The United States in the World, 1898-Present: The Limits of Military Intervention

Course Overview:

This course addresses key questions about the role of the United States abroad by considering historical and contemporary case studies of military interventions. Since the founding of the United States, leaders and citizens alike have debated the appropriate level of political and military engagement outside the borders. Each time American forces have operated in the world, their presence has sparked both appreciation and rebuke in different measures. All U.S interventions have been debated heatedly not only in the United States, but globally—with tremendous political significance for the international community and political alignments among nations. Each intervention has also resulted in partnerships with allies of varied ethical and political persuasions.

Along with popular culture, military intervention has been the primary means by which many regions have encountered the United States in the world. Accordingly, it is imperative to critically assess how the United States has engaged in this capacity in a historical frame. The course looks at the views of those nations where U.S. military interventions have taken place, and to studies them as a critical part of U.S. foreign relations as a whole. To fully understand the significance of U.S. military actions in the past 120 years requires considering not only military success or failure, but also long term political, economic and cultural aspects. These dimensions combine to form a picture of the U.S. as seen in multiple perspectives from around the world as well as domestically.

The course follows a chronological approach but does not address every U.S. intervention abroad. Instead, the course explores events with strong resonance for contemporary citizens and chooses cases where significant primary and secondary sources exist. Finally, particular conflicts are selected based on the availability of materials that document and analyze the extremely important perspectives of the peoples receiving U.S. assistance or on the receiving end of U.S. military might.

This course looks both at interventions and non-interventions to assess both the reasons U.S. leaders have considered when deciding on interventions and the perceptions of people in whose countries these interventions took place. Students must be able to think critically about competing U.S. and international perspectives about each intervention (and non-intervention) to arrive at informed and evidenced perspectives on historical and contemporary issues surrounding military intervention. This skill is critical for not only historians but for anyone aspiring to career in diplomatic or public service or simply to be an informed and more
engaged citizen. After completing this course, students should be able to respond fluently to the following questions; *When, why, and how should the United States send its military forces abroad? What has the U.S. role in the world been and what should it be? How have people understood these interventions where they took place and around the world? When have U.S. interventions been the most and least beneficial?*

**GRADES:** Loyola’s final letter grades are: F, D, D+, C-, C, C+, B-, B, B+, A- and A, and in this course they can be averaged by using the numbers 0 through 10.

- A = 96-100% = 10
- A- = 93-95 = 9
- B+ = 90-92 = 8
- B = 87-89 = 7
- B- = 84-86 = 6
- C+ = 81-83 = 5
- C = 78-80 = 4
- C- = 75-77 = 3
- D+ = 73-74 = 2
- D = 70-72 = 1
- F = 0-69 = 0

**Course Assignments and Requirements:**

Students should expect to attend all classes with readings completed and some ideas and questions to bring forward in weekly discussions. Active participation and regular attendance constitute part of the course grade. A key part of this grade is active and engaged participation in the Geneva Conference exercise. Another important part of active participation is to seek out and bring additional primary sources to the class from your own reading and research to share with the group. Each week, selected students will locate and share primary materials relating to the following week’s subject. (30%).

Reaction Papers (20%): Students will submit 4 reading reaction papers of 500 words throughout the semester—with students able to choose from among course topics. Each paper will require students to react to archival documents and also cite evidence from course readings. An additional 250-word critical analysis of a selection of propaganda cartoons from the U.S.-Philippine War will be required. The lowest of the 5 grades for these assignments will be dropped. All written assignments will be evaluated using the rubric found below.

Two essay examinations (30% total) will take place during the term; each will require students to demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge to reflect critical understanding of the case studies covered by each exam.

A final paper up to a maximum of 2500 words will be completed for the end of the term (20%), and will provide the students the opportunity to address a single large question that guides the course: *Based on your knowledge of historical cases, when and why should the United States intervene militarily outside is borders?* Outstanding papers will both demonstrate informed historical understanding of course subject matter and also show independent work into theoretical and interpretive frameworks that help students frame their arguments. The paper
should reflect critical understanding of primary and secondary historical materials and should consider alternate interpretations of historical cases chosen for analysis in the paper. Students should also connect historical examples to contemporary issues when appropriate.

All course assignments are designed to help students practice the core skills of the historical profession—written and verbal argumentation using primary and secondary sources, researching to locate and verify reliable sources, interpreting events in historical context, and developing informed historical perspective to better understand contemporary events.

**Grading Rubric:**

**Student:** Click here to enter text.  
**Course/Event:** Click here to enter text.  
**Date:** Click here to enter a date.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis/Sense of Purpose</th>
<th>Outstanding/Excell.</th>
<th>Good/Satisfactory</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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| • Thesis is exceptionally clear, concise and arguable.  
• Writer is sophisticated in ability to signal purpose to the reader | • Thesis is clear and supportable  
• There is a controlling idea that holds the paper together | • Thesis is present, but may be unclear, too broad or difficult to argue, or only indirectly linked to the assignment  
• While there may be a sense of purpose that holds the paper together, it is often very broad | • Thesis is missing, incompletely expressed, or irrelevant to the assignment  
• Paper seems disjointed or incoherent |

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<th>Analysis/Evidence</th>
<th>Outstanding/Excell.</th>
<th>Good/Satisfactory</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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| • Thesis is strongly supported by arguments and evidence that are consistently accurate, thorough and relevant  
• Support reflects sophisticated analysis and interpretation of | • Thesis is sufficiently supported by arguments and evidence which are accurate, thorough, and relevant  
• Support reflects sound analysis and | • Thesis is generally supported by evidence, though not sufficient for all points  
• Paper reflects some careful thought and analysis, but it is inconsistent  
• Information/evidence does not clearly relate to the main question or issue | • Thesis is never adequately supported; evidence is weak, inaccurate and/or misleading |
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<th>Outstanding/Excellent</th>
<th>Good/Satisfactory</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
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<td>- Uses reliable and accurate information/evidence that is relevant to the main issue</td>
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<td>- Disassembles and reassembles relevant information in an accurate, critically-oriented, deep way, producing a synthesis of the material</td>
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<td>- Demonstrates a logical progression of thought throughout the writing</td>
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<td>- Conclusion is a logical and effective outgrowth of thesis</td>
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<td><strong>Interpretation of evidence</strong></td>
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<td>- Usually uses reliable and accurate information that is relevant to the main issue, deviations do not detract from the overall paper</td>
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<td>- Logical progression of thought</td>
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<td>- Conclusion logically flows from thesis</td>
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<td><strong>Organizational</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Paper is remarkably clear and inherently logical in structure</td>
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<td>- Transitions smoothly link ideas within and between paragraphs</td>
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<td>- Paragraphs are tightly constructed and each focuses on one central idea</td>
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<td>- Paper is free of digressions and irrelevancies</td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<td>- Paper has a sound organizational structure throughout</td>
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<td>- Adequate transitions guide the reader within and between paragraphs</td>
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<td>- Paragraph structure is solid</td>
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<td>- Digression and irrelevancies, if present, are rare and do not significantly distract from the argument flow</td>
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<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
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<td>- Displays exceptional command of</td>
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<td>- Demonstrates sound command</td>
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<td>- Contains errors in spelling, punctuation,</td>
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<td>- Contains extensive errors in spelling,</td>
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<td>- Synthesis of information is not attempted or lacks accuracy, critical assessment, or depth</td>
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<td>- Logical progression of ideas is absent</td>
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<td>- Minimal analysis reflected in the paper</td>
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<td>- No real conclusion or, if present, it fails to relate to the thesis</td>
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<td>- Logical flow of ideas is interrupted, broken, or non existent</td>
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<td>- Writer’s thoughts are difficult to follow because of confusing arrangement of supporting ideas and/or ineffective transitions</td>
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<td>- Paragraph structure occasionally weak. Multiple ideas covered in lengthy passages</td>
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<td>- Digressions or irrelevancies sometimes distract reader from the flow of the argument</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Logical flow of ideas is interrupted, broken, or non existent</td>
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<td>- Writer’s thoughts are difficult to follow because of confusing arrangement of supporting ideas and/or ineffective transitions</td>
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<td>- Paragraph structure is haphazard</td>
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<td>- Digressions and irrelevancies consistently distract the reader from the flow of the argument</td>
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### Outstanding/Excellently
- Mechanics/Documentation: Standard written English
- Includes well-crafted sentences and reflects superb word choice
- Clarity of ideas is enhanced through written expression
- Sources are fully cited and in proper format
- Publishable

### Good/Satisfactorily
- Mechanics/Documentation: Of standard written English
- Is generally correct and well written.
- Contains no persistent errors in grammar, mechanics, or word choice
- Word and sentence choices clearly convey meaning
- Sources are cited and correct

### Marginal
- Mechanics/Documentation: Capitalization
- Sentence structure or word choice gets in the way of clear communication
- Some sources are either not cited or are incorrectly cited
- Sources are cited and correct

### Unsatisfactory
- Mechanics/Documentation: Punctuation, capitalization
- Sentence structure hinders communication
- Reader must occasionally guess at writer's meaning
- Most sources are either not cited or are incorrectly cited

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**Course Paper:**

For more help on the writing of your paper, you should link with the web page of Loyola's Department of History and its instructions on how to write a research paper: [http://www.loyno.edu/history/research.htm](http://www.loyno.edu/history/research.htm) Special attention should be paid to the problem of plagiarism:

"Plagiarism--the use of another person's ideas or wording without giving proper credit--results from the failure to document fully and accurately. Ideas and expressions of them are considered to belong to the individual who first puts them forward. Therefore, when you incorporate ideas or phrasing from any other author in your paper, whether you quote them directly or indirectly, you need to be honest and complete about indicating the sources to avoid plagiarism. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism can bring serious consequences, both academic, in the form of failure or expulsion, and legal, in the form of lawsuits. Plagiarism is a violation of the ethics of the academic community."[11](#)

For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, go to: [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html)

**Course Objectives:**

- Identify and evaluate different perspectives on historical military interventions by the United States.
- Debate the merits of U.S. interventions based on primary and secondary historical source materials.
- Develop informed and accurate arguments for and against U.S. military intervention abroad.

**Student Outcomes:**
• Develop a strong historical understanding of U.S. military actions around the world since 1898.
• Analyze competing arguments about the impact of U.S. military actions abroad.
• Interpret contemporary U.S. foreign policy and uses of the U.S. military in the context of historical interventions and non-interventions; these interpretations should consider the Jesuit tradition and the ethical and moral responsibilities of a great power as well as the concerns of realpolitik.

Course Schedule:

*Note—additional short readings will be added throughout the term.


**Primary Documents:**
George Washington’s Farewell Address, 1796. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp)
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Arsenal of Democracy Speech, December 29, 1940. [https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/arsenal.htm](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/arsenal.htm)

Declaration of War, December 8, 1941 [https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-8-1941-address-congress-requesting-declaration-war](https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-8-1941-address-congress-requesting-declaration-war)

Woodrow Wilson, Fourteen Points Speech, January 9, 1918. [https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-8-1918-wilsons-fourteen-points](https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-8-1918-wilsons-fourteen-points)

**Week 2: January 14th** U.S.-Philippines 1898


**Primary Documents**

William McKinley, Executive Order, December 21,1898.
General Wesley Merritt, Proclamation of the Occupation of Manila, August 14, 1898.

“Aguinaldo’s Case against The United States” North American Review, September 1899.

U.S. Philippine War Cartoons, Course Packet.

*Assignment: Students will select and write a 250-word analysis of one or more of the historical cartoons provided, making points with support from the course readings and additional research as appropriate.

**Week 3: January 21st:** The Allied Intervention, 1918-1920.

**Readings:**

**Week 4: January 28th:** Aid for Europe. NATO: Joining the Alliance, 1949-1951.

**Readings:** Sloan, Defense of the West Ch. 1-3, Appendix 1. The North Atlantic Treaty.


**Readings:** Chen Jian, Mao’s China and the Cold War. (University of North Carolina Press, 2001.) Ch.1-2.

**Primary Documents:**
- Statement by the President: United States Policy Toward China, December 18, 1946.

**Week 6: February 11th:** Geneva Conference on Indochina, 1954: Role Playing Exercise:

Students divide into groups and conduct a two-part exercise: 1.) to provide a historically sourced 2-page white paper outlining the position of the assigned nation they represent in the Geneva Conference of 1954, which ended the First Indochina War. The United States, People’s Republic of China, France, The Associated State of Vietnam, Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the USSR will each belong to one student group. Each national group will go on to make an oral presentation in class to provide an effective argument of their position on the settlement of the First Indochina War. A final student
group will form an evaluation panel to critique the other groups’ performance- an evaluation rubric will be provided.


Primary Documents:


https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v16/comp2


https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHPBulletin16_p1_1.pdf

Readings:


Week 8: February 18th Cuban Missile Crisis, Mid-Term Examination.
https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/08/the-myth-that-screwed-up-50-years-of-u-s-foreign-policy/


Week 10: March 4th: Mardi Gras Holiday
Week 11: March 11th: NATO in Kosovo and Libya: to bomb or not to bomb? 1999 and 2012.
Readings: Sloan, Ch.6,8. Dag Henriksen, NATO’s Gamble: Combining Diplomacy and Airpower in the Kosovo Crisis, 1998-1999. (Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 2007.) Part I, IV.


Primary Documents:


Week 16: April 15th: Spring Holiday
Week 17: April 29th: Conclusions, course review, and final course discussion. Course Paper Due 29 April.

Course Required Texts:


Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times (Cambridge University Press, 2007)