

**America First?**  
**President Trump and the Future**  
**of American Foreign Policy**  
**Spring 2020**

Professor Chris Gibson  
202 Schapiro Hall  
Telephone: X2612  
Email: [cpg2@williams.edu](mailto:cpg2@williams.edu)  
Office Hours: Mon/Thur 2:30-5pm and by appt

Professor James McAllister  
230 Schapiro Hall  
X2572  
[jmcallis@williams.edu](mailto:jmcallis@williams.edu)  
Thursday: 2-4pm and by appt

### **Course Description**

"America First" was a slogan and a perspective on foreign policy adopted by isolationists like Charles Lindbergh in the 1930's. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor and the Second World War, a strong bipartisan consensus emerged around the principles of liberal internationalism and isolationist/unilateralist perspectives were marginalized in American foreign policy. Appreciating this historical context is essential to understanding President Trump's highly controversial approach to world politics. With his election in November 2016, the American presidency is now in the hands of someone who proudly claims the "America First" mantle. As the course unfolds, students will develop a keen understanding of the contrast between the views of Trump and those of the American foreign policy establishment over issues such as NATO & Russia, China, North Korea, conflicts in the Middle East, nuclear proliferation, immigration and trade, terrorism, and the future of American grand strategy and leadership in the world.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Our expectations of you are especially high. The pedagogical design of this seminar is highly interactive. Achieving the course learning objectives relies heavily on your extensive preparation and participation in class. Students should only enroll if they are prepared to work hard, focus and meaningfully participate in seminar discussions. Towards that end, here are the course requirements:

**a. Class Participation.** 20% of final grade.

We will have 13 class meetings. The first will be 20-25 minutes long and organizational in nature. By the end of that meeting students will understand the structure and requirements for the course. That will be followed by 12 substantive meetings. These classes will meet on Monday evenings for 2 hours and 40 minutes (with a 10 minute break at the midpoint). ***We expect that students will spend at least 6 hours each week preparing*** for our Monday sessions. Each week a number of students will present on the readings (see next requirement for more information) ***and the rest of the class will be expected to engage meaningfully in discussion, reacting to the***

*student presentations, assessing and evaluating the readings (this is your 30% class participation grade).* Students will also have a formal counseling session with the instructors prior to spring break to receive feedback on their class participation (including their grade for Class Participation I which will constitute 10% of the final grade) in the course up to that point. Class Participation II will be worth 10% of the final grade and will be assessed following completion of all seminar meetings.

**b) 2x Commentaries on the readings/facilitating class discussion.** 20% of final grade.

When presenting on the readings (each student will present on the readings twice during the semester), students will write an 800 - 1,000 word analytical essay (op-ed length) critically analyzing the reading in relation to the week's focus *and then discuss their piece with the class.* Your piece should react to the readings, containing an overall thesis and a significant argument (one that is not obvious or trivial). Your paper should *not* summarize or describe the assigned reading. It must be turned in via email or hard copy by noon so we have a chance to read it prior to class.

**c) Mid-term Analytical Essay.** 25% of final grade.

Each student will submit a 2500-word analytical essay due high noon, Thursday, March 19th. The prompt will be handed out at the conclusion of Lesson 4. This will be a thought piece requiring you to engage with the readings and demonstrate an understanding of the previous traditions in US grand strategy that President Trump is consciously rejecting. The essay will cover all the course material up to that point.

**d) Final Analytical Essay.** 35% of final grade.

Each student will submit a 3000-word analytical essay due at high noon, Wednesday, May 20th. The prompt for that will be handed out at the conclusion of Lesson 10. This will be a comprehensive thought piece requiring you to engage with the readings, synthesizing and evaluating aspects of President Trump's Grand Strategy.

**Teaching Assistant:** Michael Gibson-Prugh is the TA for the class. He can be reached at [mdg4@williams.edu](mailto:mdg4@williams.edu)

## **Required Materials**

There are no required books assigned in this course. The instructors and TA will distribute the course packets in class. We will not be using the packet room. Part 1 and 2 will be distributed at the organizational meeting.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Feb 5: Organizational Meeting**

**Feb 10: Lesson 1 American Grand Strategy: Constitutional Foundations and the original expression of “America First”**

Mark Landler, “Trump, the insurgent, breaks with 70 years of American foreign policy,” *NY Times*, December 28, 2017.

Walter Russell Mead, “The Jacksonian Tradition in American Foreign Policy.”

Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy?* Preface and Introduction.

Amy Zeigart, “A Foreign Policy for the Future.”

Richard Kohn, “The Constitution and National Security: The Intent of the Framers.”

Russell Weigley, “The Federalists and the Jeffersonians,” *The American Way of War*, pps. 40-55.

*Declaration of Independence*

President George Washington, “Farewell Address.”

President James Monroe, “The Monroe Doctrine.”

Chris Gibson, “Principled Realism and the Monroe Doctrine.”

“James K. Polk & Manifest Destiny.”

President Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address.”

President Theodore Roosevelt, “State of the Union Message” December 3, 1901. selected passages

President Theodore Roosevelt, “Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine,” (selected passages), December 6, 1904.

Tom Parker, “The Realistic Roosevelt,” *The National Interest*, September 1, 2004.

\*Discussants/Analytical Essay

Is Grand Strategy possible and is President Trump reconstructing it? (Maria)

US Grand Strategy during the Founding Era (Washington thru Madison): What was it and was it successful? (Michael)

US Grand Strategy in the 19th Century (Monroe to Lincoln): In relation to the Founding era was this continuity or change? Explain. (Jackson)

President Teddy Roosevelt and US Grand Strategy: In relation to the Founding era was this continuity or change? Explain. (Riley)

### **Feb 17: Lesson 2 American Global Leadership: Liberal Internationalism from Wilson to Trump**

Ted Widmer, “Long Echoes of War and Speech,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2014.

G. John Ikenberry et al., *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy* (2009), pp. 10-20. A broad overview of the principles of Wilsonianism.

G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan* (2011), pp.159-193.

Patrick Porter, “A World Imagined: Nostalgia and Liberal Order,” *CATO Institute* (June 2018), pp. 1-21.

Kori Schake, “The Trump Doctrine is Winning and the Rest of the World is Losing,” *New York Times*, June 15, 2018.

Daniel Deudney and John Ikenberry, “Liberal World: The Resilient Order,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/Aug 2018), pp. 16-24.

Elbridge Colby and A. Wess Mitchell, “The Age of Great Power Competition,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2020), pp.118-130.

(Students: Erin, Ezekiel, Matt, Jakob)

### **Feb 24: Lesson 3 Republican Establishment Foreign Policy: Conservatives (Reagan) and Neoconservatives (Bush 43).**

President Ronald Reagan, “First Inaugural Address.”

President Ronald Reagan’s address to the nation on the situation in Poland, (December 1981).

President Ronald Reagan, “SDI speech.”

President Ronald Reagan, “pre-Geneva speech (1985)”

President Ronald Reagan, “Berlin Wall speech”

President Ronald Reagan’s Farewell address.

Brad Plumer, "Congress tried to fix immigration back in 1986. Why did it fail?" *Washington Post*, January 30, 2013.

Chris Gibson, *Rally Point*, pps. 19-25, 35, 58-59.

Stephen F. Knott, "Reagan's Critics," *The National Interest*, Summer 1996.

Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "Who Won the Cold War," *Foreign Policy*, no. 87 (Summer 1992). pps. 123-138.

President George W. Bush, "Axis of Evil address"

President George W. Bush, "Saddam and his sons have 48 hours speech"

Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, chapter 20 "Towards a New Strategy."

Phillip G. Henderson, "Anatomy of a National Security Fiasco: The Bush Administration, Iraq and Groupthink."

David Sanger, "50 G.O.P. Officials Warn Donald Trump Would Put Nation's Security 'at Risk'," *New York Times*, 8 August 2016.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/is-trump-ending-the-american-era/537888/> (eliot cohen)

\*Discussants/Analytical Essay

Approaches to the Cold War in 1980s: President Reagan versus the Establishment/Detente: who was right? (Rocco and William Jeffries. One discussant will argue for Reagan and one will argue for the Establishment)

President Bush 43's grand strategy of "Preemption" - Is President Trump's criticism of neo-conservatism warranted? (William Kingham)

The Establishment Strikes Back: Who do you agree with Cohen & Sanger or President Trump? (Melissa)

## **Mar 2: Lesson 4 What Went Wrong? The Nationalist Critique of Globalism and the Return of an "America First" Grand Strategy**

Jeff Greenfield, "Trump is Pat Buchanan With Better Timing," *Politico* (September/October 2016).

Patrick Buchanan, *The Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025* (2011), Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 11.

Peter Baker, “‘Use That Word!’ Trump Embraces the Nationalist Label,” *New York Times*, October 23, 2018.

Donald Trump, “Speech at Center for National Interest,” April 27, 2016.

Donald Trump, *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again* (2015), Chapters 3-4.

“Remarks by President Trump to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,” September 25, 2019.

Randall Schweller, “Three Cheers for Trump’s Foreign Policy: What the Establishment Misses,” *Foreign Affairs* (Sept/Oct 2018), pp. 133-143.

Tom McTague, “Donald Trump Stumbles Into a Foreign-Policy Triumph,” *The Atlantic*, January 17, 2020.

Robert Blackwill, “Trump Deserves More Credit for his Foreign Policies,” May 7, 2019.

Andrew Bacevich, “Saving America First: What Responsible Nationalism Looks Like,” *Foreign Affairs* (Sept/Oct 2017), pp. 57-67.

Jeff Colgan and Robert Keohane, “The Liberal Order is Rigged: Fix it Now or Watch it Wither,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2017), pp. 36-44.

(Ella, Devon, Alexis, John)

### **March 9: Lesson 5 Trump and Obama: Democratic Foreign and National Security Policy in the Obama Era and After**

Jeffrey Goldberg, “A Senior White House Official Defines the Trump Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, June 11, 2018.

Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic* (April 2016).

President Barack Obama, “Speech at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony,” May 28, 2014.

Gideon Rose, “What Obama Gets Right,” *Foreign Affairs* (Sept/Oct 2015), pp. 2-12.

Bret Stephens, “What Obama Gets Wrong,” *Foreign Affairs* (Sept/Oct 2015), pp.13-16.

Stephen Walt, "Barack Obama Was a Foreign-Policy Failure," *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2017.

Jamelle Bouie, "Sanders Has an Advantage, and It's Not About Economics," *New York Times*, February 21, 2019.

Bernie Sanders, "Speech at Westminster College," September 21, 2017.

Elizabeth Warren, "A Foreign Policy for All," *Foreign Affairs* (Jan/Feb 2019), pp. 50-61.

David Milne, "Obama's Foreign Policy is Winning the 2020 Democratic Primary," *Foreign Policy*, January 22, 2020.

Michael Brenes, "Pete Buttigieg is No Foreign Policy Maverick," December 18, 2019.

Thomas Wright, "Buttigieg Splits from the Progressives on Foreign Policy," June 13, 2019.

Joe Biden, "Why America Must Lead Again: Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump," *Foreign Affairs*, January 23, 2020.

(Zia, Maddy, Lucy, Elliot)

**March 16: Lesson 6 Trump & the Domestic sources of Grand Strategy: Trade, Jobs, Immigration, Refugees, Border Security, Homeland Security, and the debate on Climate Change (Gibson)**

**Note: Mid-term essay due on March 19th**

**Individual counseling sessions: Tuesday 9am - 12:00 noon and 1pm-5pm and Thursday 9am - 12:00 noon and 3pm - 5pm**

President Donald Trump, "America First: National Security Strategy," selected passages. December 2017.

Elliott Abrams, "The Trump National Security Strategy," *Council on Foreign Relations* blogpost, December 26, 2017.

Rebecca Friedman Lissner, "The National Security Strategy is not a strategy." *Foreign Affairs*, December 19, 2017.

Mark Landler, "Trump, the insurgent, breaks with 70 years of American foreign policy," *NY Times*, December 28, 2017. (*review this piece from week 1*)

Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Tradition in American Foreign Policy." (*review this piece from Week 1*)

Presidential Candidate Donald Trump, Campaign Kick-off address, June 15, 2015

President Donald Trump, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 2017.

Presidential Candidate Donald Trump, "Make America Wealthy Again," *Politico*, June 28, 2016.

Peter Baker, "Trump Abandons Trans-Pacific Partnership, Obama's Signature Trade Deal," *NY Times*, January 23, 2017.

Patrick J. Buchanan, "An 'America First' Trump Trade Policy," [Buchanan.org](http://Buchanan.org)

Matea Gold, "Paul Ryan warns that the GOP is engaged in a 'fight for the soul of our party' over free market principles," *Washington Post*, August 1, 2016.

Alan Tonelson, "Why Trump is Right to Target China with Tariffs," *The National Interest*, September 23, 2018.

<https://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/why-trump-right-target-china-tariffs-31842>

Trevor Kincaid, "Trump's Tariffs could cripple American farmers," *Reuters*, July 25, 2018.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kincaid-tariffs-commentary-idUSKCN1L81NX>

President Donald Trump, "Speech on pulling out of Paris Climate Accord," *The Hill*, June 1, 2017.

Victor Davis Hanson, "The Anti-Trump Bourbons: Learning and Forgetting Nothing in time for 2020," *American Greatness*, August 14, 2017.

Victor Davis Hanson, "Trump Constructive Chaos," Hoover Institution, October 18, 2017.

Bob Inglis TED Talk on climate

Jason Guerrasio, "Al Gore explains our chances against climate change, and his fateful meeting with Donald Trump," *Business Insider*, July 25, 2017.

Jeffrey Sachs, "Trump's failure to fight climate change is a crime against humanity," *CNN*, November 23, 2018.

Kimberly Amadeo, "Donald Trump on Immigration, Pros and Cons of his policies," *The Balance*, November 26, 2018.

Ann Coulter, "Gutless President in Wall-less Country," posted on [anncoulter.com](http://anncoulter.com), December 19, 2018.

Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, preface and Chapter 1.

\*Discussants/Analytical Essay

Is it good to have a President so highly focused on domestic politics when it comes to making grand strategy decisions; more specifically, is it a good thing to have a President so “transactional” to achieve both re-election and better outcomes for the American people? (Erin and Ezekiel. One discussant will argue “yes” and one discussant will argue “no”)

Is it possible to advance an American First” grand strategy while still being a good steward of the environment? Assess the Trump administration decision to withdraw from the Paris Accord. (Matt)

Is it possible to advance an “America First” grand strategy while bringing the nation together on immigration, refugee policy and border security? Assess the Trump administration on these issues. (Jakob)

**April 6: Lesson 7 Guest Speaker Lieutenant General (retired) H.R. McMaster, former National Security Advisor to President Trump (Gibson)**

Readings: TBD.

April 13: **Lesson 8: Trump, Putin’s Russia, and the Future of NATO (McAllister)**

Michael Crowley, “Putin’s Revenge,” *Politico*, December 16, 2016.

Anne Applebaum, “Putin’s Grand Strategy,” *South Central Review* (Spring 2018), pp. 22-34.

John Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin,” *Foreign Affairs* (Sept/Oct 2014), pp. 77-89.

Michael McFaul, “Russia as it Is: A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/Aug 2018), pp. 82-91.

Doug Bandow, “The West Should Avoid Starting a New Cold War with Russia,” *National Interest* (April 2018), pp. 1-6.

William J. Broad and David Sanger, “Trump Plans for Nuclear Arsenal Require \$ 1.2 Trillion, Congressional Review States,” October 31, 2017.

Brenna Gautam, “Summary of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review,” *Lawfare*, February 9, 2018.

Bret Stephens, “The U.S. Needs More Nukes,” *New York Times*, August 9, 2019.

Ernest Moniz, and Sam Nunn, “The Return of Doomsday,” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2019), pp.150-161.

Julian Barnes and Helene Cooper, “Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. From NATO,” *New York Times*, January 14, 2019.

Michael O’Hanlon, “What Trump Gets Wrong on Burden Sharing,” *Brookings Review*, July 11, 2018.

Charles Kupchan, “NATO is Thriving in Spite of Trump,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 20, 2019.

Barry R. Posen, “Trump Aside, What’s the U.S. Role in NATO,” *New York Times*, March 10, 2019.

Steven Erlanger, “Macron Says NATO is Experiencing ‘Brain Death’ Because of Trump,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2019.

Alina Polyakova and Benjamin Haddad, “Europe Alone: What Comes After the Transatlantic Alliance,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/Aug 2019), pp. 109-120.

(Maria, Michael, Jackson, Riley)

#### **April 20: Lesson 9 Trump and the Middle East (McAllister)**

Jack Thompson, “Trump’s Middle East Policy,” *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, October 2018.

Susan B. Glasser, “Why the Middle East Hated Obama But Loves Trump,” *Politico*, 31 July 2017.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, “A Force for Good: America Reinvigorated in the Middle East,” Speech in Cairo, Egypt, January 10, 2019.

Robert Malley, “The Unwanted Wars: Why the Middle East is More Combustible than Ever,” *Foreign Affairs* (November 2019), pp. 38-46.

Miriam Berger, “Where U.S. Troops are in the Middle East and Afghanistan,” *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2020.

Justin Logan, “Why the Middle East Doesn’t Matter,” *Politico*, October 9, 2014.

Hal Brands, “Why America Can’t Quit the Middle East,” *Hoover Institution*, March 21, 2019.

Seth Cropsey and Gary Roughhead, “A U.S. Withdrawal Will Cause a Power Struggle in the Middle East,” *Foreign Policy*, December 17, 2019.

Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "America's Middle East Purgatory: The Case for Doing Less," *Foreign Affairs* (Jan/Feb 2019), pp. 88-100.

Dexter Filkins, "A Saudi Prince's Quest to Remake the Middle East," *The New Yorker*, April 9, 2018.

Michael Doran and Tony Badran, "Trump is Crude. But He's Right About Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, November 21, 2018.

Mike Pompeo, "Confronting Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Nov/Dec 2018), pp. 60-70.

Colin Kahl, "Pompeo's Dangerous Delusions: What the Trump Administration's Strategy Gets Wrong," *Foreign Affairs*, October 24, 2018.

Michael Doran, "Trump's Ground Game Against Iran," *New York Times*, January 3, 2020.

Brett McGurk, "The Cost of an Incoherent Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, January 22, 2020.

President Donald Trump, "Vision for Peace, Prosperity, and a Brighter Future for Israel and the Palestinian People," January 28, 2020.

Michael Crowley and David Halbfinger, "Trump Releases Mideast Peace Plan that Strongly Favors Israel," *New York Times*, January 28, 2020.

Khaled Elgindy, "Trump's Peace Plan is a Trojan Horse," *Foreign Policy*, January 29, 2020.

(Rocco, William J., William K., Melissa)

#### **April 27: Lesson 10 Trump, China, North Korea, and the Future of Asia (McAllister)**

Evan Osnos, "Making China Great Again," *The New Yorker*, January 8, 2018.

Hal Brands, "The Chinese Century," *The National Interest* (May/June 2018), pp. 35-45.

Michael Beckley, "The United States Should Fear a Faltering China," *Foreign Affairs*, October 28, 2019.

Gordon Chang, "The Great Fall of China," *The National Interest* (March/April 2018), pp. 64-72.

Elizabeth Economy, "China's New Revolution: The Reign of Xi Jinping," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2018), pp.60-74.

Chris Buckley, "China is Detaining Muslims in Vast Numbers," *New York Times*, September 8, 2018.

“Remarks by Vice President Pence on the Administration’s Policy Toward China,” Speech at Hudson Institute, October 4, 2018.

Nicki Haley, “How to Confront an Advancing Threat from China,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 18, 2019.

Graham T. Allison, “Destined for War?” *The National Interest* (May/June 2017), pp. 9-21.

Mark Bowden, “How to Deal with North Korea,” *The Atlantic* (July/August 2017).

Joshua Shiffrin, “Learning to Love Kim’s Bomb,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 3, 2018.

(Zia, Maddy, Lucy, Elliot)

#### **May 4: Lesson 11 President Trump and his Advisors (Gibson)**

Victor Davis Hanson, *The Case for Trump*. selected passages.

Michael Warren, “Inside the McMaster-Bannon War,” *The Weekly Standard*, August 2, 2017.

Natasha Bertrand, “It looks like Bannon’s efforts to oust Trump’s National Security Advisor completely backfired,” *Business Insider*, August 18, 2017.

Penny Star, “Report: Trump and McMaster ‘at odds’ on ‘key national security issues’” *Breitbart*, July 28, 2017.

Maggie Habermann and Matt Stevens, “Sebastian Gorka is forced out as White House Advisor, officials say,” *NY Times*, August 25, 2017.

Maham Abedi, “Nationalism vs. Globalism - Why Trump’s ‘nationalist declaration is worrying people,” *Global News*, October 23, 2018.

Patrick J. Buchanan, “Globalists vs. Nationalists: Who Owns the Future, The American Conservative, March 13, 2018.

David Remnick, “There is no Deep State,” *The New Yorker*, March 20, 2017.

Michael Crowley, “The Deep State is Real,” *Politico*, September/October 2017.

Jon Michaels, “Trump and the Deep State.” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2017.

Julian Barnes, Adam Goldman, and Charlie Savage, “Blaming the Deep State: Officials Accused of Wrongdoing Adopt Trump’s Response,” *NY Times*, December 18, 2018.

Michael J. Glennon, "Populism, Elites, and National Security." *Humanitas*. 2018.

"How Long Can John Kelly Hang On?" *NY Times*, February 26, 2018.

Nancy Clark, "Mick Mulvaney as Chief of Staff: Let Trump be Trump," *Politico*, December 19, 2018.

Mark Perry, "Are Trump's Generals in Over their Heads?" *Politico*, October 25, 2017.

Jonah Shepp, "Will the Generals Save Us from Trump?" *New York Magazine*, November 2, 2017.

Phillip Carter, "Uncivil Military Relations?" February 22, 2018.

MacKubin Owens, "Civil-Military Relations in the Age of Trump," *American Greatness*, December 13, 2017.

Mark Bowden, "General Chaos," *The Atlantic*

\*Discussants/Analytical Essay

President Trump thinks you should no longer view political conflict in terms of conservatives v. progressives, and instead, view this as a struggle between nationalists vs. globalists. Were you persuaded? What are the implications of this potential change? And, what role are advisors playing in this debate?

Is there a "Deep State?" What are the implications of this debate for the professionalism in our diplomatic corps? Implications for U.S. grand strategy? (we will have two discussants for this question)

Is President Trump changing the norms in U.S. Civil-Military Relations? What are the implications of this debate for professionalism in our military? Implications for U.S. grand strategy and American politics?

(Ella, Devon, Alexis, John)

### **May 11. Lesson 12 Course wrap-up discussion & course critiques (Gibson)**

Victor Davis Hanson, *The Case for Trump*. Epilogue.

Frank Rich, "What will happen to the Trump toadies? Look to Nixon's defenders, and the Vichy collaborators for clues." *NY Magazine*, January 7, 2020.

Student preparation: Review course syllabus and class notes, think about the discussion questions distributed the week prior to class