This course is a senior seminar designed to explore the interplay between hegemony and contemporary US foreign policy. The course will explore theoretical conceptions of hegemony and bring these theories to a discussion of key issues in US foreign policy. The goals of the course are for students to develop a deep understanding of the leading theories of hegemony within International Relations, the debates between these theories, and the implications of hegemony in contemporary issues of US foreign policy. The first part of the course will be devoted to exploring hegemony from a theoretical perspective. The different understandings of hegemony lead to very different readings of US foreign policy in the 21st century. Students will then be asked to apply these insights to the major issues in US foreign policy, paying special attention to how the dynamics of hegemony give these issues a decidedly different tone when compared to other tools of foreign policy analysis. This course asks students to look beyond an individual, bilateral, regional or functional basis and consider contemporary foreign policy issues from a broad systemic perspective—an international environment wrestling with the question of US hegemony in the twenty first century.

As a senior seminar, the course demands a significant reading and in-class participation, as the core of the class will be discussion oriented. Students are expected to have completed all of the assigned reading prior to class, and to come to class with questions, analysis, insights, and critiques for the day’s discussion. To that end, students will bring a short written reaction to the readings to class, which can serve as the starting point for a discussion on the day’s topic. In each class, there will also be a discussion of current events. The unfolding of various world events will serve as illustrations for the course topics, and may inspire further discussion.

Course Schedule

Note: Required readings are available on reserve at the library and will also be posted on the Blackboard website. Some reading assignments may change over the course of the semester depending on ongoing world events.
**August 28: The US in World Affairs**

Introduction and overview of the course. What is the US position in the world today and what issues does that raise?


*Highly Recommended:*


**September 4: Military Power and Hegemonic War**

Realists focus on security, military power, and hegemonic war. What are the sources of US hegemony? What role does a hegemon play in the international system? How do theories of hegemonic war operate? What do these theories say about the US today?


Browse [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org) to see just how powerful the US military is and where it is deployed around the world.
Highly Recommended:

Recommended:

September 11: Hegemonic Stability Theory
Liberalism, IPE in particular, focuses on the provision of public goods and institutional leadership. What are the sources of US hegemony? What role does a hegemon play in the international system? How does Hegemonic Stability Theory operate? What does this theory say about the US today?


Read the brief notes at http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pol116/hegemony.htm and browse the recommended articles linked on the bottom of the page.

Highly Recommended:

Recommended:

**September 18: Ideational Hegemony**

Critical Theorists and Constructivists see ideational elements as the foundation of hegemony, but in very different ways. How does Gramsci’s theory of hegemony operate? How do constructivist and other ideational theories of hegemony operate? How do liberals understand the role that ideas play? What role does hegemony play in the international system, and what does this say about the US today?


Andreas Bieler, Adam David Morton, “A critical theory route to hegemony, world order and historical change: neo-Gramscian perspectives in International Relations,” *Capital & Class* 82 (Spring 2004).


**Recommended:**


September 25: Historical Hegemony
The modern international system can be seen as a series of hegemonic cycles. How do cycles of hegemony operate? What did British Hegemony look like and how did it operate? Are there lessons or comparisons that can be drawn between past hegemons, such as the British, and the US today?


Highly Recommended


Recommended:


**October 2: The Origins of Post-War US Hegemony**

*Book review due*

US hegemony has its origins in the aftermath of World War II. How did the US manage its hegemonic position after the war, and what institutional order did it establish? Why this order and not some other? How has it evolved and what are the implications of these changes?


Highly Recommended:


**October 9: (YOM KIPPUR, class to be rescheduled at some point) Contemporary Hegemony—The Grand Strategy Debate**

Grand Strategy provides an overarching approach to US foreign and defense policy. In the Cold War, containment served as a grand strategy to guide US actions. What grand strategy should the US adopt today? What are the options and the implications of those options? How does President Bush’s National Security Strategy fare? What assumptions of hegemony or empire are built into these strategy proposals?

Readings on Presidential Campaign on Foreign Policy / National Security Strategy TBA.


**Highly Recommended:**


**October 16: Nuclear Proliferation and Military Force**

How do nuclear weapons change the calculus of military force and hegemony? What is the current regime governing nuclear proliferation, how does it work, and why is it under threat? Why are states seeking to acquire nuclear weapons? What are the implications of further nuclear proliferation? Does the spread of nuclear weapons change the conditions of hegemony or challenge theories of hegemony?


**Highly Recommended:**

**Recommended:**

**October 23: Terrorism**

Research paper proposal due

Does modern terrorism pose a threat to a hegemonic order? If so how, and what does this struggle look like? Can one side “win” and what would that look like? Or, is the threat from terrorism overblown?


George Packer, “Knowing The Enemy: Can social scientists redefine the ‘war on terror’?” The New Yorker, December 12, 2006. Available at http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/061218fa_fact2


Highly Recommended:

Recommended:

October 30: International Law and Organizations
Can international organizations such as the UN and international law operate under hegemony? How? How important are they? What is the future of international cooperation and law?


Thomas Carothers, “A League of Their Own,” Foreign Policy, July / August 2008.


Recommended:
Kofi Annan, “‘In Larger Freedom:’ Decision Time at the UN,” Foreign Affairs, May/June 2005
**November 6: The Global Economy**

What role does the US play in today’s global economy, and how does US economic policy have global impact? What are the global influences on the US economy? Does the US’s role as hegemon give it special responsibilities in today’s global economy? What should be on the global economic agenda?


Stephen Burman, *The State of the American Empire*, chapters 1, 2, 3.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Speech to the UN General Assembly, September 16, 2005. Available at: [http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article10315.htm](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article10315.htm)

**Recommended:**


**November 13: Culture**

How has US culture impacted the rest of the world? How wide, deep, and important is US cultural hegemony? What reaction has this spawned?


*Highly Recommended:*  

*Recommended:*  

**November 20: Hegemonic Challenger**
Does the US face any states who vie to replace the US as hegemon? What is the difference between a rival within the system and a rival to the system? Is China the hegemonic challenger? How does that impact the US – China relationship? Is there a hegemonic war in the future? What would a Chinese hegemony look like? Or, does someone else fit the bill?

Bruce Russett, “The Mysterious Case of Vanishing Hegemony; or, is Mark Twain Really Dead?” *International Organization* 39:2 (Spring, 1985), pp. 207-231.


**Highly Recommended**

**Recommended:**

**December 4: The Rise or Fall of a Great Power?**
What is the future of US hegemony? Is Iraq a moment of overstretch?


Highly Recommended:

Recommended:

December 12 (Friday): Final papers due 12:00 noon.

Course Requirements

Students in this course are required to attend each class, participate in class discussion, do the assigned readings, deliver a presentation in class, and turn in papers of their own individual, original work on the specified dates. All students are expected to have read, and to abide by, the Academic Integrity Code of the American University. A copy can be found at: http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code01.htm.

The grade for this course will comprise of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly papers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of discussion topic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weekly Reaction Papers: Each week, students will turn in a brief (2-3 page) reaction paper. The paper should analyze, critique, and react to the topic for the week based on the assigned readings. These reaction papers are meant to serve as the starting points for in-class discussion topics. Therefore, students should bring their papers with them to class, and may want to refer to their papers in class discussion. Students should turn in a reaction paper for each week of class except for the first day and the day they are scheduled for a presentation.

Presentation: Alone or in groups of two, students will sign up to present discussion topics based on that week’s readings to the class. The presentations should raise key points of debate, contention, and discussion from the readings. Do NOT simply summarize the readings. These presentations will then serve as the foundation for a class discussion. Students are encourage to be creative and innovative with the presentations—use technology, distribute discussion questions or additional readings or internet links prior to class, frame debates, or bring in additional materials. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss their presentations with the instructor in advance. Presentations should be limited to no more than 10 minutes.

Book review: Students should select a book relevant to the class, read it, and write an analytical book review of about 4-5 pages. You may choose a book from the list that will be provided in class or choose another book in consultation with the instructor. The book review should summarize the main argument of the book, critically evaluate that argument, locate the work within the larger discussion of hegemony and US foreign policy, and discuss its relevance to the class and / or contemporary policy debates and issues. The book review is due on October 2.

Research proposal and paper: Students will write a significant research paper that addresses a question engaging theoretical approaches to hegemony and key issues in US foreign policy. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss their choice of topics with the instructor before writing. The research paper proposal is due October 23. The proposal (4 pages) should contain the elements of a basic research design: the topic and its relevance, the research question, the initial argument answering the question, the methodology for demonstrating the argument, and plan for continued research including identification of evidence to be acquired. The proposal should lay out a plan for completing the larger research paper. The final paper will then execute that plan, producing a well written research paper. The final paper is due on December 12.

Class Participation: Class participation will include attendance, contribution to the class discussion, asking intelligent questions in class, and being an attentive listener to other students. Class participation will also incorporate following current events and news on US foreign policy. Students may supplement their class participation by contributing on-line to the blog: www.sis382.blogspot.com.
Students will be required to follow the current events and the news US Foreign Policy. Contemporary events will be used to illustrate issues and topics, and students need to know what is going on in the world to fully participate. You can be up to date by reading the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Economist, or any other quality news publication either in print or on-line. You may wish to supplement your reading with broadcast media such as NPR, CNN, or the major network newscasts. Be aware, however, that the network nightly news does not always cover every important issue and often gives the short-shrift to important global issues. Using global media outlets, such as the BBC, is also encouraged to provide an alternative perspective.

To be up to date on current events, you need to be an intelligent and informed consumer of news, which often requires using multiple sources. It is up to you to decide how best to keep abreast of the news. Discussion of current events will occur in class. You can also participate in an on-line discussion of current events at the blog: www.sis382.blogspot.com.

Please note: Students are required to access the course Blackboard website, which contains links to a number of the course readings, important class announcements, internet links, the syllabus, and other relevant material. You can reach the course website from www.american.edu/blackboard. It is the student’s responsibility to be informed of changes in reading requirements and schedule. This is best accomplished by checking the Blackboard website regularly. In addition, there will be no makeups, nor will paper deadlines be waived without a written doctor’s excuse.

Green Teaching Initiative: In accordance with the Green Teaching Initiative, make an effort to conserve paper. Do readings on-line to minimize printing. Save paper on assignments by printing on both sides of the page and using 1.5 or single spacing (and adjust page recommendations accordingly). Feel free to use your laptop to take notes in class. If you have hand-outs for a presentation, post or email them rather than printing. Suggest other ways the class could go green!

Required Texts


Additional readings are on reserve at the Library and are posted as electronic reserves on the course Blackboard site. Some recommended readings may not be posted on reserve, but are, for the most part, available through the library’s electronic databases including EBSCO, ProQuest, and JSTOR.