The Evolving Role of the U.S. in World Affairs

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In this course we will analyze the evolving role of the United States of America in world affairs. In doing so, we will consider alternative interpretations of the American role as well as the domestic economic, political, and societal bases on which it depends. We will also examine the impact of changes in the international system due to globalization and the diffusion of power. By the conclusion of this course, students should acquire a broad understanding of the determinants of U.S. strength, its unique role in world affairs, the contingent nature of policy choices, and the potential consequences for international order if the U.S. were to adopt a strategy of disengagement.

KEYWORDS:
United States of America, Foreign Policy, Primacy, Decline, Competitiveness, Leadership

REQUIRED READING: (The Lieber and Mandelbaum books are available in paperback and e-reader):
Journal articles on U.S. foreign policy (see included below)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Students are expected to complete the reading before each class.
Participation in discussion: At every session, each student will be asked to identify what he or she considers the most important question or problem from at least one of the readings and/or the subject of that session.
One short paper of no more than 250 words. These will be presented in the seminar.
One research paper. M.A. students approximately 10 pages; Ph.D. students 15-20 pages).

SCHEDULE:
Friday, July 26
#1, Introduction to U.S. Foreign Policy
Robert J. Lieber, Power and Willpower, Introduction, pp. 1-6
Michael Mandelbaum, The Frugal Superpower, Introduction, pp. 1-8
Monday, July 29
#2, American Exceptionalism

#3, Liberal Internationalism and US Foreign Policy

#4, Discussion of Exceptionalism and Liberalism

Tuesday, July 30
#5, Realism and US Foreign Policy
Barry Posen, “Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy,” Foreign Affairs, Jan/Feb 2013, pp. 116-129

#6, Problems of Policy & Purpose: Economic Policy
Lieber, Power & Willpower, 30-51
Mandelbaum, Frugal Superpower 1-34

#7, Domestic and Global Interactions: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy
Lieber, Power & Willpower, “American Attitudes and Institutions,” 59-64

Wednesday, July 31
#8, Domestic & Global Interactions: Energy and Foreign Policy
Lieber, Power and Willpower, 52-58
Mandelbaum, Frugal Superpower, 167-175

#9, US Attitudes & Institutions
Lieber, Power and Willpower, 64-79

#10, Discussion

Thursday, August 1
#11, The Rise of Others, The US & China
Lieber, Power & Willpower, 95-105

#12, BRICS and Problems of Collective Action
Lieber, Power & Willpower, 137-144
Mandelbaum, Frugal Superpower, 101-135

#13, Security Threats
Lieber, *Power & Willpower*, 80-95, 105-117
Henry Kissinger, “Iran Must be President Obama’s Immediate priority,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 16, 2012

**Friday, August 2**

**#14, Commitments & Capabilities: Is There a Problem of “Imperial Overstretch”**
Lieber, *Power & Willpower*, 156-172

**#15, Why the US is Not Destined to Decline**
Mandelbaum, *The Frugal Superpower*, 181-194
Lieber, *Power & Willpower*, 147-156