign Relations**

Borstelmann, chap. 5, review chaps. 1-4

April 29, May 1 **Vietnam**

M&P, chap. 11

May 6 **The End of the Cold War**

M&P, chap. 13

Borstelmann, chap. 6

May 8 **Issues for the Future in Historical Perspective**

Final Essay Due at Ttime of Final Exam