

AMERICA'S FUTURE



Values and Contemporary Issues 366

Professor TERRENCE CASEY

Office Hours: MTRF, 4th hour or drop-in

E-Mail: Terrence.C.Casey@rose-hulman.edu

Website: [http://www.rose-hulman.edu/~casey1/AmericasFuture\(VA366\).htm](http://www.rose-hulman.edu/~casey1/AmericasFuture(VA366).htm)

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Office: Moench A205

RHIT Mailbox: #93

PHONE: 877-8281

“He who only knows his side of the case, knows little of that.” --John Stuart Mill

This course offers a critical examination of the challenges and opportunities facing American policymakers in the early 21st century. We will explore various important foreign, domestic, and economic issues. It is hoped that by the end of this course you will have developed a more informed and coherent vision of how the United States can maintain a prosperous, democratic and (hopefully) peaceful world.

READINGS – Readings for this course include:

(1) Andrew Bennett and George Shambaugh, eds., *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in American Foreign Policy*, 4th Edition, McGraw Hill, 2007.

(2) George McKenna and Stanley Finegold, eds., *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Political Issues*, 15th Edition, McGraw Hill, 2007.

(3) Cullen Murphy, *Are We Rome? The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America*, Houghton-Mifflin, 2007.

(4) Brink Lindsey, *The Age of Abundance: How Prosperity Transformed America's Politics and Culture*, Collins, 2007.

Books are available for purchase at the Institute bookstore. You are also expected to keep abreast of major national and international events. We will begin every class with a discussion of current events.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Your grade will be based on the following:

(A) Six Analytical Papers (10% each, 60% total): Based on selections from the *Taking Sides* books, you will write six short (3-5 page) papers that summarize the key points made by the respective authors, analyze their arguments, and use this analysis to build your own argument. You must write on three each from the foreign policy section and three from the domestic policy section. Further details on the requirements of these papers will be discussed in class. **Papers can be turned in at any time, however, please note the final due dates in the course schedule below.**

(B) Two Critical Book Reviews (12.5% each; 25% total): You will be required to write critical reviews (that is, analyzing and critiquing, not just summarizing, the work) of both Cullen Murphy's *Are We Rome?* and Brink Lindsey's *The Age of Abundance*. These will be in the range of 5-10 pages. Further details on the assignment will be handed out separately.

(C) Participation (15%): This is a discussion class, so you are *expected* to come to each class prepared (i.e., having done the assigned reading) and ready to actively participate in the discussion. Participation points are *not an automatic bonus* for showing up. If you do not do the reading or never speak up, even if you attend class every day, you will get a zero for participation

COURSE POLICIES: The following policies apply unless otherwise stated.

Cheating: You are expected to abide by the terms of the Institute's Honor Code, which states that: "Plagiarism is taking the words or ideas of another and presenting them as your own. Cheating is making use of any assistance on an examination, assignment, or other class project (including written reference materials, help from other students, etc.) beyond that authorized by the professor." Penalties for academic misconduct are at the discretion of the professor and can range from the loss of all credit on an assignment to a formal hearing before the Institute's Rules and Discipline Committee. It is incumbent upon you to know what constitutes academic misconduct and make sure to avoid it. If you are in any way unsure about what constitutes a violation, please ask me. *Claiming ignorance after the fact is not a valid excuse. Think rationally; the risks outweigh the gains.*

Late Assignments: Extensions for exams or assignments will only be given if you have a legitimate excuse AND you contact me in advance. *All projects that are late will receive a letter grade reduction for each day, including weekend days, which they are late.* You can reach me via e-mail, voicemail, or by dropping a note in either my campus or HSS mailbox. Short of being in a coma, you should be able to reach me if there is a problem. I am very accommodating to those who alert me to a problem in advance; I will be far less friendly if you approach me after the fact. *Failing to turn in any of the take-home exams or the research paper will result in an automatic 'F' for the course.*

Ideological Perspectives: Being a political scientist, I obviously have strong beliefs about political issues. However, my goal is not to indoctrinate you into my beliefs, but rather to allow you to *think critically* about political issues. The issues we will be exploring are inherently contentious and seldom amenable to objectively right or wrong answers. That being said, *there are good and bad arguments.* You may hold any opinion you wish, but *your arguments must be logically sound and supported by the available evidence.*

More importantly, I can only facilitate the learning process; I cannot force knowledge into your heads. You are all adults fully capable of being responsible students and active learners. That means that *if you do not understand something you need to take the initiative to find out the answer* -- raise your hand, talk to me after class, come to my office, look it up on the internet. I cannot read minds, so it is up to you to try to seek clarity when it is lacking!

Topics and Readings

Below is a tentative list of topics and readings. This is may be altered to reinforce the class discussion or in response to changing political events, so please be prepared to be flexible.

I. America Abroad – Foreign Policy (Weeks 1-5)

A. The Basics of US Foreign Policy

Introduction to Foreign Policy Issues
Assessing the Bush Doctrine

Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Introduction
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 2

B. America's Role in the World

Is American hegemony good for the world?
Should we be promoting democracy?
Are We Rome? – Part I
Are We Rome? – Part II
Are We Rome? – Part III

Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 1
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 3
Murphy, Prologue and Chapter 1
Murphy, Chapters 2-4
Murphy, Chapter 5 and Epilogue

C. What Next in Iraq?

Was the War in Iraq Justified?
Should the US stay in Iraq?
Should Iraq be partitioned?

Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 4
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 5
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 6

D. Key Bilateral Relations

Is a rising China a threat to the United States?
Should the US preemptively attack Iran?
How should the US deal with North Korea?
Does US support for Israel hurt our foreign policy?

Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 10
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 8
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 11
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 12

D. Prosecuting the War on Terror

Does domestic spying help the United States?
Is torture ever justified?

Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 14
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 20

E. The Economic and Political Consequences of Globalization

Is globalization good for the United States?
Is outsourcing good for the United States?
Should immigration be loosened?
Should the US work to combat climate change?
Can the US become energy independent?

Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 16
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 17
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 15
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 18
Taking Sides-Foreign Policy, Issue 19

**First Foreign Policy Due no later than Monday, September 17th
Critical Review of Murphy's *Are We Rome?* due on Monday, September 24th
Second and Third Foreign Policy Papers Due by Friday, October 5th**

II. America at Home – Domestic Policy (Weeks 6-10)

A. The Institutions of American Democracy

Ideology and Partisan Alignment	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Introduction
Should Americans believe in a unique American ‘mission’?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 1
Do the media have a liberal bias?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 4
Should campaigns be publicly financed?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 5
Should the courts seek the ‘original meaning’ of the Constitution?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 7
Should there be a wall of separation between church and state?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 23

B. The Transformation of American Politics

The Age of Abundance – Part I	Chapters 1-3
The Age of Abundance – Part II	Chapters 4-6
The Age of Abundance – Part III	Chapters 7-8

C. Key Domestic Public Policy Issues

Does affirmative action advance racial equality?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 10
Should abortion be restricted?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 12
Is capital punishment justified?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 9
Are tax cuts good for America?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 13
Is America becoming more unequal?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 14
Is ‘Middle Eastern’ profiling justified?	<i>Taking Sides-Political Issues</i> , Issue 11

First Domestic Policy Due no later than Monday, October 22nd
Critical Review of Lindsey’s *The Age of Abundance* due on Monday, October 29th
Second and Third Domestic Policy Papers Due by Friday, November 9th