Foreign Policy in Practice, Spring 2021 (Writing Intensive)

Class Number: 21:790:466:Q1:DU  
Lecturer: Kehinde A. Togun  
Location: via Zoom  
Class Hours: Wednesday 6pm-8:30pm  
Office Hours: By appointment

Class Synopsis:
The goal of this course is two-fold: 1) hands-on exploration of how US foreign policy is made, and 2) directly engage foreign policy professionals to learn about their work and their career trajectory.

At various points in US history, our nation has faced what many would consider “existential threats.” Often that threat has come from the outside, and sometimes from within. In 2021, we are once again in one of those moments—after years of decline, a new Biden administration is seeking to rebuild the US’s image and reinvigorate alliances that are now strained; we also face growing threats from adversaries like Russia and China. In addition, we face the existential threat from climate change. During this course, we will engage with experts to explore how various institutions and actors shape foreign policy.

The course will be a combination of guest lectures, written assignments, and group podcast creation. Each of the guest lecturers have extensive experience in various foreign policy topics and their career trajectories offer valuable insights on options you might pursue after graduation. The group podcast will require you to become an “expert” on a particular topic, present cogent ideas, and hold a conversation as you would, if you were a senior government official.

As you know, we are in an unprecedent period with a pandemic that precludes us from engaging in person with each other. My expectation is that you will still do the required reading, engage as fully as you can, and learn from each other. I also want you to take care of yourself this semester and to check in with me if you need additional support at any point.

Learning Objectives:
1) Expand students’ knowledge of institutions and actors shape US foreign policy.
2) Use current international events to understand how the international community views the United States’ role.
3) Hone analytic, oral communication and writing skills through group assignments, research, and writing assignments.

Required Text(s):
There is no textbook for this class, instead, each week you will be assigned readings, drawn from newspaper articles, congressional testimony, think tanks, academic journals, etc. You will also be assigned podcasts, audio, or video to listen to/watch.

In addition to the assigned reading, our discussions—and your ability to succeed as a political observer—would be greater if you become an avid reader of major publications such as the *New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Yorker, or The Atlantic*.

**Grading:**

**20%: Class Participation and Attendance:** Class participation includes actively engaging guest lecturers and partaking in discussion threads on your classmates’ podcast submissions via Blackboard’s discussion board.

**15%: Group Podcast and Script:** Beginning in the third week of class, students will collaborate in small groups to create a podcast on a topic listed below (page 3). As part of the assignment, your group will be expected to create a script that includes: a 1-2 minute introduction to the topic that provides the context for the audience, an outline for the aspects you will discuss on the podcast, and a one minute closing. Using the script and outline, you will then record a 12 to 15-minute discussion within your group on the chosen topic. You may also choose a debate (or point/counterpoint) format for your podcast that begins after the introduction. The discussion for the podcast can be recorded using the audio-only function on Zoom. It can then be edited using Audacity or QuickTime. Completed podcasts should be uploaded in the discussion board on Blackboard on the day you’ve selected to complete the assignment. You will find resources for podcast creation as well as instructions to submit available on Blackboard.

Please do not meet with your group in person. All prep work and collaboration should happen remotely via phone, video calls, or other tools.

By the end of the first week, students should sign up for which week and topic they wish to present in groups of two or three—depending on the class size, group sizes may vary. All students are expected to have a speaking role in the discussion and group members must jointly create the podcast. All students will be expected to listen to the podcast and to frequently provide commentary via Blackboard’s discussion board.

**30%: Policy Memo and Feedback Paper:** There are also two writing assignments in this course: a policy memo and a feedback paper.

*Policy Memo:* The week your podcast is due, each group member is expected to submit a three-page policy memo that analyzes the topic and offers recommendations for how senior government officials should respond to a particular concern. A sample policy memo as well as guidance for writing policy memos are available on Blackboard in the Course Documents section. Ideally, final versions of your policy memo could become writing samples if/when you apply to graduate school programs.

*Feedback Paper:* At the beginning of the semester, each student will identify one guest lecturer who you will write a feedback paper on. The paper will draw on aspects of their presentation/experience you found most engaging and would like to further explore. The paper should be three pages and I encourage you to make linkages to their substantive presentation as well as their career discussion in
your feedback paper. **Based on the presenters listed on the syllabus you will need to sign up for the feedback paper by the second week of class.** All of the speakers have bios that can be found online.

**Writing Intensive:** As this course is writing intensive, you will submit two versions of each writing assignment. After the first version, I will provide comments on how to improve your work. And you will have two weeks to submit the revised version. Please note that each paper—the first and second version will be graded. All submissions should be made via Blackboard.

The policy memo and feedback paper should be Standard 1-inch margins, 12-point font, single-spaced writing, free of grammatical and spelling errors. Appropriate use of varied references is required; this includes interviews, newspaper, magazines and books (Chicago / MLA). All papers must be submitted as MS Word documents. Papers will be subject to checks for plagiarism. If you would like additional assistance with writing please stop by Rutgers University’s Writing Center: http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter

The group podcast and policy memo **SHOULD NOT** be a summary of reading materials. Instead, students are expected provide perspectives that demonstrate reflection and analysis. You might consider these questions as you complete the assignments: How has policy changed depending on the party in power in the US? Who/what are the major influences driving this issue? What policy recommendations would you make if you were advising the US president of the Secretary of State? What aspects of your topic might the average citizen care about? *(Please do not need to answer these questions verbatim in your paper or assignment).*

The topics for your podcast and policy memo are:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US response to North Korea’s nuclear ambition</td>
<td>How foreign policy can address the US immigration crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>USMCA and effect on US manufacturing sector</td>
<td>Responding to cybersecurity attacks against the US</td>
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<td>The value of the NATO alliance to the US</td>
<td>Reseting US and Russia relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resetting the US and Chinese relationship</td>
<td>US policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reigniting the Iran nuclear deal</td>
<td>The US global response to the COVID-19 pandemic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaping a feminist foreign policy for the United States</td>
<td>The US response to climate change</td>
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The podcast and policy memo provide an opportunity to sharpen your analytical, research, and writing skills as well as expand your presentation skills while working within a team.

**20%:** **Midterm:** The midterm will be essay format with pre-assigned questions. Answers are to be 3-4 pages in length each. This is a take home exam. You will have two weeks to complete and submit via
Blackboard by 6pm on the due date. There will be no podcast due the week of midterms. All exams must be submitted as MS Word documents.

15%: **Final:** The final will follow the same format as the midterm. This questions on the final will be provided on the second to last week of class. It is due two weeks later (on the Wednesday of the University Final's Schedule). You must submit via Blackboard by 6pm on the due date. All papers must be submitted as MS Word documents.

**Class Attendance and Late Policies:**
While the class will be held virtually, you are still expected to attend class. If you have to miss a class (i.e. due to illness, religious observance, etc.), please email me as soon as you are aware of your need to be absent. Having more than one unexcused absence will impact your attendance grade.

**Assignments** and **Exams** received late will not be accepted, except in extraordinary circumstances. This policy is strictly enforced as the podcast and papers are due on a date of your choosing.

**Academic Integrity:**
Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I will check assignments for plagiarism; if it occurs, you will receive a F grade and also be reported. **There is NO excuse.** Please review Rutgers University policy on academic integrity, levels of violations, sanctions and student code of conduct can be located at the following website: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy).

**Technology Requirement:**
Students are expected to have access to reliable computers in order to fully participate in this class. Compatibility and software issues can be addressed with campus computing. We will be using Blackboard. Please make sure you can access Blackboard through the Rutgers “Current Student” web page. You will have assignments that also require the use of podcast software. Campus Computing information can be found on [http://ncs.newark.rutgers.edu](http://ncs.newark.rutgers.edu).

**Students with Disabilities:**
If you are experiencing difficulties in this course do not hesitate to consult with me. There is a significant range of services available through the University, to support your academic efforts.

**Counseling Services:**
The university provides counseling services. You can access via Counseling Center Room 101, Blumenthal Hall, (973) 353-5805 or [http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu](http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Weekly Topics and Assigned Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>Semester begins</td>
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</table>
|      | 1/20  | **Topic: Foreign Policy 101**  
**Presenter:** Rose Jackson, Director, Policy Initiative, Atlantic Council Digital Forensic Lab  
**Assigned Reading:**  
1) [How US foreign policy is made](#)  
2) Podcast: [*What’s the price of giving up on human rights and international law*](#)  
3) [Biden: Why America must lead again](#)  
4) [Trump thinks America should go it alone, Americans disagree.](#) |
| 2    | 1/27  | **Topic: Transatlantic Relations – US and Europe**  
**Presenter:** Laura Kupe, Counsel, House Homeland Security Committee  
**Assigned Reading:**  
1) [Berlin protests highlight need for employment discrimination laws in Germany](#)  
2) [Populists keep winning messaging war in Europe over migration](#)  
3) [Rebalancing the US-European Relationship](#)  
4) [US relations with Europe likely to remain strained regardless of who wins November election](#) |
| 3    | 2/03  | **Topic: Role of congressional oversight in US foreign policy**  
**Presenter:** Lesley Anne Warner, Professional Staff, House Foreign Affairs Committee  
**Assigned Reading:**  
1) [Parliamentary Oversight of the Executive Branch](#)  
2) [The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track](#)  
3) [Improving Congressional Oversight](#)  
4) [Maryland governor says Congress didn’t do it’s job with partisan impeachment](#) |
| 4    | 2/10  | **Topic: Telling and sharing stories across the globe**  
**Presenter:** Michelle Moghtader, Co-Founder, Shared Studios  
**Assigned Reading:**  
1. Podcast: [*Mistakenly Seeking Solitude*](#) (They can listen to it at 1.5 speed to make it faster)  
2. Reading: [*How to Spark Unlikely Conversations about Peace*](#)  
3. Video: [*Shared Studios Documentary*](#) |
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| 4    | 2/17 | Careers in Foreign Service and Beyond | Desiree Cormier Smith, Senior Policy Advisor, Open Society Foundations | 1) Revitalizing the State Department and American Diplomacy  
2) Podcast: Breaking the ‘pale and male’ barrier  
3) The damage at the State Department is worse than you can imagine |
2) Book Chapter: Counter-Narratives: Myanmar’s Digital Media Activists (in Blackboard under Course Documents)  
3) Video: The Facebook Dilemma |
2) Can Vaccine Diplomacy Shape a New World Order?  
3) America’s Vaccine Diplomacy is AWOL in the Middle East |
| 7    | 3/10 | Innovative Approaches to Peacebuilding | Michelle Barsa, Program Director, Beyond Conflict | 1. Don’t call it a racial reckoning  
2. A large-scale test of the link between intergroup contact and support for social change |
<p>| 8    | 3/17 | Prioritizing human rights in foreign policy | Zsuzsanna Lippai, Associate Director, Open Society Foundations’ Human Rights Initiative | TBD |
| 9    | 3/24 | Entering bilateral and multi-lateral agreements | | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>4/07</td>
<td>Creating Reforms from the US Senate</td>
<td>Desiree Pipkins, Chief of Staff, Mercy Corps</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/14</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa Policy</td>
<td>Stephanie Akpa, Chief Counsel to U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<td>4/21</td>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>Jackie Quinones, Independent Consultant</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<td>4/28</td>
<td>So you still want to go to law schools?!</td>
<td>Brittany Hale, Chief Culture Architect, BND Consulting</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<td>5/12</td>
<td><strong><strong>Final due (via Blackboard)</strong></strong></td>
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