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Spring 2023

DIPL 3115 The Washington Experience: Actors, Institutions and the Policy Process

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Recommended Citation

Walser, Ray Ph.D., "DIPL 3115 The Washington Experience: Actors, Institutions and the Policy Process" (2023). *Diplomacy Syllabi*. 723.

<https://scholarship.shu.edu/diplomacy-syllabi/723>

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**The Washington Experience:
Actors, Institutions and the Policy Process
DIPL 3115**

**Seton Hall University School of Diplomacy
and International Affairs
Washington Program**

**Spring 2023
Ray Walser Ph.D., FSO ret.**

This seminar-like course is focused on the Washington policy process in several dimensions: key actors, institutions and principles that influence the formation of US foreign policy and, more broadly, the conduct of and relationship between U.S. domestic and foreign policy. With Washington as its laboratory and testing ground, the course sets out to explore the growing number of players engaged in policymaking and the ever-expanding range of challenges the United States faces in a changing domestic and world order. Topics will range from responding to a pandemic and economic crisis to addressing the nation's challenges of polarization, an apparent crisis in federalism, voting rights, racial division, inequality and social injustice. The course will focus on the opportunities and constraints Washington policy makers encounter on a daily basis. It will explore the dynamic interaction between domestic and foreign policy in the aftermath of the consequential elections of November 2020, the January 6 insurrection, the second impeachment of President Donald Trump, the 2022 mid-term elections and the initial two years of the Joe Biden presidency. Considerable attention will be given to the institutional foundations of American democracy: The Constitution, the Presidency, Congress and the Supreme Court as well as critical cabinet departments, particularly Defense, State, Homeland Security, and the intelligence community. Consideration will also be given to recurrent themes such as American exceptionalism and greatness versus national division and negative partisanship.

The course to the extent possible will be conducted in seminar form, based on discussions, reflections, debates and interactions between the seminar leader and the students. When possible, outside experts will be invited to address the class. Regrettably COVID-19 partially limits the ability for in-person meetings and visits to federal buildings, think tanks and other Washington institutions. The hope is, as we return to a classroom setting, that in-person meetings and site visits will resume.

One caveat: This syllabus is not set in stone, especially in a period of rapid developments on the domestic and international scenes. The seminar leader reserves the right to alter readings and assignments and discussion topics in response to emerging policy challenges and significant events.

Course Objectives

This course is intended to help students:

- Focus on the institutional and conceptual framework that is American democracy and the challenges it faces in 21st century.
- Enhance understanding of the individuals, institutions, concepts, traditions and processes that drive U.S. domestic and foreign policy and discern the times and places in which these may converge or conflict.
- Note the objectives and agendas of different actors in the policy process;
- Be able to track both domestic and foreign policy issues through the decision-making and policy processes, provide scenarios for their outcome and formulate policy alternatives and recommendations.
- Prepare cogent policy analysis - written and oral -presented in ways that support the policymaking process.

By semester's end, students should demonstrate improved proficiency in collecting, sorting, and evaluating information; analyzing complex situations; integrating a spectrum of advice and opinion in the analysis of the Washington policy eco-system, and strengthening effective oral and written skills.

Required readings:

Readings will be selected and assigned on a weekly basis. They will reflect the issues/problems under discussion. A weekly assignment sheet with key readings, questions and discussion points will be distributed in advance of each class.

Students are also expected to develop a tailored reading list in consultation with their instructor. While the reading list will cover topics raised in class, it will also attempt to sharpen the student's knowledge base in areas of individual interest.

Requirements & Grade Evaluation:

1. Each student will be expected to complete a written assignment once every two weeks. Formats will include the following: Op-Ed, Decision Memo, President's Daily Brief, Memorandum of Conversation [Memcon] [20%]
 - Op-Ed – February 3
 - Decision Memo – March 17
 - Presidential Daily Brief – March 24

- Memorandum of Conversation [Memcon] – May 5
2. Two book reviews. One should be a domestic policy maker memoir or biography. A suggested list will be provided. [20%] A list of suggested readings will be provided.
 - Book Report One – March 3
 - Book Report Two - April 28
 3. What makes Washington tick. Lessons learned - a final take home essay [10%]
 4. To whom do I go to find out? An annotated guide to the experts in the field. [10%]
 5. A Capstone exercise focused on an institution of U.S. governance and the policy challenges it faces. [30%] Additional guidance will be provided.
 6. Class participation [10%]

University and United Nations Foundation Policy

Coronavirus Safety:

Our host, the United Nations Foundation [UNF] mandates that all students submit vaccination information for access to the building. Masks are now optional. Updates on Seton Hall's policies can be found here: <https://www.shu.edu/health-intervention-communication/>

CAPS:

As part of Seton Hall's commitment to the health and well-being of all students, the University's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers initial assessments, counseling, crisis intervention, consultation, and referral services to the SHU community. The CAPS office is located on the second floor of Mooney Hall, room 27. Appointments can be made in-person or by calling 973-761-9500 during regular business hours, Monday-Friday, 8:45 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. In case of a psychological emergency, call CAPS (973-761-9500) at any time to speak to a crisis counselor. For more information, please visit: <https://www.shu.edu/counseling-psychological-services/index.cfm>

Disability Services Statement

It is the policy and practice of Seton Hall University to promote inclusive learning environments. If you have a documented disability you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in compliance with University policy, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and/or the New Jersey Law against Discrimination. Please note, students are not permitted to negotiate accommodations directly with professors. To request accommodations or assistance, please self-identify with the Office for Disability Support Services (DSS), Duffy Hall, Room 67 at the beginning of the semester. For more information or to register for services, contact DSS at (973) 313-6003 or by e-mail at DSS@shu.edu.

Policy on Incompletes

Incompletes will be given only in exceptional cases for emergencies. Students wishing to request a grade of Incomplete must provide documentation to support the request accompanied by a Course Adjustment Form (available from the Diplomacy Main Office) to the professor *before* the date of the final examination. If the incomplete request is approved, the professor reserves the right to specify the new submission date for all missing coursework. Students who fail to submit the missing course work within this time period will receive a failing grade for all missing coursework and a final grade based on all coursework assigned. Any Incomplete not resolved within one calendar year of receiving the Incomplete or by the time of graduation (whichever comes first) automatically becomes an “FI” (which is equivalent to an F). It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they have completed all course requirements within the timeframe allotted. Please be aware that Incompletes on your transcript will impact financial aid and academic standing.

Academic Integrity & Dishonesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Administration and may result in a lowered or failing grade for the course and up to possible dismissal from the School of Diplomacy. See University and School standards for academic conduct here: <https://www.shu.edu/student-life/upload/Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf> and <http://www.shu.edu/academics/diplomacy/academic-conduct.cfm>.

Resources for academic integrity can be provided upon request.

Citation Formats

Research papers should utilize Chicago Manual of Style citation formats. A packet of information will be distributed separately.

Office Hours:

Your instructor is available for individual consultations in person either before or after Friday class, during the lunch break or at any other time via Zoom, Teams or telephone.

Lesson Plan

January 20- Introduction: Welcome to Washington – Introduction to UNF - Democracy or Republic - Federalism in Crisis

January 27 – The Struggle for the American Narrative – Divided About the Past, Divided About the Future. Patriot, Woke or Neither?

February 3- Does the United States Have a Grand Strategy? What does our rise from colony to Superpower and beyond tell us about the conduct of foreign relations. Can we learn from the past?

February 10 - Behind the Resolute Desk: The Presidency – Imperial and Otherwise - the NSC – The Policy Process - and yes, the “Deep State”

February 17 – Breaking the Mold: From Trump to Biden. From Make America Great Again to Build Back Better

February 24 – Climbing Capitol Hill: A Divided Congress Charts an Uncertain Future

March 3 – Beware the Debt Ceiling. The United States Economic Policy Machine. Grappling with the federal budget, debt, inflation and industrial policy

March 17 – Striving to Remain Number One: The Department of Defense: Organization, Strategies, Resources, Force Structure and Civil Military Relations

March 24 – Truth to Power: The Directorate of National Intelligence, the CIA and the Intelligence Community

March 31 – The 9/11 Revolution: Department of Homeland Security – Terrorism, Extremism, Migration and Natural Disasters

April 7 – A Nation Built on Laws, Justice and Injustice: The Supreme Court, the Department of Justice, and the Law Enforcement Community

April 14 - Is Diplomacy Dead or Alive? The U.S. State Department, the Foreign Service and the Agency for International Development

April 21 – Searching for a Green New Deal vs. America’s Quest for Energy Independence

April 28 – Of Fellows, Scholars, Influencers and Operatives. Think tanks, NGOs, lobbyists and others.

May 5 – The Great Disruption: Information and Misinformation: The Impact of Social Media and Media Ecosystems on Washington’s Polarized Politics

May 12 - Final Exam and Final Presentation