

# PO379-30 United States Foreign Policy

**24/25**

**Department**

Politics & International Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Christopher Moran

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

22 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module analyses the foreign policy of the United States of America. The module introduces the main theoretical and conceptual debates concerning US foreign policy; focuses on the institutions and processes of US foreign and defence policy-making; analyses the individual, governmental, societal and external sources of US foreign policy; and offers opportunities for understanding and explaining the place of the US within the international system and its relationship with other states and non-state actors. Several contemporary issues and challenges facing the US in its foreign relations will be analysed including international terrorism, the use of military force, the perceived threats from Iran and North Korea, the US role in the international system, and the question of American decline.

### Module aims

Module aims:

- to introduce the main theoretical and conceptual debates relevant to a detailed analysis of the place of the United States within contemporary international relations and in particular foreign policy analysis;
- develop understanding and interpretation of the institutions and processes of foreign and defence policy-making within the United States;
- to facilitate analysis of the individual, governmental, societal and external sources of US foreign

and defence policy;  
to offer opportunities for understanding and explaining of the United States' place within the international system and its relationship with other states and non-state actors;  
to offer informed discussion of several contemporary issues and challenges facing the United States in its foreign relations;  
to develop students' skills in the effective collection and interpretation of information from diverse sources;  
to develop students' abilities to argue cogently, concisely and critically.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

### **Part One (Term 1 Weeks 1-4)**

addresses different theoretical approaches to foreign policy analysis and how they can be applied to the United States;  
explores the significance of American national identity, values and beliefs for foreign policy making;  
puts changes and continuities in contemporary US foreign policy in historical context;  
and locates the construction of the national interest under the Bush, Obama and Trump administrations.

Part Two (Term 1 Weeks 5-10) looks at the processes, actors and institutions involved in the making of US foreign policy such as:

the President, the National Security Council, the State Department, Pentagon, and Intelligence agencies ;  
Congress;  
think tanks, NGOs and interest groups;  
the media and American public opinion;  
and the international system.

Part Three (Term 2 Weeks 1-10) considers a number of contemporary issues in US foreign policy such as:

Russia and Europe;  
nuclear non-proliferation;  
international terrorism;  
the threat and use of force;  
the Middle East;  
Africa and Latin America;  
the role of soft power and popular culture;  
and the Asia-Pacific.

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- to demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the theoretical and conceptual debates germane to an understanding of US foreign policy;

- to evaluate critically the characteristics of and issues raised by key facets of US foreign and defense policy making and their consequences;
- to demonstrate an ability to locate the study of the US in the international system within broader debates within the disciplines of International Relations and/or Foreign Policy Analysis;
- to be familiar with a wide range of classic and contemporary academic literature on US foreign policy;
- to be able to critically analyse complex ideas, both orally and in writing, with relation to contemporary US foreign policy.

## Indicative reading list

Sample reading list for term 1, week 2: National Identity and US Foreign Policy: Is America Exceptional?

Required Reading:

Michael Cox and Doug Stokes (eds.), *US Foreign Policy* 3rd Edition (Oxford University Press, 2018). Chapter 3. "American Exceptionalism"

Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 2012. "Introduction" and Chapter 1 "An Exceptional Nationalism?" [Electronic version available]

Trevor McCrisken. *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US foreign policy since 1974*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Chapter 8 "Conclusions: American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam". [Electronic version available]

Kal J. Holsti "Exceptionalism in American foreign policy: Is it exceptional?." *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2011): 381-404.

(Optional): Hilde Eliassen Restad. *American exceptionalism: an idea that made a nation and remade the world*. Routledge, 2015. Chapter 8. "American exceptionalism today." [Electronic version available]

(Optional): Michael H. Hunt. *Ideology and US Foreign Policy*. New Edition. Yale University Press, 2009. Chapters 1 and 2 [Electronic version available]

Further reading:

Andrew J. Bacevich. *The limits of power: the end of American exceptionalism*. Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2009.

Roxanne Doty. "Foreign policy as social construction." *International Studies Quarterly*, no. 37 (1993): 297 – 320.

Colin Dueck. "Ideas and alternatives in American grand strategy, 2000–2004." *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 04 (2004): 511-535.

Richard T. Hughes. *Myths America lives by*. University of Illinois Press, 2004

Seymour Martin Lipset. *American exceptionalism: A double-edged sword*. WW Norton & Company, 1997.

Georg Löfflmann. "Leading from Behind–American Exceptionalism and President Obama's Post-American Vision of Hegemony." *Geopolitics* 20, no. 2 (2015): 308-332.

Deborah L. Madsen. *American exceptionalism*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1998.

Walter Russell Mead. *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the*

World. Routledge, 2002.

Henry R. Nau. *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy*. Cornell University Press, 2002.

Ralf Niebuhr. *The Irony of American History*. University of Chicago Press, 1952.

Jutta Weldes. "Constructing national interests", *European Journal of International Relations*, no. 2 (1996): 275 – 318.

Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall, eds. *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger*. University of Minneapolis Press, 1996.

## Subject specific skills

(a) to apply different theoretical approaches, methods and techniques to the study of US foreign policy and national security and acquire an advanced understanding of the domestic and international factors influencing political decision-making in the United States in the realm of international affairs;

(b) to synthesise ideas drawn from different sources of the vast literature on US foreign policy to understand the emergence, dynamics, and implications of the US foreign policy agenda.

## Transferable skills

(a) to apply a detailed critical analysis and interpretation of a variety of primary and secondary sources to initiate and carry out research projects;

(b) to process complex materials and ideas within the broad field of International Relations(IR), foreign policy analysis and security studies, and to consider unfamiliar ideas, test hypotheses and challenge existing ways of thinking;

and to (c) communicate clearly key ideas, theories and problems regarding the international role of the United States in group discussion, as well as in oral and written presentations.

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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	264 hours (88%)
Total	300 hours

### Private study description

The module is taught through a combination of a weekly one-hour lecture and a compulsory one-

hour seminar the following week. Seminars are an opportunity to explore in depth particular issues and to engage in discussion in a small group context. Students will be expected to contribute fully to such discussions each week based on in-depth preparation. Students will also be expected to engage in intensive independent study, employing the reading lists provided to deepen their knowledge of the subject. In addition to attendance at lectures and seminars, students should spend 8-10 hours per week on own independent study for the module.

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
First 3000 word essay 3000 word essay	50%		Yes (extension)
Second 3000 word essay 3000 word essay	50%		Yes (extension)

### Feedback on assessment

Written feedback is provided on all assessed work, including exam questions and summative essays. \r\nAll assessed work is marked according to marking criteria set out in the UG Handbook.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 4 of UECA-4 Undergraduate Economics 4 Year Variants
- Year 3 of UECA-LM1D Undergraduate Economics, Politics and International Studies
- UHIA-VM14 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
  - Year 3 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
  - Year 4 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)

- Year 3 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)
- Year 3 of UPOA-M100 Undergraduate Politics
- Year 4 of UPOA-M101 Undergraduate Politics (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M168 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese
- Year 3 of UPOA-M169 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese (3 year)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M165 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Italian
- Year 3 of UPOA-M162 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods
- Year 4 of UPOA-M167 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 3 of UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MX Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Unusual option for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
  - Year 3 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
  - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
- UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)
  - Year 4 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of V7MQ Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite) with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of V7MM Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite) (with Intercalated year)
- Year 3 of UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MX Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UPOA-M16A Undergraduate Politics and International Studies
- Year 4 of UPOA-M16B Undergraduate Politics and International Studies (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 3 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- Year 4 of UPOA-ML14 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M163 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and French
- Year 4 of UPOA-M164 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and German
- Year 3 of UPOA-M16D Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and German (3 year degree)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M166 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies
- Year 3 of UPOA-M16H Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies (3 year degree)

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
  - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
  - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)
  - Year 4 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of V7MQ Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite) with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of V7MM Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite) (with Intercalated year)

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics