

## US Culture and Society: Makers and Shapers of US Foreign Policy Spring 2025 PPCU

Az amerikai külpolitika tradíciói: kulturális vizsgálódások,

Történelmi-kulturális szakszeminárium – BBAN13400 D3, BBAN13400A

*Instructor:* Beatrix Balogh. [balogh.beatrix@btk.ppke.hu](mailto:balogh.beatrix@btk.ppke.hu)

*Place and Time:* D 218, **Thursday 14.30-16.00**

*Type:* Seminar/Discussion

*Evaluation:* Seminar grade (gyakorlati jegy), see Assessment and Requirements

*Office hours:* Wednesday 16.00-17.00 Rm 102

**Purpose:** We will investigate the social and cultural underpinnings of American foreign policy from the early days of independence through the ascendance into the present superpower status. With some initial understanding of the main actors and mechanisms of foreign policy making, we will discuss what particular policy measures in a given historical era or the rhetoric that accompanied the US responses suggest about American world view and Americans themselves. We will also meet formidable thinkers or leaders who set the course of US foreign policy.

We will obviously build on your overall familiarity with US history but you do not need to be a history buff or a political scientist. This course is not about mastering detailed accounts of international conflicts. Nor is it a review of theories of international relations examining why states behave in a particular way vis-à-vis other states. We will instead approach American foreign policy from a social and cultural perspective and familiarize ourselves with the ideas, ideals, traditions, and a few specific factors that have shaped American interaction with other nations. We will dissect such elusive umbrella concepts as “exceptionalism” and examine more specific components of American identity that influence the US’s behavior on the global stage.

**Assessment:** Your final grade is based on the following elements:

- Your regular preparation for (including glossaries) and active participation in class discussions
- In-class presentation on a “maker” or “shaper”
- pop-up quizzes (concepts) and a take-home quiz (opinions)
- End-term test (a series of short essay questions based on class discussions)

Preliminary **schedule** of discussion topics:

Feb 13	<b>Introduction</b> and goal orientation. Aware of America’s last war? What was that about? Short discussion Explaining American foreign policy from <b>critical culture studies perspective</b>
Feb 20	Discussion of <b>Charlie Wilson’s War (2007)</b> How and why would Charlie Wilson get to make foreign policy? Who are the actors? What are the Ideals?
Feb 27	Compare these (from previous) with the basics of “ <b>Who makes foreign policy</b> ” and “How foreign policy is made in the US. Constitution, President, Congress, Bureaucracy, Interest Groups, Mechanism. The Architecture of Global Power
Mar 6	The Young Republic: <b>Independence</b> and <b>no entanglements</b> . From <i>Washington’s Farewell Address</i> to the <i>Monroe Doctrine</i> .
Mar 13	The age of <b>Manifest Destiny</b> and designs for a commercial empire.
Mar 20	The Imperial Thrust: <b>The White Man’s Burden</b> , Social Darwinism, Hierarchy of Races, and the <i>Benevolent Uncle</i> . Congressional Debate on annexation.
Mar 27	Roosevelt-Wilson-Roosevelt: From the <i>Roosevelt Corollary</i> to <b>Making the World Safe for Democracy</b>
Apr 3	From <b>Containment</b> and <i>Domino</i> to Kissinger’s <i>Realpolitik</i>
Apr 10	<b>Global Policeman, Indispensable Nation</b> or <i>Benevolent Empire, Retreat or New Imperialism</i>
May 8	Hollywood War narratives (from WWII movies to <i>American Sniper</i> ) and Foreign Policy
May 15	End-Term Test and course summary

Requirements and Practices:

**Discussion-based** seminar course: We will discuss concepts of American foreign policy, will broach questions about American identity and self-appointed role; will scrutinize narratives and practices.

**Texts/Reading assignments:** your readings include original source documents, book chapters, chapter reviews/outlines, short commentaries published in journals and trade magazines, and a few longer scholarly essays. Read the assigned text(s) for the dates given, highlight key ideas and concepts, and pin questions to the margins. Bring your own copy to class. You will find further readings in the Recommended section that include both comprehensive scholarly analyses and expert writing on specific factors that can influence the making of American foreign policy.

We will also engage in class with a wide range of culture products from political cartoons to movie clips, documentaries, television news, or interviews.

**Presentation:** Students are to give one in-class talk about an influential statesman or an additional factor in American foreign policy. For example, you can choose to give an overview of Jefferson’s ideas about American

conduct and specific foreign policy measures or can investigate American regional attitudes to foreign policy. You can also bring to class a discussion about ethnic interest groups or oil as potential factors in US foreign policy. Your talk should be accompanied by a short PPT and/or handout (for class), and a brief memo on the key points and sources (submitted to instructor). You are to sign up for a specific topic and date by the third class. Seek me out if you think your idea for a presentation does not readily fit the themes announced in the syllabus.

**Glossaries:** given the “introductory” nature of the course, you will only be asked to identify the key points in the reading assignments and to compile a 5-8-item glossary of special terminology (concepts or phrases) for each class. Commentaries on American foreign policy often use “insider” language assuming a shared understanding of such phrases as “hawkish” or refer to concepts such as “Hobbesian world” or “Malthusian dilemma” that you might not be familiar with. Your glossary for the given reading should list the concepts, jargon, or non-jargon words that you think require some explanation.

**Quizzes:** pop-up quizzes will feature a few concept questions or a short-essay question reflecting on previous class discussion or the assigned reading and serve as feedback on your understanding of the material. These will nevertheless be scored/graded and your three best scores will count towards your overall course grade. One take-home quiz (probably for the Spring Break and in unipoll format) will ask you to actively engage with the several assigned texts and provide brief reflections/formulate opinion.

**End Term test** will feature only short essay questions based on class discussions. Prove understanding of core concepts, ideals, and inherent controversies

**Attendance policy:**

1. Please make your priority to attend in person discussions. If you are bound to miss classes due to illness (or symptoms make you cautious), let the instructor know immediately. **Missing a class does not exempt you from preparing** for the next class. **Assignments should be turned in notwithstanding.** Do not miss a class for an alluring alternative activity. If you miss more than 3 classes without permission, your course may be marked “incomplete”.

**Preliminary list of set texts.** Some of these will be assigned in installments. Full publication data listed for the class discussion you will first need to access. When multiple texts are listed, please consult final arrangements communicated in class.

**Class 2:** *Charlie Wilson’s War* (2007). Dir. Mike Nichols

**Class 3:** (excerpts only) “Foreign Policy And Democracy”. *American Government*. Chapter 14. W.W. Norton. Chapter Study Outline. 2. Who makes American foreign policy? <https://www.norton.com/college/polisci/american-government12/brief/ch/14/outline.aspx>, “How US Foreign Policy is Made?” *Foreign Policy Association*. [https://www.fpa.org/features/index.cfm?act=feature&announcement\\_id=45&show\\_sidebar=0](https://www.fpa.org/features/index.cfm?act=feature&announcement_id=45&show_sidebar=0)

Read pp 5-8 of Walter Russell Mead. “The Jacksonian Tradition: And American Foreign Policy.” *The National Interest*, no. 58, 1999, pp. 5–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42897216>. Read ‘Architecture of Global power’ from McCoy, *Le Monde Diplomatique* Jan 18, 2018 <https://mondediplo.com/openpage/the-world-according-to-trump>

**Class 4:** Mead, pp 7-9; Robert H. Ferrell. “Traditions” Chapter 1. *American Diplomacy: The Twentieth Century*. W.W. Norton, 1987. Read pages 3-10 on Independence; Transcript of Monroe Doctrine (1823). <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=23&page=transcript>

**Class 5:** Ferrell, pp 10-12 and 18-22; Frank Caso. “Manifest Destiny.” *History Magazine*. June/July 2007. pp 47-50. pdf copy provided by instructor

**Class 6:** Mead, pp 9-11; Ferrell, pp 22-26; Michael T. Lubragge. “Manifest Destiny.” <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/1801-1900/manifest-destiny/>

**Class 7:** Mead pp 11-15; President Wilson’s Declaration of War Message to Congress, April 2, 1917; Records of the United States Senate; Record Group 46; National Archives. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=61&page=transcript>

**Class 8:** Mead, pp 15-25; Magyarics Tamás. “A helyi védelemtől a globális elkötelezettségig: Az Egyesült Államok biztonságpolitikájának története.” *Rubicon*, 1997/5-6. pp 75-81. copy will be provided by instructor

**Class 9:** Mead, pp 26-29; Nicholas Bouchet. “Hillary Clinton’s Unexceptional Exceptionalism” *The German Marshall Fund in the United States*. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/hillary-clintons-unexceptional-exceptionalism>; Micah Zenko. “The Myth of the Indispensable Nation.” *Foreign Policy*. November 6, 2014. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/06/the-myth-of-the-indispensable-nation/#> Read ‘Architecture of Global power’ from McCoy, *Le Monde Diplomatique* Jan 18, 2018 <https://mondediplo.com/openpage/the-world-according-to-trump> Jonathan Chait. “Trump’s Performative Imperialism: The Political Logic of Trump’s International Threats” *The Atlantic*. Jan 7, 2025 <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/01/trump-performative-imperialism-greenland-panama-canal/681232/>, signs or rhetoric of New Imperialism TBA

**Class 10:** Stephen M. Walt. “Great Powers Are Defined by Their Great Wars.” *Foreign Policy*. September 21, 2017. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/21/great-powers-are-defined-by-their-great-wars/>

Additional/Recommended Readings:

Jonathan Masters. “U.S. Foreign Policy Powers: Congress and the President”. *Council on Foreign Relations*. March 2, 2017 <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-foreign-policy-powers-congress-and-president>

Alfred McCoy. "The World According to Trump: or how to build a wall and lose an empire" *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Jan 18, 2018. <https://mondediplo.com/openpage/the-world-according-to-trump>

Milo Kershaw. "How National Identity Influences US Foreign Policy." Aug 7, 2018. *E-International Relations*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/07/how-national-identity-influences-us-foreign-policy/> background reading

Tony Smith. "Making the World Safe for Democracy in the American Century." *Diplomatic History*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1999, pp. 173–88, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24913737>

Richard Pipes. "Is Russia Still an Enemy?" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 5, 1997, pp. 65–78, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20048200>.

Robert Kagan. "Benevolent Empire" *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998. Reprint *Carnegie*, June 1, 1998 <https://carnegieendowment.org/1998/06/01/benevolent-empire-pub-275>

Kalevi J. Holsti. "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is It Exceptional?" *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 17, no. 3, Sept. 2011, pp. 381–404, doi:[10.1177/1354066110377674](https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066110377674).

Peter H. Irons. "'The Test Is Poland': Polish Americans and the Origins of the Cold War." *Polish American Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1973, pp. 5–63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20147875>.

Jennifer Pitt. "Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism." *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 13. June 2010. pp. 211-235. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polisci.051508.214538>. pp 219-227.

Shibley Telhami. "The Persian Gulf: Understanding the American Oil Strategy". *Brookings*. March 1, 2002. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-persian-gulf-understanding-the-american-oil-strategy/>

Richard Grenier. Hollywood's Foreign Policy: Utopianism Tempered by Greed The National Interest , Summer 1991, No. 24 (Summer 1991), pp. 67-77. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42894748>