

American Foreign Policy – Aug 23

Course Introduction and Review of Syllabus

Important considerations in American Foreign Policy

- Unique character of American history
 - Isolation from great powers
 - American identity through philosophy - the "American Way"
 - Missionary mentality
- America's geography
 - Isolated by two oceans from nearest major powers
 - Many domestic resources
 - Frontier until the 20th century
- Unique nature of American government
 - Separation of powers
 - Federalism
- Unique position of US in world of today
 - Hegemony: no real challengers (economic or military)

Agents and Structures in American Foreign Policy

The Agency-Structure dynamic

Agents:

- Actors who engage in decision-making
- Can be individuals or collective actors

Domestic Agents:

- President
- Congress
- Bureaucratic organizations (State Dept, Treasury Dept, etc.)
- State Governments
- Non-Governmental Organizations (Lobbying groups, grassroots organizations, etc.)
- Corporations
- Individuals

International Agents:

- Foreign Governments
- Inter-Governmental Organizations
- Non-governmental Organizations
- Corporations
- Individuals

Structure:

- The institutions and context in which action takes place
- Create incentives for individual action

Domestic Structures:

- Constitutional Rules
- Federalism
- Social System

International Structures:

- The International System (theories vary on nature)
- International Organizations
- International Markets

American Foreign Policy as complex process

- Agents and structures interact to create policy outcomes
- Agents make decisions within institutional context
- Over time action by agents can alter institutional context