THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Political Science Department

Political Science 284/495
American Grand Strategy
Winter 2019

Instructor: John Mearsheimer
TAs: Andrea Bartoletti, Alexandra Chinchilla, Maura Cremin, Andres Uribe

Course Description: This course examines the evolution of American grand strategy since 1900, when the United States first emerged on the world stage as a great power. The focus will be on assessing how its leaders have thought over time about: 1) which areas of the world are worth fighting and dying for, 2) when it is necessary to fight in those strategically important areas, and 3) what kinds of military forces are needed for deterrence and war-fighting in those regions. Attention will be paid to issues such as America's entry into World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War; the influence of America's location in the Western Hemisphere on its grand strategy; the superpower competition in the Cold War; the strategies of containment, massive retaliation and flexible response; the impact of domestic politics on US grand strategy; the relationship between America's economic and military position in the world system; the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of al Qaeda on US grand strategy; international politics during the unipolar moment (1990-2016); the future of America’s Cold War alliances; the Bush Doctrine; the emerging multipolar system; and whether China is likely to rise peacefully.

Course Requirements: This course is oriented around the readings and the lectures. It is expected that every student will do all the reading and attend every lecture. Moreover, each student will be expected to attend a discussion section once a week. The grade will be based on a comprehensive final examination (75%) and classroom participation in the discussion section (25%).

Readings and Books: The books below are in paperback and available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore:

- George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, expanded ed. (Chicago)
- Russell Frank Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Indiana)

All articles, unpublished papers, and book chapters with ** next to them are on Canvas.

Course Outline:

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1. January 7, 2014 (Monday): Organizational Meeting and Overview

2. January 9 (Wednesday): Defining Grand Strategy

PART II: AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY, 1900–1945

   -- Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea* (Yale, 2009), chap. 5. **


5. January 21 (Monday): No class – MLK Day

6. January 23 (Wednesday): Isolationism, 1900–1941

7. January 28 (Monday): World War II
   -- Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, “Plan Dog” memorandum (Nov. 12, 1940). **
   -- Weigley, *American Way of War*, part 4

PART III: AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY, 1945–1989

8. January 30 (Wednesday): Containment
   -- Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” in *American Diplomacy*.


10. February 6 (Wednesday): The Early Cold War

11. February 11 (Monday): The Third World
12. February 13 (Wednesday): The Vietnam War–I

-- Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War* (Univ. of California, 1999), chap. 12. **

13. February 18 (Monday): The Vietnam War–II


14. February 20 (Wednesday): The Persian Gulf


15. February 25 (Monday): Unipolarity and “The End of History”


16. February 27 (Wednesday): Is Unipolarity Peaceful?


17. March 4 (Monday): The Pursuit of Liberal Hegemony


18. March 6 (Wednesday): The Terrorist Threat


**PART V: AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY, 2017-2019**

**19. March 11 (Monday): The Return of Great Power Politics**


**20. March 13 (Wednesday): Can China Rise Peacefully?**