

The West Wing and American Foreign Policy
Duke TIP Scholar Weekend
Sarah Fisher and Kayce Mobley
October 20-21, 2012

Course Description and Objectives

Though American government courses reflect a rich theoretical tradition, they typically lack opportunities for students to analyze intangible concepts through the interpretation of creative works, a standard exercise of critical analysis. To address this dearth, this weekend course will incorporate the television series *The West Wing* into a more standard American Foreign Policy curriculum. It will address three specific layers of the series: substance, agency, and ethics. The series presents students with fictional foreign policy scenarios that typically stem from real or plausible events. Though imagined, these storylines provide students with common sources for discussion that they can address without the prejudices attached to historical events. We provide a practical and valuable avenue for exploring these themes with both middle school and high school students.

Saturday

Morning

- 10:00-10:15 - Ice breakers - quotes around the room- which quote speaks to you the most
- 10:15-10:30 - Rules, expectations, game plan
- 10:30-11:00 - Discussion: interests and influences
 - What is the national interest and what does that mean?
 - What are the most important AFP issues today?
 - Should the US be more involved in the world or less?
- 11:00-11:15 - Morning break
- 11:15-11:30 - Introducing *The West Wing* and focusing questions (small groups: substance, agency, and ethics) for episode
 - Slides on characters
 - Slides setting up scenario - Air Force transport shot down 150 miles north of Tartus - hard intelligence shows attack coming from Syrian Defense Ministry
- 11:30-12:15 - WW 1:03: "A Proportional Response"
 - Ethics in foreign policy decision-making.
 - The role of norms, such as states' responses to violence.
 - The importance of presidential advisers and staffers. The focus on individual characters allows the study of actor-centric decision-making, which introductory international relations courses often black-box. The interplay between characters' lives and their foreign policy decisions highlights the simultaneous importance and insignificance of individuals on the international stage.
- 12:15-12:30 - Post-episode discussion (small groups, then full class)
 - What is the responsibility of the US (generally)? How do you see that?
 - Divide up different parts of responsibility from Hastedt article

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- 12:30-12:40 - Interactive presentation on similar strategic scenarios (e.g., Lusitania, USS Maine, Tonkin Gulf, Lockerbie bombing, Somalia, Kenyan embassy, USS Cole, current embassy troubles)
 - How do you classify these?
 - Does your categorization affect how you respond? (e.g., seeing terrorism as war or crime)
- 12:40-1:00 - Roads Not Taken activity - small groups, chart paper, markers, presentations
- 1:00-2:00 - Lunch

Afternoon

- 2:00-3:00 - Prisoner's Dilemma Game
 - What is the prisoner's dilemma?
 - Activity: small groups (even numbers) - white board, markers, slips of paper
 - Discussion: decision-making
 - How do you make decisions? Does it vary from context to context?
 - Introduction to IR decision-making theories
 - Rational Choice
 - Prospect Theory
 - Cognitive Theories
- 3:00-3:15 - Discussion: real world decisions and their consequences: hard power, soft power, and human security
 - Roll responsibility discussion into this section if time runs out in the morning.
 - Assign focusing questions for small groups: hard/soft power, human security, and decision making theories
- 3:15-4:00 - WW 3:08: "Women of Qumar"
 - Soft security in the 21st century (including women's issues, public health crises, etc.). These 'non-traditional' issues present numerous ethical and philosophical questions relating to American foreign policy that are both relevant in current contexts and accessible to student audiences.
 - Analogical reasoning and the study of American foreign policy.
 - The use of propaganda in American history.
 - US Support of Saudi Arabia
- 4:00-4:15 - Afternoon break
- 4:15-4:45 - Discussion of the episode
 - Hard power vs. soft power
 - Traditional vs. nontraditional security
- 4:45-5:15 - Propaganda Activity - small groups, primary sources (e.g., recruitment posters and political cartoons from WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam)
 - What sentiment does this image appeal to?
 - Who is the intended audience for this image?
 - Is there a depiction of the "the enemy" or "the other" in this image?

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- Can you imagine this cartoon being printed today? Why or why not? (segue to Dutch cartoons.)
- 5:15-6:00 - What would you do - arms and Qumar? Draft a press release to announce your policy. Be conscious of the domestic and international consequences of your decision.
- 6:00-6:30 - Discussion: where do bad ideas come from? Walt article.
 - Extra, if needed: Sex issue of Foreign Policy - http://www.foreignpolicy.com/The_Sex_Issue

Sunday

Morning

- 9:00-9:30 - Activity: drawing concept maps of yesterday's discussions - markers, chart paper
- 9:30-10:00 - Cold War and post-Cold War US-Russian relations
 - Slide show of Putin's activities
 - Focusing questions for small groups: language
- 10:00-10:45 - WW 3:19: *Enemies Foreign and Domestic*
 - Traditional security threats in the 21st century (including Iranian nuclear development).
 - History of US-Russian relations, focusing on diplomacy between individuals and across administrations.
 - The importance of language to foreign policy.
 - Free speech and foreign policy.
- 10:45-11:00 - Break
- 11:00-11:30 - Discussion
- 11:30-12:30 - Debate: hard power vs. soft power and traditional vs. non-traditional security concerns
- 12:30-1:30 - Lunch

Afternoon

- 1:30-1:45 - Which character or role would you like to play in the White House? Why?
 - Focusing questions:
- 1:45-2:30 - WW 5:13: *The Warfare of Genghis Khan*
 - What makes an ally an ally?
 - The "special relationship" between Israel and the United States.
 - Diplomatic processes concerning war and nuclear weapons.
 - Bureaucratic politics and the role of the president. The interplay between the importance of an individual and the larger bureaucratic and geopolitical situation is especially apparent in the American relationship with Israel.
 - Outer space as a frontier of international relations.
- 2:30-2:45 - Break
- 2:45-3:45 - Final Discussion and Pinning Ceremony