Course mission: to explain and evaluate past and present United States foreign policies. What caused the United States' past involvement in foreign wars and interventions? Were the results of U.S. policies good or bad? Would other policies have better served the U.S. and/or the wider world? Were the beliefs that guided U.S. policy true or false? If false, what explains these misperceptions? General theories that bear on the causes and consequences of American policy will be applied to explain and evaluate past and present policies.

The history of United States foreign policy in the 20th century is covered in detail. Functional topics are also covered: U.S. military policy, U.S. foreign economic policy, and U.S. policy on human rights and democracy overseas. Finally, we will predict and prescribe for the future: what policies should the U.S. adopt toward current crises—e.g., in the Balkans, the Taiwan Straits, Central Africa, and the former Soviet Union? What should be the U.S. stance on global environmental and human rights questions?

This is a HASS Communications Intensive course, and so helps fulfill the HASS CI requirement. Communications intensive subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences require at least 20 pages of writing divided among 3-5 assignments. Of these 3-5 assignments, at least one should be revised and resubmitted. HASS CI subjects further offer students substantial opportunity for oral expression, through presentations, student-led discussions, or class participation. In order to guarantee sufficient attention to student writing and substantial opportunity for oral expression, the maximum number of students per section in a HASS CI subject is 18, except in the case of a subject taught without sections (where the faculty member in charge is the only instructor). In that case, enrollments can rise to 25, if a writing fellow is attached to the subject.

This is an undergraduate course, but is open to graduate students.

Format and Requirements: Class format: two 1-hour general meetings and one 1-hour discussion section meeting per week. Class starts promptly at 11:05, ends at 11:55. Grades are based on section participation (15%), two 8-page papers (40%), final exam (30%), and two quizzes (15%). Students must also complete three ungraded response papers that react to class readings or lectures. The five writing assignments will total 20 pages. One of the 8-page papers must be submitted in draft for comments for rewrite. There will be a public speaking exercise in section. Sections will include 10 students or fewer. Thus this course conforms to the mechanical requirements for all HASS communication-intensive courses.

* Discussion sections: students are expected to complete required readings before section and to attend section regularly. Section attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absence from section will be penalized. Sections will include a public speaking exercise, in the format of "congressional hearings" where you are asked to frame and defend to the group a viewpoint on a foreign policy issue.

* Papers: students will write two short ungraded response papers that react to course readings and lectures, and two longer papers on questions arising from the course material. The two response papers each will be two pages long (doublespaced—not 1.5 spaced, please). The longer papers will be 8 pages. One 8-page paper assignment asks you to explain a past case of American conduct—what accounts for American behavior? A second 8-page assignment asks you to evaluate a past American policy: was the policy appropriate, or would another policy have produced better results?
The first ungraded response paper is due the week of Sept. 24-28; the second is due the week of Oct. 15-19. The first 8-page paper is due at 11:00 a.m. (class time) on Thursday, November 8. The second is due at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 4. Your TAs are willing to comment on rough drafts of your papers. Moreover, we require that you submit a draft of at least one of your 8-page papers before its due date in order to get comments for rewrite. So, please leave yourself time to get comments on drafts of the 8-page papers from your TAs before you submit final drafts.

Your two response papers should advance an argument about the reading or lectures. Your argument can dispute argument(s) advanced in the reading or lectures; can concur with argument(s) advanced in the reading or lecture; can assess or explain policies or historical events described in the reading and lectures; or can relate current events in the press today to ideas or events in the readings or lectures. We encourage evaluation of policies or ideas covered in the reading or lecture. Are they right or wrong? Good or bad? Somewhere in your paper--preferably at the beginning--please offer a 1-2 sentence summary of your argument. Both papers should be about two typed pages (double spaced, with standard one-inch margins on left, right, top and bottom). They will not be graded but are mandatory and must be completed to receive full credit for class participation.

Late papers will be penalized unless extensions are granted well in advance of the paper deadline. Extensions will not be granted except in emergency situations.

Your papers may be improved by keeping up with current international affairs during the semester. Three publications offer especially excellent coverage: the New York Times, the Economist (a weekly), and the Far Eastern Economic Review (also a weekly).

Your papers and public speaking may also be improved by seeking help from MIT's writing and Communications Center (14N-317, 253-3090, http://web.mit.edu/writing). They give good writing advice and have useful practice facilities for public speaking. * Quizzes: two short (15 minute) quizzes will be given. Quiz dates are October 4 (Thursday) and November 15 (Thursday). Three short (define-and-identify) questions will be asked on each quiz.

* Final exam: a list of study questions will be circulated before the final. The final exam questions will be drawn from this list. Students are encouraged to study together to prepare their answers. The final will also include short-answer questions that will not be distributed in advance.

* Films: the 17.40 film society. Two optional evening film-showings will be organized during the term. Films on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War will be shown. Dates and places TBA.

Books to purchase, available at the MIT COOP bookstore:


Robert F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis (1971)

These books are also on reserve at Dewey library (building E-53, on Wadsworth Street). All other readings will be available as photocopied course notes, and can be purchased from the Technology Copy Center, in the basement of building E-52 (also on Wadsworth Street).

Also at the Coop, in the section for another course (17.432), should be a book that will improve your papers:

Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and

Turabian is not required for 17.40 but you will want to own a copy. She has the basic rules for how to format footnotes, etc. Learn and obey them.

Readings in books available in the COOP bookstore are denoted below with a "B"; coursenotes readings are denoted below with a "CN"; readings that are handed out in class are denoted below with an "H".

Some of the "further reading" (see p. 9, below) are on reserve at Dewey library, for your consultation should you want to do further reading for your paper assignments. These are denoted with a pound ("#") sign.

Assigned readings average 85 pages per week over 14 weeks. However, note that readings are heavier for some weeks. You should plan ahead and budget your time so you can complete the heavy readings.