POLS 249: U.S. Foreign Policy, 1945–present
Simmons University

I. Course Information

POLS 249: US Foreign Policy, 1945-present
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Office hours: TBA

II. Course Catalog Description

Examines the origins of the Cold War in the dramatically altered balance of international forces at the end of World War II. Considers the historic impact of Third World revolutions and the surge toward détente. Also investigates the sudden termination of the Cold War in the Gorbachev era and the emergence of China as an increasingly strong economic, political, and potentially military power.

III. Learning Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, students should be able to do the following: describe the history of the Washington-Moscow rivalry, including its major points of tension and the interests of minor powers (such as those in the nonaligned movement); explore the Cold War as a form of social mobilization, including McCarthyism and the anticommunist movement; compare opposing scholarly views on the Cold War; explore critical junctures in the politics of foreign policy, including those symbolized by the years 1945, 1962, 1968, 1989, 1991, and the major events of the post-Cold War era; differentiate eras of U.S. power, especially its hegemonic phase; analyze the United States in the world today and its role amid several rising powers; and, critically examine U.S. foreign policy in writing and in oral presentations.

IV. Simmons PLAN Global Historical (GH) Key Content Area (KCA) designation

Courses with Simmons' GH KCA designation are intended to show students a variety of viewpoints on history, including current history. This political history of the Cold War and post-Cold War worlds will show a variety of views on the nature of international rivalry, such as one perspective that claims the Cold War was really a symbiotic rather than competitive relationship. This course will also explore how issues of foreign policy are intimated connected with American nationalism, and how people think about their place in the nation and the world.

V. Book List

The following books are available at the bookstore (lower level, Main College Building—A):

1. Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).
2. Andrew Bacevich, ed., *Ideas and American Foreign Policy: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
3. M.E. Sarotte, *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Stalemate*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021).
4. Stephen Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

VI. Course Outline

Part I: The Cold War

Yalta; U.S. liberal order in 1945; the Berlin airlift; the Korean War; McCarthyism and the Red Scare; the Cuban Missile Crisis; the Vietnam War; détente; oil embargo; the fall of the Berlin Wall; the parade of sovereignties; and, the collapse of the USSR.

Part II: The End of History

NATO expansion; 9/11 and the national mood; Afghanistan; Iraq; popular support for war; Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Part III: The Return of History

America first versus deep engagement; withdrawal from Afghanistan; Ukraine-Russia War; Israel-Gaza War; American social protests.

VII. Assessment Methods

1) Mid-term Paper (25%). The mid-term exam will take the form of a take-home essay writing assignment about the nature of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.

2) Research Paper (25%). Students shall prepare an independent research paper assessing the state of American dominance in the twenty-first century.

3) Warburg Event Write-Up (20%). Often, diplomats have very different ideas than academics about Washington's role in the world. Thus, at least once during the semester, students shall attend a policy talk on foreign affairs designed by the Warburg program. Professor Williams will provide a list of talks. Afterwards, write up a reaction paper that thickly describes the event and draws connections to our class.

4) Critical Summary and Critical Questions (20%). On two occasions, you will present to the class your impressions of the reading for that week. One will be a critical summary of the material, and the other will be critical questions.

The weeks you present summary and questions are very much about your thoughts and impressions of the readings. Yes, you should faithfully present the reading to the class, but I and the rest of the class are interested in how you have interpreted the readings. Perhaps there was one idea that was central to the rest of the reading. Or perhaps there was a common theme in two or three readings. Or perhaps there were contrasting views in the readings.

However you approach the assignments, think about how you would present it to someone not in the course. What main ideas to you want to say to this person, and how do you want them to think about the topic?

You will present twice this semester. When it is your week to present a summary:

--Write a 2-3 page (double spaced) summary that critically reviews the readings.
--Post the summary under assignments on Moodle by Sunday.
--Write notes for a 5 minute presentation.
--On Monday, give the class a five minute presentation.

When it is your week to present questions:

--Write 4-6 questions. Each one should take a sentence or two to introduce the topic, present a question for discussion, and take a stab at answering your own question.
--Post on Sunday.
--Present on Monday.

Pro Tip: Do the readings early, and then write an e-mail to me or meet with me to talk about your ideas for your presentation. I cannot read whole drafts of your assignment, but I can give feedback on the general approach you intend to take. Feel free to send a short paragraph on what your summary will include, or, feel free to send a sample question. The earlier your write to me, the better the odds of good feedback.

Common Question: “Things are busy this week. May I present the same material next week?” To this, my answer is always the same: no. There are lots of reasons for this, but the short version is that these discussions are really for the benefit of the class, not for the presenter.

3) In-Class Participation (10%). Grades are holistic and non-formulaic, based on the quality of your comments in class. Students with excellent participation may, in addition, see a 1/3 letter

grade benefit at the end of the semester. This participation requirement presumes that students will attend all class meetings of this in-person course. Missing more than one or two class sessions will substantially harm one's ability to participate and cause students to miss out on large portions of the course material.

VIII. Submission and Grading Policies

As will be noted on the first assignment, students may use any established citation style, such as Chicago, APA, or MLA. Professional journals and publishing houses in the fields of political science and public policy tend to use variations on Chicago, but not uniformly and always with "house style" variations.

Plagiarism is using another's words or ideas without proper attribution. Plagiarized work may result in disciplinary action. For more on plagiarism, please talk to Professor Williams, click on the dropdown in the link below §VIII(a), or try this direct link: https://internal.simmons.edu/students/academics/academic-integrity.

The use of ChatGPT and other machine learning programs, even as a first draft, is considered plagiarism. Writing is hard, and it is only through practice that one becomes a strong writer. The writing process begins by staring at a blank page.

As will be noted on the individual assignments and on Moodle, work shall be submitted in Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF (.pdf) formats. Google docs and other formats will not be permitted, though most—including Google docs—can be easily converted to PDF. Work will all be scanned using plagiarism software, such as TurnItIn.

IX. Other Policies and Notes

(a) Students are expected to treat one another with respect and hold themselves to high academic standards. Follow this link for Simmons University's policies on academic integrity, student resources, accessibility, and gender-based misconduct (such as sexual harassment): https://internal.simmons.edu/students/academics/syllabus-policies.

(b) Letter grades will be assigned to averages as follows: >93= A; 90-92.9= A-; 86-89.9= B+; 83-85.9= B; 80-82.9= B-; 76-79.9=C+; 73-75.9= C; 70-72.9= C-; 66-69.9= D+; 63-65.9= D; 60-62.9= D-; <60= F.

(c) This course does not have any pre-requisites. Yet it nonetheless requires a great deal of energy and effort expended outside of class. Given the readings and written work, in addition to the

complexity of the topics, this course requires several hours of work outside of class. Students tend to find the workload manageable by dedicating time to prepare multiple days each week.

(d) Simmons University and Professor Williams are committed to equal access to programs and learning opportunities. Students who believe they may be entitled to an academic accommodation should consult with the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) at access@simmons.edu.

(e) This syllabus is not a contract. The instructor reserves the right to alter course requirements and/or assignments based on new materials, class discussions, or other legitimate pedagogical objectives.

(f) The course materials are the intellectual property of the instructor and Simmons University. Students may not share, in person or online, course material (such as notes, the syllabus, paper prompts, and tests). Unauthorized copying of courses materials violates the Simmons Honor Code and federal copyright laws. Students may not record lectures or class discussions without explicit permission of the instructor (unless recordings are permitted by a student's accommodation).

(g) Want to talk politics? Please write to me at gregory.williams@simmons.edu with questions (both worldly and practical) or with your ideas about how politics works. To me and to most folks my age or greater, including employers, e-mails are more like letters than text messages. E-mails should have a greeting/salutation, a message, and a closing. I try to respond to messages within one business day.