

HIST 251, A HISTORY OF AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS

Dr. Robert K. Brigham

Fall 2021

Office: Swift 308

Class: TR, 1:30-2:45pm

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1:30-3:00pm & by appointment

Course Description:

This course examines the foreign relations of the United States from the 19th century to the present day emphasizing the motivations, objectives, and tactics of U.S. policy makers. The course will focus on America's role in the Spanish-American War; its embroilment in two world wars; its Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union; its wars in Korea and Vietnam; its response to human rights abuses and mass atrocities; and its leadership in the global war on terror.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Each student is required to write: a short essay on empire (800 words) and a 3,000-word research paper; and a final essay. Students will also participate in a simulation on the Cuban Missile Crisis. In addition, students are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and participate in discussion. I require that all students read the College's *Originality and Attribution: A Guide for Student Writers at Vassar College* before the second day of class.

Attendance and Participation	20%
Empire Essay, due 9/21	15%
Simulation, 11/11	10%
Research Paper, due 12/7	35%
Final Essay, due 12/16	20%

Required Textbooks

The following books are required reading and available at the Vassar College Store:

Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Harvard, 2018). ISBN# 978-0674986770.

Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Harvard, 2011). ISBN# 97806774062054.

Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances* (Princeton, 2013). ISBN#978-0691157924.

Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism* (North Carolina, 2006). ISBN#978-0807855089.

Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Harvard, 2016). ISBN# 978 0674660342.

Empire Essay, Due 9/21:

Historian Kristin Hoganson argues that the United States went to war with Spain to rescue the United States from the “softness” that came to its shores as a partial result of the industrial revolution. She also believes that American men found imperialism attractive because it destroyed the traps of leisure and surplus capital. In an argumentative essay of 800 words (typed, double spaced) please discuss Hoganson’s thesis drawing from her essay and your other readings/discussion on empire. No outside research is needed.

Simulations, 11/11:

Each student will participate in a simulation of the ExComm meetings surrounding the Cuban Missile Crisis. Students will work in groups to best represent the various options policy makers faced and assess the reasons why the Kennedy administration chose the path that it did. The simulation will be based on group PowerPoint presentations, just as a national security meeting would be today.

Research Paper, Due 12/9:

Research papers must be 3,000 words in length (typed and double-spaced with pages numbered). Papers should have a clearly defined thesis and should demonstrate each student's proficiency in handling primary materials. The paper must have endnotes or footnotes and a bibliography. Historians consult Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Fifth Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) or *The Chicago Manual of Style*, Thirteenth Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) for proper bibliographic and note form.

Students should select a topic as soon as possible to facilitate library needs. I suggest that you each meet with me early in the semester to discuss your topics and possible sources.

History is an art as well as a science. Seek stylistic grace and use attractive, as well as proper, English. You should apply all the standard rules of good writing. Nearly all historians can benefit considerably and quickly by buying and using White and Strunk's, *The Elements of Style*. A single evening with this little book will pay large, long-range returns. May I also suggest that students read Anthony Brundage's *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing* and Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, eds., *The Modern Researcher*.

The final essay is a take-home assignment due December 16, 2021.

Originality and Attribution:

- 9/21:**
Required Reading: **The World of Woodrow Wilson**
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65381>
- 9/23:**
Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I*
- 9/28:**
Required Reading: **The Failed Peace**
“The Covenant of the League of Nations”
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp
- 9/30:**
Required Reading: **Coming of the Second World War**
Franklin Roosevelt on Lend-Lease at <https://fdrlibrary.org/lend-lease>
and Franklin Roosevelt, “Fire Side Chat on Arsenal of Democracy,” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPwJIswbDk0>
- 10/5:**
Required Reading: **The Second World War**
Franklin Roosevelt, “Progress of the War,” at:
<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/february-23-1942-fireside-chat-20-progress-war>
- 10/7:**
Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances*.
- 10/12:**
Required Reading: **Origins of the Cold War**
“The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” by X *Foreign Affairs* 25 (July 1947): 566-582. <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/kennan.html>
- 10/14:**
Required Reading: **Truman and the National Security State**
“The Truman Doctrine”
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/truman-doctrine>
- 10/19 and 10/21**
Fall Break
- 10/26:**
Required Reading: **Ike’s New Look**
Richard Immerman, “Eisenhower and Dulles: Who Made the Decisions,” *Political Psychology* 1 (Autumn 1979): 21-38. JSTOR.
- 10/28:**
Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*
- 11/2:**
Required Reading: **Modernization**
Nick Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *American Historical Review*, v. 112, no. 2 (April 2007). JSTOR
- 11/4:**
Required Reading: **Kennedy’s Flexible Response**
“Kennedy’s Inaugural Address”
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/kennedy.htm>
- 11/9:**
The Cuban Missile Crisis

- Required Reading: <http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Cuban-Missile-Crisis.aspx> and <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/>
- 11/11:** **Simulation, ExComm Meetings over Cuba**
- 11/16:** **The Vietnam War, 1950-1968**
 Required Reading: “The Wars for Vietnam” at “Rusk-McNamara Report to Kennedy, November 11, 1961” at <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/doc7.html>; “The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, August 1964,” at <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/doc9.html>; “McGeorge Bundy Memo to President Johnson, February 7, 1965,” at <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/doc10.html>.
- 11/18:** **The Vietnam War, 1968-1975**
 Required Reading: “President Nixon’s Speech to the American Public, November 3, 1969,” at <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/doc14.html> and “Excerpts from the Paris Peace Accord,” at <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/doc16.html> and Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*.
- 11/23:** **Library Day**
- 11/25:** **No Class**
- 11/30:** **Carter, The Human Rights President?**
 Required reading: Debbie Sharnak, “[“Sovereignty and Human Rights: Re-examining Carter’s Foreign Policy Towards the Third World,”](#) *Diplomacy & Statecraft* (June 2014): 303-330. Handout.
- 12/2:** **The Reagan Offensive**
 Required Reading: James Wilson, “How Grand Was Reagan’s Strategy?” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 18 (December 2007): 773-803. Handout.
- 12/7:** **Enlargement and Engagement**
 Required Reading: Richard Haas, “Fatal Distraction: Bill Clinton’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 108 (Autumn 1997): 112-123. JSTOR and Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide,” *The Atlantic* (September 2001)
<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200109/power-genocide>

[Research Paper Due]

Final Essay due December 16, 2021.

For Research Papers:

Getting Started: The Planning and Thinking Process

1. Think carefully about the question you have chosen to answer. Are there complexities in the question that you can use to enrich your approach?
2. You should always begin with the text/documents before answering a question. Reread the text/documents or at least all the portions that seem significant to the question; chances are you will catch far more the second time around and it will improve your paper. Never try to write the paper first and find quotes to “force into it” for so-called proof.
3. You should always create some kind of an outline, even if it is no more than a bunch of concepts and quotes scribbled down with arrows connecting them. Few people can write a coherent, let alone compelling, paper without knowing their thesis and the points they will discuss ahead of time.
4. Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. You will often make discoveries while you are writing the first draft. Go back and rewrite so that your argument provides a unifying frame for the paper. Always draw on the documents to support your argument. Highlight that this is what you are doing. For example, “In a 1961 White House position paper, the Kennedy administration argued...”
5. You must properly cite any quotations, ideas, or concepts that are not your own. Any deviation from this practice is a breach of academic integrity. You are required to read the College's "Originality and Attribution" before writing your paper and must follow proper citation form outlined in Turabian or the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
6. Pick a topic that interests you. You will have to live with this subject for a number of weeks.

Style Issues

- 1) A strong and concise (but not vague) introduction with a clear thesis statement is the best way to engage your reader from the start. It also helps you to focus your thoughts. You need not have a perfect introduction before writing the body. A working introduction and thesis will do fine so long as you go back and flesh it out later. In fact, it is a good idea to rethink the introduction once the paper is complete; the initial plan does not always match the end result.
- 2) Avoid “mega paragraphs,” especially in the introduction. Treat each paragraph as the development of a single idea, or as one facet of a larger concept. The problem with very long paragraphs is that they quickly lose focus, and the point of the paragraph gets lost. If a paragraph is more than a half a page long, chances are, it is too long.
- 3) Use concise language. Omit needless words and phrases. A happy reader is more likely to be persuaded. Delete such phrases as “It has always been true...” “It is clear that...” “The fact was that...” You can improve your prose by cutting adverbs. This rule is often very clearly, evidently, and completely true. If this is a problem for you, do a word search for

“very” and “ly” and check each adverb. Do you need it? Absolutely? Some people like to use adjectives in pairs: “Schelling’s limited war theory was exciting and thrilling to Kennedy’s advisors.” If the two adjectives are synonyms, omit one.

- 4) Simplify. Many Vassar students tend to “overwrite.” That is, they use academic jargon (ten dollar words) when simple, straightforward language (ten cent words) is best.
- 5) Avoid passive voice. Check all “to be verbs.” The best way to do this is to read the paper in draft form carefully. We want strong verbs. Check each one.
- 6) In general, historians write in the past tense about events and present tense about authors. Do not switch tenses. See me if you are confused.
- 7) Watch out for dangling modifiers. These will never help you. For example, “Loading their weapons, the trees hid thousands of Communist soldiers.” You must place the modifying clause (loading their weapons) beside its subject (soldiers). Also be sure that the subject is clear when you start your sentence with a pronoun.
- 8) Generally, commas go inside quotations marks and footnotes go outside. The exception is semicolons and colons: they go outside quotation marks. If one clause of a sentence is dependent (like this one), separate the clauses with a comma. In other cases (like this) each clause could stand on its own as a complete sentence; in such cases use a semicolon or a colon, not a comma.
- 9) Possessives. If you can replace “it’s” with “it is” and the sentence makes sense, use an apostrophe. Otherwise, use “its.” When something is owned, use an apostrophe.
- 10) Spell check and proofread. You should have no mistakes in any paper you hand as your best academic work. Spell checks are limited. “Ill right thee paper too day.” “Four egg sample, it did nut cash any off this problems.” Read aloud to listen for awkward phrasings and rhythm.
- 11) Citations. For a book in a footnote: George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 2-34. Second citation of the same work, Herring, *America’s Longest War*, p. 23. For a journal: George C. Herring, “The Vietnam War Revisited,” *Journal of American History* 23 (Summer 1997): 876-877. For a newspaper: *The New York Times*, 30 April 1975, p. 2. Government documents are specific. See me for help with these. Underline book titles, journal titles, and newspaper titles.

Research Sources

State Department’s Foreign Relations of the United States
http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/frus.html

The Department of Defense Archives
<http://www.defense.gov/pubs/archive.html>

The National Security Archives
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/>

Diplomatic History, the journal of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-7709>
Also available in the Library at E183.7.D48

The Encyclopedia of Human Rights is available on line at the Vassar College Library
<http://www.oxford-humanrights.com/?authstatuscode=202>

Woodrow Wilson Center, Cold War International History Project
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409

Miller Center for Public Affairs
<http://millercenter.org/>

The Thomas Jefferson Papers
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/

John Quincy Adams Presidential Papers
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/john_quincy_adams.php

Papers of Woodrow Wilson
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/woodrow_wilson.php

Herbert Hoover Presidential Library
<http://hoover.archives.gov/>

Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/>

Harry Truman Presidential Library
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/>

Dwight Eisenhower Presidential Library
<http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/>

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library
<http://www.jfklibrary.org/>

Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library
<http://www.lbjlibrary.org/>

Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library
<http://nixon.archives.gov/>

Gerald Ford Presidential Library
<http://www.ford.utexas.edu/>

Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
<http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/>

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
<http://www.reaganlibrary.com/>

George H.W. Bush Presidential Library
<http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/>

William J. Clinton Presidential Library
<http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/>