

Teaching guide

IDENTIFICATION DETAILS

Degree:	International Relations
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Field of Knowledge:	Social and Legal Science
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Faculty/School:	Communication Science
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Course:	TODAY'S WORLD III: USA
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Type:	Compulsory
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ECTS credits:	6
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Year:	2
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Code:	7022
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Teaching period:	Third semester
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Area:	Geopolitics and Today's World
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Module:	Foundations for a Theory of International Relations
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Teaching type:	Classroom-based
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Language:	English
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Total number of student study hours:	150
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Teaching staff	E-mail
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SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

Herramientas básicas para el estudio y el conocimiento de los hechos más relevantes de la historia de EEUU y de su política exterior.

This course offers a comprehensive study program. From the earliest historical encounters between European settlers and Native Americans, to trends in the contemporary American politics and culture, the course explores a

wide and stimulating range of topics. It is designed to help contextualize current developments, to identify various interpretative frameworks and to acquaint students with a variety of useful sources for understanding the United States. We will train students to think conceptually in order to enable them to read, discuss and write in a clear and critical manner.

We will emphasize the connection between past history and present problems, and the dynamics (demographics, historical, economic, political, social, religious and cultural) that have contributed to shape the United States. Throughout the analysis of the main actors in the history of the United States (presidents, politicians, businessmen, intellectuals, preachers...) as well as its main events, the student will learn to understand the men, ideas and institutions that currently define the nature of the country. It will also be the aim of the course to invite a debate on the foreseeable future of the United States based on current and past trends.

The student is introduced to the basic themes and events of American history and the key events, ideas and figures that shaped its character. These introductory lessons provide the foundation upon which the programme will subsequently build. The student will learn and practise technical skills, developing your abilities in research, writing, and argumentation.

In summary, this course provides the student with the opportunity to study the institutions, history, politics, culture and society of the United States. The analytical and research skills developed will help him to gain in-depth knowledge of major political theories and ideas and historical debates as they relate to a North American context. This will give the student greater insights into North American society and culture, and he will also prove he is resourceful and informed on American history, politics and society.

The course is seminar-based and student-led, with seminar topics being assigned to students. Students are expected to read the relevant material and to make presentations as a basis for discussion with colleagues during the seminars.

On some occasions the course will be supported by the screening of some audio-visual materials (political debates, speeches, documentaries or movies) in order to provide the student with a more immediate experience of the course issues.

The structure of the course consists of nine main areas related to key issues which will be examined accordingly:

- The historical, legal and ideological roots of the United States: Colonial America, Declaration of Independence, War of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights.
- The main institutions of the United States: the Presidency, Congress, Supreme Court.
- The Democratic system: the presidential and congressional elections, political primaries, voter divisions, the electoral system, controversies on voting redistricting and political donations.
- The Federalist system: the powers of the states and the central government.
- The territorial expansion: the expansion of the United States to the West, the secession war and the Confederate States of America, states vs. central government.
- The political division around the idea of America: the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian opposing views on government and society; the creation, history and ideas of the Republican and Democratic political parties; liberalism/progressivism & conservatism.
- Rise of capitalism: from agrarian to industrial society, economic expansion and crises, plutocracy and populism, the great depression, the new deal, the great society, the crises of the 1970s, reaganomics.
- Race and immigration: American-Indians, slavery, civil war and emancipation, reconstruction, segregation and civil rights, from WASP to multi-ethnic and multi-cultural America, Hispanics and the "melting pot" paradigm.
- Current political debates: Culture wars (abortion, gay issues, feminism, drugs, separation church and state, public morality), Gun rights, Health Care, Taxes...
- Foreign Policy: from colony to superpower.

Course material includes required texts, readings from selected books and journals and occasional audio-visual material.

GOAL

The aim of the course is to acquaint the student with a deep knowledge of the economic, religious, political and ethnic roots of the United States as well as the current state of affairs in the country. The student will learn about the institution governing the country and the peculiarities of the American democracy, its economy and its foreign policy.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Students are expected to know how to express themselves in English (oral and written). They are also expected to be familiarized with the current debates regarding the United States: its culture, history, politics and foreign policy.

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. Introduction

Explanation of the course and a introduction to the United States (geographical, economical, sociological and political overview)

Colonial America: Ideological, social and religious roots of the United States: Puritans, pilgrims and settlers

II. The Creation of the United States

Declaration of Independence, War of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights

Differences and similarities (religious, cultural, economic, political and social) between the French and American revolutions: The different paths taken by Europe and the United States.

III. The Democratic system

The Republican institutions: Presidency, Congress and Supreme Court

Presidential and congressional elections

IV. Federalism in the United States

Federalist and anti-Federalist, Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian perspectives

The Federal system: states vs. central government

V. The political divide: origins, ideology and early history of the Republican and Democratic parties

VI. The expansion to the West: from 13 to 50 states

VII. The race issue: slavery, Civil War, segregation and civil rights

VIII. The identity question: immigrant waves, decline of WASP America and the "melting pot" paradigm

IX. Foreign Policy

How foreign policy is made

American foreign policy doctrines: Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian, Jacksonian and Wilsonian

Brief history of US foreign policy

*Please, notice that changes in the syllabus might take place according to the needs and development of the course.

EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

The course will consist on a series of lectures and debates.

In advance of each lecture, students are expected to read the bibliography uploaded to the webpage of the course.

Each week, the students will be required to read a series of papers (available in the webpage of the course) and debate them in class.

Besides from the lectures and discussions in class, students can also take part in a voluntary assignment consisting of reading of book. They will present a written summary of their findings regarding the main arguments of the book and then discuss its merits with the professor in an individual interview.

During the course a political documentary will be screened. Students will then discuss the main ideas and facts expressed in the documentary while expressing their personal views and opinions on them.

Also, another formative activity will consist in the viewing and analysis (with a discussion) of a political debate or a presidential discourse.

(The content, format and timing of the activities can be modified and rearranged in order to adapt the course to different scenarios and follow the recommendations of the health/political/academic authorities).

DISTRIBUTION OF WORK TIME

CLASSROOM-BASED ACTIVITY	INDEPENDENT STUDY/OUT-OF-CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
60 hours	90 hours

SKILLS

Basic Skills

Students must have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in an area of study that is founded on general secondary education. Moreover, the area of study is typically at a level that includes certain aspects implying knowledge at the forefront of its field of study, albeit supported by advanced textbooks

Students must have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) in order to make judgments that include reflections on pertinent social, scientific or ethical issues

Students must be able to convey information, ideas, problems and solutions to both an expert and non-expert audience

Students must have developed the learning skills needed to undertake further study with a high degree of independence

General Skills

To acquire critical, analytical, synthetic, reflective, theoretical and practical thought to be able to understand, analyse, interpret and rigorously and independently sum up international reality from a multidisciplinary standpoint.

To acquire the ability to consider and creatively respond to the essential questions as to the whys and wherefores, and the consequences of human, social, political and economic events of global society.

To understand and analyse the international reality from the standpoint of respect and protecting democracy, human rights, cultural diversity and the values of equality, justice and solidarity. To be able to take part in discussions on current affairs, based on knowledge of international relations and an analysis of today's world.

To develop communication skills allowing for accurate written and oral expression, as well as rigorous discourse and suitable reasoning in public.

To suitably use all possible sources that make it possible to be familiar with the international reality in the historical, political, economic, legal and social spheres, in all formats, in order to organise and plan the study and analysis of the international reality.

Specific skills

To understand and analyse decision-making in foreign policy in the main US states.

LEARNING RESULTS

To examine and understand the (past and present) political, economic and cultural reality of the United States as well as the decision-making process of its highest political institutions and its impact on US foreign policy.

LEARNING APPRAISAL SYSTEM

Active participation: The students are expected to read in preparation of each session and to participate in the discussion.

Discussion: Each week, a paper will be distributed among the students. They will be required to read and think about it and then participate in a discussion about its arguments.

Reading: Each student is given the opportunity to read the books "The World America Made" and "The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World" by Robert Kagan and will then talk about it with the professor in a personal discussion of 20 min. The student is required to buy the books (Amazon, Abebooks or Ebay) before the beginning the course (he is asked to have a physical copy of the book not an online edition). In the discussion the student will make clear that he has read the book (he is required to attend the meeting with the book and with a written essay of its main points) by summarizing its main ideas and then engage in a conversation with the professor about those ideas and his views on them.

Final grade:

5% Test (50 states of the Union and US Presidents)

20% Partial exam

45% Final exam*

20% Attendance and active participation in the discussion of the weekly papers in class

10% Interdisciplinary seminar

1 extra point for the reading and discussion of two books ("The World America Made" and "The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World," both authored by Robert Kagan)

* In order to pass the course one needs to pass the final exam (obtain more than 50% of the note of the final exam, otherwise, the different percentages of the course cannot allow the student to pass the course without having passed the final exam)

Final grade for those not requiring attendance (those who cannot attend the lessons should notify the PEC within the first 15 days of the course and will receive a response regarding their request within 15 days):

20% Partial Exam

45% Final Exam*

20% Online paper discussions and analysis

10% Interdisciplinary seminar

* In order to pass the course one needs to pass the final exam (obtain more than 50% of the note of the final exam, otherwise, the different percentages of the course cannot allow the student to pass the course without having passed the final exam)

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND OTHER RESOURCES

Basic

Brands, H.W., *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism, 1865-1900* (Doubleday, 2010)

Buckley, William F., *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of 'Academic Freedom'* (Regnery Publishing, 1986)

Ferguson, Niall, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (Penguin Press, 2004)

Goldwater, Barry, *Conscience of a Conservative* (Wilder Publications, 2009)

Herring, George C., *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Holmes, Kim R., *The Closing of the Liberal Mind: How Groupthink and Intolerance Define the Left* (Encounter Books, 2016)

Howe, Daniel Walker, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford University Press, 2007)

Huntington, Samuel P., *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (Simon & Schuster, 2005)

Johnson, Paul, *A History of the American People* (Harper Perennial, 1999)

Kagan, Robert, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (Vintage, 2007)

Kagan, Robert, *The World America Made* (Knopf, 2012)

Kennedy, David M., *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1999)

Levin, Yuval, *The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism* (Basic Books, 2016)

Levin, Yuval, *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and the Birth of Right and Left* (Basic Books, 2014)

McPherson, James M., *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford University Press, 1988)

Middlekauff, Robert, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Murray, Charles, *American Exceptionalism: An Experiment in History* (AEI Press, 2013)

Murray, Charles, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010* (Crown Forum, 2012)

Paine, Thomas, *Rights of Man and Common Sense* (Everyman's Library, 1994)

Patterson, James T., *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (Oxford University Press, 1996)

Patterson, James T., *Restless Giant: The United States from Watergate to Bush vs. Gore* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Patterson, James T., *The Eve of Destruction: How 1965 Transformed America* (Basic Books, 2012)

Perlstein, Rick, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (Hill and Wang, 2001)

Perlstein, Rick, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (Scribner, 2008)

Perlstein, Rick, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (Simon & Schuster, 2014)

Putnam, Robert D., *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon & Schuster, 2000)

Steyn, Mark, *America Alone: The End of the World As We Know It* (Regnery Publishing, 2008)

Tocqueville, Alexis de, *Democracy in America* (Knopf, 1994)

Wood, Gordon S., *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Wood, Gordon S., *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (Penguin Press, 2006)

Wood, Gordon S., *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (Penguin Press, 2011)

Wood, Gordon S., *The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Uses of History* (Penguin Books, 2009)

Wood, Gordon S., *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (Knopf, 1991)

Additional

Newspapers and Magazines
www.nytimes.com
www.wsj.com
www.washingtonpost.com
www.nybooks.com
www.theamericaninterest.com
www.foreignpolicy.com
www.realclearpolitics.com
www.foreignaffairs.com
www.weeklystandard.com
www.nationalreview.com
www.foxnews.com
www.cnn.com
www.newyorker.com
www.aei.org
www.nationalinterest.org
www.newsweek.com
www.reason.com
www.time.com
www.townhall.com
www.claremont.org/crb/

Think Tanks
www.heritage.org
www.cato.org

www.brookings.edu
www.americanprogress.org
www.cfr.org
www.mises.org

Government Institutions

www.house.gov
www.senate.gov
www.federalreserve.gov
www.supremecourt.gov
www.whitehouse.gov
www.defense.gov
www.state.gov