Kissinger Seminar: History, Strategy, and American Statecraft  
SA.200.738.01  
Instructors: Hal Brands, Francis Gavin, James Steinberg  
Thursday, 8:00-10:30AM  
R206

Description
What are the major patterns in the history of American strategy and statecraft? How has the United States handled key diplomatic and military crises in the past? What challenges have the most important American statespeople faced, and what strategies did they develop to advance U.S. interests? What lessons do their experiences hold for leaders today and in the future?

This course is structured around an effort to answer these questions. This course is part 1 of 2 of the new Henry A. Kissinger Center curriculum in history, strategy, and statecraft; it provides students with an introduction to issues of strategy, war, and diplomacy, framed against the history of U.S. foreign policy. The course will begin with a discussion of the nature of strategy and statecraft, and of how history can help us understand these issues. The bulk of the course will explore American statecraft and strategy by looking at the policies and personalities of important American leaders, from Washington through Obama. We will examine the range of factors that went into their strategy and statecraft, including personal and political history, ideas, beliefs, and traditions in American foreign relations, and the pressing challenges of the day. Our hope is that this course will help students generate basic principles and guidelines that can be used to improve American approaches to strategy, war, and diplomacy in the years to come. The second part of this course (offered in the spring semester) will encourage students to apply these principles to the particular foreign policy challenges the United States confronts today.

This course will be tied to the activities of the Kissinger Center, and will feature guest speakers, some of whom directly participated in or written about the issues and events we will study in the course. There will be opportunities for extracurricular sessions exploring issues of particular interest to the class. The course can also serve as preparation for the core exam in American Foreign Policy.

Fair warning: This course involves a substantial amount of reading and intensive intellectual engagement on a weekly basis. We ask you to put a lot into the class because we expect that you will get a lot out of it.

Course Requirements

- Class participation: 35%
- Analytical paper based on Mead, *Special Providence*, in Week 3: 10%
- Analytical precis: 20%
- Long paper due at end of semester: 35%
Class participation involves actively and productively engaging in discussions and debates during our weekly sessions, and demonstrating deep engagement with the readings. It also involves more prosaic matters like being present and on time for class.

The analytical paper based on Mead is due before class in Week 3. In no more than 1200 words, you must briefly summarize Mead’s analytical framework and then explain how it helps us understand U.S. foreign policy today (or in recent years).

Each student will also write one analytical précis. The “analytical précis” takes that week’s readings and accomplishes two tasks. First, it summarizes them, identifying common themes and suggesting critiques or questions raised by the readings. Second, it interrogates them, either using one of the readings from an earlier week or developing an original critique. The overall paper must not be longer than 3000 words, of which no more than half should be pure summary. We will discuss this assignment in greater detail in Week 1; you will have the opportunity to pick a week in which to complete this assignment during Week 2.

The long paper will be due on December 7th. You are to select a memoir by a key American statesperson and write a critical analysis of 3000-4000 words. The person you choose can be any foreign policy leader (president, diplomat, and in certain circumstances, military figure) and must be approved by us. You must obtain approval for your choice no later than prior to class in Week 8.

In general, your paper should address two broad points:

- First, you should descriptively analyze the policymaker’s perspective on international politics:
  - What is the policymaker’s underlying worldview about international relations?
  - How does the policymaker understand the national interests of his or her country?
  - What choices did the policymaker consider, and which option did the policymaker choose? Why?

- Second, you should prescriptively evaluate the policymaker’s responses:
  - Did the policymaker understand key international situations well?
  - Did the policymaker make the right decisions? Why or why not?
  - What were the key strengths and weaknesses of your policymaker’s approach to identifying and engaging with international issues?

Importantly, make sure that you document your arguments with specific reference to the text of the memoir. Remember that you should rely primarily on your own analysis of your chosen memoir to complete the tasks laid out above. Do not rely on secondary sources on your policymaker (biographies, histories, etc.) to draw conclusions about the policymaker’s worldview and decisionmaking.
Required Books


Schedule

September 7: Introduction

- Hal Brands and Charles Edel, “The End of History is the Birth of Tragedy,” *Foreign Policy*, May 2017
- Micah Zenko and Rebecca Lissner, “Trump is Going to Regret Not Having a Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Policy*, January 2017

September 14: Approaches to the Study of Strategy and Statecraft


• Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (Routledge, 2002), Chapters 1-2, pp. 3-55, and Chapters 4-7, pp. 99-263

September 28: George Washington, Hamilton, and Jefferson

• Alexander Hamilton, The “Camillus” Essays 22 July 1795–9 January 1796
• Letter from James Madison, Opposing Jay Treaty, August 23, 1795, https://cdn.loc.gov/service/mss/mjm/05/05_1026_1030.pdf
• Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy*, pp. 115-136
• Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776*, pp. 15-56

October 5: John Quincy Adams

• Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776*, pp. 57-75

October 12: Abraham Lincoln and William Seward
- Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, [http://www.gettysburg.com/bog/address.htm](http://www.gettysburg.com/bog/address.htm)

**October 19: Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson**
- Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 29-55, 218-245

**October 26: Franklin D. Roosevelt**
- Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 369-422
- Warren Kimball, *Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman*, pp. 3-20
- Mark Stoler, ‘The Roosevelt foreign policy: flawed, but superior to the competition,’ in Justus D. Doenecke, Mark A. Stoler *Debating Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Foreign Policies, 1933-1945*
- Waldo Heinrichs, “President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Intervention in the Battle of the Atlantic, 1941,” *Diplomatic History* 10, 4 (October 1986), pp. 311-332
- Address to Congress on the Yalta Conference, *March 1, 1945* [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16591](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16591)

**November 2: Dean Acheson and George Kennan**
- John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, pp. 24-87
- Skim chapters 11-14 of Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (2011), pp. 225-336. The idea is to get a sense of Kennan the person and to understand how some of his ideas were formulated “in real time.”
- Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department*, chapters 2-4, 8, 12,15, 18, 22, 24-26, 39, 41, 44-46
November 9: Henry Kissinger

- Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 674-732

November 16: Reagan

- Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy*, pp. 102-144
- Westminster speech, 8 June 1982, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7tpKDQH9nE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7tpKDQH9nE)
- Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, chapter 30

November 30: Bush and Obama

December 7: The Policymaker’s Perspective