

American Primacy: Hyperpower or Hype?
Political Science 390
Northwestern University
Fall 2012, Tuesday 2:00-4:50 in Kresge Hall 4-365

Prof. Jonathan Caverley

Email: j-caverley@northwestern.edu

Twitter: [@jcaverley](https://twitter.com/jcaverley)

104 Scott Hall

Office Hours: Thursday 12:30-2:30 and by appointment ([link](#))

Course Description

The course has two goals. The first is to apply basic International Relations theory towards understanding the central fact of international politics for the next several decades: the overwhelming, multifaceted power *currently* enjoyed by the United States relative to any other international actor. We'll examine the implications of this fact through the following questions:

- Do other states regard the United States as benevolent? Is their assessment correct?
- Does power change a state's identity or function within the system?
- What should the United States do with all this power? Or can it really not do very much?
- Is American power in decline? And is so, what are the implications?

The second goal is to develop writing skills through multiple revisions and feedback from your peers and the instructor of a research paper; by the end of the class I hope you will have written the best work of your college career to date.

Do not enroll in this course unless you have taken at least one International Relations class or have the permission of the professor.

Course Requirements

This course entails a substantial amount of reading and preparation. Class attendance and participation will be crucial components of the final grade. No late work will be accepted without a written medical excuse.

The readings tend towards the abstract (for example, none of them address Iraq in any depth); class discussions will focus on tying the readings into "the real world." The paper will apply the readings and discussion to an international issue area (democratization, global warming) or a more concrete event (the Iraq War, the Doha Round).

This course is a seminar whose success depends on your participation. It is expected that every student will do all the reading and attend every class. Each student will introduce the readings for one week. The course is also designed to improve your writing skills through multiple drafts

of a final paper (~15 pages). The grade will be based on a paper abstract (10%), a first draft of the paper (15%), a final draft (50%), and participation in the seminar (25%).

You can choose any topic you like for the paper, or you can write a reaction piece to the following report (the pdf will be loaded on Blackboard):

National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*

Readings and Books: The following books have been ordered through the Northwestern Bookstore:

Joseph Nye *The Future of Power* (PublicAffairs 2011)

Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton 2008)

Barry Eichengreen *Exorbitant Privilege: The Rise and Fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System* (Oxford 2011)

Note that the schedule of lectures and readings may change based on the availability of guest lectures or even current events. If so, students will be informed at least a week in advance unless under exceptional circumstances.

Research Study Participation Requirement

Students enrolled in this course are required to complete a research assignment that can include up to 4 hours of research study participation. These studies require that students set up an appointment to complete participation at a laboratory on campus (or via an on-line survey). Students will learn how studies are conducted and will receive a synopsis at the conclusion of the quarter describing the study's goal, result, and relevance to the class. Students who prefer not to participate in research as subject may opt for an alternative that entails reading any one chapter about political science research and writing a five page reaction paper. The typical chapter is about 20 pages and thus reading it and writing a five page paper should take approximately four hours. During the first week of the quarter, students will receive an e-mail asking them whether they prefer study participation or the alternative assignment. The e-mail will also include details on how to complete either requirement. Failure to complete the requirement during the quarter will result in an incomplete. Failure to complete the requirement during the following quarter will result in a failing grade for the class. Note that if you are enrolled in multiple classes that require participation, you only need to satisfy the requirement one time. Also, if you already completed the requirement in another course in a previous quarter, you are excused from the requirement.

Academic Integrity

Any student who violates the University's principles of academic integrity will automatically fail this course and be referred to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies' office for further action by the University. There are no exceptions. The Dean's policy for WCAS is available at:

<http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/academic.html>.

All student work may be analyzed electronically for violations of the university's academic integrity policy and may also be included in a database for the purpose of testing for plagiarized content.

Accessibility

Any student with a verified disability requiring special accommodations should speak to the course instructor and to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, (847) 467-5530, as early as possible in the quarter, preferably within the first two weeks of the course. All discussions will remain confidential.

COURSE OUTLINE

Oct 2: How Much Power Does the U.S. Have? How Durable is American Power?

Oct 9: What is Power?

Brooks and Wohlforth, Chapters 1 and 2.

Barnett, M. and R. Duvall. "Power in International Politics." *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 39-75.

Nye, Joseph, Chapters 1-4, 6

Oct 16: A Realist Power: Hegemonic Stability, Balance of Power, or Neither?

Waltz, Kenneth. "Structural Realism after the Cold War,": 29-67 in G. John Ikenberry (ed.), *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Cornell 2002)

Pape, Robert, "The World Pushes Back," *Boston Globe*, 23 March 2003.

Layne, Christopher, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States' 'Unipolar Moment'," *International Security* 31/2 (Fall 2006): 7-41.

Brooks and Wohlforth, Chapter 3.

Oct 23: A Liberal Power: Can the United States Check its Own Power?

Eichengreen *Exorbitant Privilege*, entire book

Ikenberry, G. John. Democracy, Institutions, and American Restraint, 213-238 in *America Unrivaled*

Owen, John M. Transnational Liberalism and American Primacy; or, Benignity is in the Eye of the Beholder, 239-259 in *America Unrivaled*

Abstract for paper due. All students must have met with the professor before today!

Oct 30: Constructing A New Type of Power: Does Power affect Identity or Vice Versa?

Risse, Thomas. "U.S. Power in a Liberal Security Community," 260-284 in *America Unrivaled*

Kagan, Robert. 2002. "Power and Weakness." *Policy Review* (113).

Finnemore, Martha, "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be," *World Politics* 61, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 58-85.

Snyder, Jack, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon. "Free Hand Abroad, Divide And Rule At Home." *World Politics* 61, No. 1 (January 2009), 155-187.

Nov 6: The E Word: Liberal Imperialism

Snyder, Jack. *Myths of Empire*. pp. 1-20, 255-322

Niall Ferguson, "A World Without Power," *Foreign Policy* (July/August 2004).

Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, "What's at Stake in the American Empire Debate," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (2007): 253-271.

Nov 13: Is Decline a Choice?

James Fallows, "How Can America Rise Again," *The Atlantic*, January 2010;

William C. Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War," *World Politics*, Vol. 61 (2008): 28-57;

Barry R. Posen, "From Unipolarity to Multipolarity: Transition in Sight?" in Ikenberry and Wohlforth (editors), *International Relations Theory and the Consequences of Unipolarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 317-341;

Richard K. Betts, "The Political Support System for American Primacy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 81 (2005): 1-14

Nov 20: Paper Workshop

Draft paper due to professor today. You must have already given your draft to your discussant in sufficient time for her to read it

Nov 27: How Will It End?

Kupchan, Charles. *The End of the American Era* (Knopf, 2002). Selections.

Richard Ned Lebow and Robert Kelly, "Thucydides and Hegemony: Athens and the United States," *Review of International Studies* No. 27 (2001);

Wendt, Alexander. 2003. Why a World State is Inevitable. *European Journal of International Relations* 9 (4):491-542.

Stephen Van Evera, "A Farewell to Geopolitics," in Leffler and Legro, editors, *To Lead the World: American Strategy after the Bush Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 11-35;

Nov 30: Final paper due at 4pm in hard copy and electronic form