From the moment of its birth, the United States has told a story about itself: That it was not simply a nation among nations but a beacon of democracy and individual freedom. As it became a world power at the end of the 19th century, the U.S. began to deploy its wealth and force abroad to advance its national interests, as other great powers did—but also, or so it said and its people deeply believed, to shape a more peaceful, democratic and just world order. The United States continued to pursue that self-assigned mission through two world wars and the Cold War, and now in the face of terrorism. America is unlike any previous world power both in the beliefs on which it was founded and in its geographical situation, surrounded by oceans and far removed from the conflicts in which it intervenes. And yet it is also a hegemon—a dominant power—and shapes the world to its perceived interests, as all hegemons do. Over the last century, critics have never stopped accusing the U.S. of hypocritically pursuing narrow interests in the name of global good. In electing a new president, American voters may finally have put that claim to rest by choosing someone who does not accept the nation’s historic mission.

This class will examine a series of critical points—war, colonialism, the founding of global institutions, interventions abroad—in order to understand the tension between America’s idealistic global mission and the brute fact of its power and dominance.

Teaching and Learning Methodologies: The class will be taught almost entirely in group discussion, with lectures kept to a bare minimum. Students will be expected to have thought about the readings, and to be prepared to talk about them in class. Four classes will end in debates that pit teams of two students against one another, with other students serving as critics and judges.

Requirements: Reading, as below. Class participation. Debate preparation. Students will write four papers of 3-4 pages in length, as well as a final paper of 6-8 pages.

Grading: Class participation 20%, debate 10%, weekly papers 50%, final paper 20%. In general, class participation will be assessed not on the volume of what you say, but on the depth of your engagement with the reading.

Assignments:

Class 1--Founding Faiths
John Quincy Adams July 4, 1821 address: https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-4-1821-speech-us-house-representatives-foreign-policy

The Monroe Doctrine, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29465 (from "It was stated at the commencement of the last session..." to end)


George Herring, From Colony to Superpower, pp. 176-84, 194-207

Class 2--The Spanish-American War and Colonialism

Herring, pp. 299-316
Robert Beisler, Twelve Against Imperialism, 139-64
James Traub, The Freedom Agenda, pp. 11-36

Paper Due

Class 3--Wilson and the League of Nations

Herring, pp. 410-35
Wilson, the Fourteen Points speech, https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/President_Wilson's_Fourteen_Points

Henry Kissinger, World Order, 257-69

Debate

Class 4--Cold War andContainment 1946-60

Herring, pp. 595-601 (to "...as confirmation of Soviet expansionism.") 611-619 (to "...as $6 billion appropriation in June.") 623-6, 635-9 (to "...would soon put it back on the table.") 651-60, 664 (From "The United States' credibility"") 667 (to "...with the Soviet Union itself.")


Class 5--Kennedy and Vietnam

President Kennedy Inaugural Address, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm
Herring, pp. 702-10, 716 (from "Kennedy devoted more attention. . .")-29, 736-745, 751-9
Hans Morgenthau on Vietnam, “We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam,”
http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam/hans%27.htm
President Johnson’s April 7, 1965 Speech at Johns Hopkins,
http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650407.asp
Debate

2/26--The Cold War 1970-90
Herring, pp. 829-838, 845 (from "The Carter Administration is remembered. . .")-855
(to "...and nuclear non-proliferation."), 858 (from "No single event .
(to "...its economy in shambles."), 893-7 (to "...for Soviet propaganda.")
Jimmy Carter’s Notre Dame Speech,
http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3399
Jeane Kirkpatrick, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,”
Paper Due

3/5--Bosnia, Haiti, Rwanda
Samantha Power, A Problem From Hell--- pp. 247-51, 264-69, 288-296, 302-310,
391-393, 401-409, 437-441, 503-14
Michael Mandelbaum, Mission Failure, pp. 75-94
Debate

3/19--The Iraq War
Robert Mann, Rise of The Vulcans, 303-21, 336-44, 351-53
National Security Strategy 2002, sections I-V—
Paper Due

3/26--Democracy Promotion
Traub, The Freedom Agenda, pp. 99-122, 153-71
Bush Second Inaugural,
Larry Diamond, “What went wrong and right in Iraq?”, in Fukuyama, ed., Nation
Building, pp. 173-95
Tony Smith, Why Wilson Matters, pp. 235-49

4/3--Israel/Palestine
Obama's 2009 speech in Cairo--
Twenty-Five Years After Oslo,
Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal, Michael E. O'Hanlon, Bending History: Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy, pp. 116-40
Nathan Thrall, “Israel and the US: The Delusions of Our Diplomacy,”
Debate

4/10--The War on Terror

Obama speech on combatting ISIS,
Derek Chollet, The Long Game, pp. 68-78, 147-57
Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Little America, pp. 190-204
Vali Nasr, The Dispensable Nation, pp. 141-58
Paper Due

4/17--Syria

Shadi Hamid, “Syria is not Iraq,”
http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/02/syria-is-not-iraq/272815/
Marc Lynch, “Shopping Option C for Syria,”
http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/14/shopping-option-c-for-syria/
Frederic Hof, “A Humanitarian Intervention in The West Wing,”
"The Obama Doctrine," in The Atlantic Monthly ("Down to the paragraph that begins, "History may record August 30, 2013...")

4/24--The Coming Struggle With China

5/1--America Good, Bad or Indifferent?

Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire*, pp. 7-54
Final Paper Due