

**HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE: SOCIAL SCIENCE 234  
AMERICA AND THE WORLD**

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**Introduction:**

We are perched at an extraordinary moment in the history of the world: never has one nation possessed such an overwhelming concentration of military and economic power as does the United States today, and never has the world community faced such a complex and powerful array of global challenges. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the threats of international terrorism, nuclear-arms proliferation, global environmental decline, increasing global economic inequity, and vital resource depletion. How this country organizes itself to address these challenges will have an effect on virtually everyone in the world and on generations to come.

It would be reassuring to think that senior officials in this country and abroad were in agreement on how to deal with the world's most pressing problems. But that is not the case. To the contrary, there is an intense debate in the United States and elsewhere as to how to solve these problems – and as to how this country should wield its immense power in doing so. This debate informs almost every aspect of American foreign policy. For example, it lies at the heart of the national discord over the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism. It is also central to the debate over foreign policy in the new Democratically-controlled Congress and will surely dominate the coming presidential campaign season. How America should wield its immense power is also the pivotal issue in U.S. relations with its friends and allies around the world.

No intellectual or moral task is more critical today than to engage in this debate, to weigh the relative advantages and disadvantages of competing strategies, and to hammer out effective – and just – solutions to pressing problems. This is the responsibility of every inhabitant of the international community who is concerned with the fate of the world. For the duration of SS-234, “America and the World,” our classroom will serve as a public forum for such engagement. Every participant in the course will be expected to become familiar with the contending visions of America’s international role and how they apply to some of the most pressing global challenges. In addition, each student will examine a particular problem in greater detail and offer some guidelines for how the next president might constructively address this problem.

Participation in SS-234 will require a high level of intellectual engagement in the themes of the course. Students will be expected to learn about and discuss a variety of approaches for shaping America’s international role and its potential responses to key global challenges. It will not be enough to articulate and defend one’s own outlook: To permit an informed debate, we must all become familiar with the positions advanced by others (including those we disagree with) and be able to identify both the merits and the flaws of all proposed strategies. This requires approaching the debate with an open mind and respect for the views of others, however odious they may seem.

### **Course requirements:**

To successfully complete this course and receive a positive evaluation, each student must accomplish the following:

\* **Attend all class sessions** and **participate *actively*** in discussions on the assigned readings. Bear in mind that there are no “correct” answers to any of the controversial issues being discussed in class; rather, the aim of class discussion is to identify the various strands of opinion on these questions and to weigh their relative appeal and merit; it is essential, therefore, that everyone contribute to this debate. I also expect you to keep up with world affairs during the course of the semester (we will discuss any major developments in class) and come prepared to discuss current events. Repeated absences will be noted and penalized.

\* Approximately six weeks into the semester, submit a **6-8 page typed essay** based

on your reading of Chomsky's *Hegemony or Survival* and Mandelbaum's *The Case for Goliath*. You will have a week to answer a question given by the instructor on some comparative aspect of the two books.

\* At some point during the semester, prepare a **five-minute oral statement** on the best approach to a particular international issue, and read or summarize it to the class. These oral presentations will be conducted in the form of a mock Congressional hearing, with students presenting (what they take to be) a liberal, centrist, or conservative position. Because the aim of this exercise is to consider multiple points of view, you may wind up having to articulate and defend a position that you are not actually in sympathy with. To ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to claim the slot they seek (schedule-wise, topic-wise, and position-wise), volunteers will be solicited for the earliest "hearings" and a lottery will be conducted for the rest. (You can also trade slots with others in the class.)

\* At the end of the semester, submit a **12-15 page policy paper** on some issue in current world security affairs that bears on America's dominant role in the world. Select a topic that will allow you to master the contending positions on the problem: For example, do not choose the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unless you have spent years studying this issue and are familiar with the massive literature on the topic. A list of possible topic is attached. Each paper should summarize the history and background to the issue, identify the key actors and issues involved, describe the current status of the problem and efforts now under way to settle it, and conclude with *your* vision of the best possible solution to the problem. You may team up with another student in preparing this paper (and, in fact, are encouraged to do so).

### **Assigned texts:**

(Note: All texts are available at the Hampshire College Bookstore.)

Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival* (Metropolitan Books, 2004).

Michael Klare, *Blood and Oil* (Owl Books, 2005).

Michael Mandelbaum, *The Case for Goliath* (Public Affairs, 2006)

George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2006)

## **CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

Wed., Jan. 31: Introduction to Course

Mon., Feb. 5: The Burden of Power: Bearing Responsibility for World Order  
**Read:** Mandelbaum, *Goliath*, introduction and chap. 1

Wed., Feb. 7: The Temptation of Power: Remaking the World in America's Image  
**Read:** Chomsky, *Hegemony*, chaps. 1, 2

Mon., Feb. 12: Challenges: International Security  
**Read:** Mandelbaum, *Goliath*, chap. 2

Wed., Feb. 14: Challenges: Rising Powers and the World Economy  
**Read:** Mandelbaum, *Goliath*, chap. 3

Mon., Feb. 19: Challenges: International Disorder  
**Read:** Chomsky, *Hegemony*, chaps. 3, 4

Wed., Feb. 21: Challenges: "Rogue States"  
**Read:** Chomsky, *Hegemony*, chap. 5

Mon., Feb. 26: The Dilemma of Legitimacy  
**Read:** Chomsky, *Hegemony*, chap. 6; Mandelbaum, *Goliath*, chap. 4

Wed., Feb. 28: To be announced

Mon., Mar. 5: The Iraq Imbroglio: Weapons of Mass Destruction  
**Read:** Packer, *Assassins' Gate*, chaps. 1-3

Wed., Mar. 7: The Iraq Imbroglio: The Bush Doctrine and the Use of Force  
**Read:** Packer, *Assassins' Gate*, chap. 4

Mon., Mar. 12: Mock Hearing: Should the U.S. Engage in Preventive War?  
**Read:** Packer, *Assassins' Gate*, chaps. 5-6

Wed., Mar. 14: To be announced

Mon., Mar. 19 & Wed., Mar. 21: **Spring Break**

Mon., Mar. 26: The Iraq Imbroglio: Insurgency and Civil War  
**Read:** Packer, *Assassins' Gate*, chaps. 7, 9, 10

Wed., Mar. 28: Mock Hearing: Should the U.S. Send More Troops to Iraq?

Mon., Apr. 2: America's Oil Dependency and U.S. Policy to the Middle East **Read:** Klare, *Blood and Oil*, chaps. 1-3

Wed., Apr. 4: To be announced

Mon., Apr. 9: Mock Hearing: Should the U.S. Overthrow the Regime in Iran?  
**Read:** Klare, *Blood and Oil*, chaps. 4, 5

Wed., Apr. 11: To be announced

Mon., Apr. 16: U.S.-China Relations  
**Read:** Klare, *Blood and Oil*, chap. 6

Wed., Apr. 18: Mock Hearing: Should the U.S. Defend Taiwan if China Invades?

Mon., Apr. 23: Addressing the Threat of Terrorism  
**Read:** Chomsky, *Hegemony*, chap. 8

Wed., Apr. 25: Mock Hearing: Should the U.S. Rely on Military Means to Defeat Terrorism?

Mon., Apr. 30: Alternatives to Hegemony  
**Read:** Mandelbaum, *Goliath*, chap. 5; Chomsky, *Hegemony*, chap. 9

Wed., May 2: Mock Hearing: Are There Viable Alternatives to the Bush Doctrine?

### **Possible Term-Paper Topics**

(These are suggestions; you are not limited to the list)

- Assessment of possible U.S. policies toward Iranian nuclear enrichment
- Assessment of possible U.S. policies toward North Korean nuclear weapons
- Assessment of possible U.S. policies toward Syria
- Assessment of possible U.S. strategies for disengagement from Iraq
- Assessment of possible U.S. strategies for prevailing in the war in Afghanistan
- U.S. policy toward Taiwan
- U.S. policy on China's nuclear/missile assistance to Iran
- U.S. policy on China's nuclear/missile assistance to Pakistan
- Implications of the U.S. nuclear deal with India
- U.S. policy toward India's energy ties with Iran
- U.S. policy toward Russia's nuclear/arms assistance to Iran
- Implications for U.S. of Russia's pursuit of energy dominance in Europe
- Implications for U.S. of Russia's pursuit of energy dominance in Caspian region
- Implications for U.S. of China's pursuit of geopolitical advantage in Central Asia
- Implications for U.S. of China's pursuit of geopolitical advantage in Africa
- Implications for U.S. of China's pursuit of geopolitical advantage in Middle East
- Implications for U.S. of China's pursuit of geopolitical advantage in Latin Am.
- Future U.S. ties with Saudi Arabia (or Pakistan)
- Future U.S. ties with Venezuela (or Cuba)
- Assessment of possible U.S. strategies for conducting the war on terror
- Assessment of possible U.S. strategies for conducting the war on drugs
- Assessment of possible strategies for reducing U.S. dependence on imported oil

