There is theory, and then there is practice. It is relatively easy to develop theories, strategies, explanations, constructs, or simple rules-of-thumb for conducting foreign policy. It is quite another thing to know which of these abstract options is the optimal choice. What is the best way for the United States to advance its interests in the world? How does the U.S. deal with Iran? North Korea? Sub-Saharan Africa? Which strategy is the right one? Are the best short-term options consistent with long-term goals? Should material interests alone guide policymakers, or should ethical and humanitarian impulses be factored in?

There’s another problem. Even if a policymaker could divine the optimal foreign policy response, there’s the small matter of executing it. What if the policy is imperfectly implemented? How do domestic, bureaucratic, and cognitive constraints affect policymaking decisions?

The goal of this course is to offer a greater understanding about the politics of the policymaking process. A good policymaker must have the analytic tools necessary to respond to external events or forward the national interest. That alone is insufficient, however. There are two other components to the crafting of foreign policy. First, the policymaker must have a grasp of the domestic and bureaucratic environment in which policy is being crafted, and recognize how that environment affects both private and public actions. Second, the policymaker must also learn the various “dark arts” associated with the policymaking process. The most brilliant foreign policy architect in the world will have no influence unless s/he can make a coherent presentation at a National Security Council briefing, a congressional hearing, or write a concise but accurate briefing paper.

To that end, this course is designed to test the analytic portion of policymaking as well as the interpersonal skills needed to further one’s views. There will be a series of exercises designed to test your mettle in different policy settings – and you will be graded on your performance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I expect the following if you take this class:

- You will keep abreast of current events in American foreign policy. This includes reading a daily newspaper or three (the New York Times, Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor, Financial Times, Wall Street Journal, etc.) plus the Economist.
- In class, you will turn off or mute your cell phone – and any other electronic device that makes noise. If your phone rings in class, I will make you sing a song of my choosing – and bear in mind I have a soft spot for maudlin ballads.
I expect your full participation. This means you should have read the assigned material before the class date. I place a high degree of importance on class participation. This does not mean talking for talking's sake, it means making incisive observations that display original thinking. Oh, and I will call on you on occasion, just to be mean.

Your grade will be based on the following:

- **A policy options memo.** You will be asked to revise the policy options memorandum outlining possible policy options to deal with a problem of my choosing. The memo should delineate all of the feasible options, assess their likelihood of success, and offer a clear set of actionable recommendations. Your analysis will be based on information you have gleaned from the first part of the class. This will be a reworking of your original options paper – but now you will need to weigh and assess the problems of policy implementation and political support. You will get two cuts at this – and combined, they will count for 50% of your grade.

- **In-class simulation and class participation.** There will be multiple exercises to simulate real policymaking activities: congressional testimony, mock NSC briefings, Sunday morning talk shows, etc. These will include a mixture of both written and performance elements. These exercises – plus your overall in-class participation – will count for 30% of your grade.

- **An op-ed on an issue of your choosing.** This exercise will count for 15% of your grade. **NOTE:** this does not have to be on the same topic as your op-ed from last semester.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**


1) **Introductory class (1/20)**

2) **Who are the policy gatekeepers? (1/25)**


**PART I: SYSTEMIC CONSTRAINTS**

1) **When does the system matter? (1/27)**

Gerry C. Alons, “Predicting a State’s Foreign Policy: State Preferences between Domestic and International Constraints,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 3 (July 2007), 211–232.


**PART II: DOMESTIC POLITICS**

1) **Public opinion (2/1)**


2) American public opinion (2/3)


3) Legislatures (2/8)


4) Congress (2/10)


5) **Foreign Policy and the Law (2/17)**

Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency*, all


2/22: **POLICY SIMULATION I: MOCK CONGRESSIONAL HEARING**

6) **Pluralism and Interest Group Politics (2/24)**


7) **Case study: The Israel Lobby (3/1)**


8) **Ideas, experts and policy entrepreneurs (3/3-3/10)**


George, *Bridging the Gap*, pp. 115-146.


**3/10: ENTREPRENEURIAL OP-ED DUE**

**PART II: THE ORGANIZATION OF POLICYMAKING**

9) **Bureaucratic politics (3/15-3/29)**


**3/17: GUEST LECTURER: Charli Carpenter**

**3/31-4/5: POLICY SIMULATION I: MOCK CRISIS SIMULATIONS**

10) **The psychology of the policymaking process (4/12-4/14)**

Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, selected chapters


### PART III. Today’s policy debates

1. **Climate change: (4/19)**

   ADD READINGS

   **4/21: POLICY SIMULATION II: MEET THE PRESS**

2. **The ethics of statecraft (4/26-4/28)**

   SPECIAL MOVIE SESSION, EVENING OF 4/26


   **4/30: POLICY OPTIONS PAPER REDUX DUE**