Proposal for Plan II Junior Seminar (TC 357)

“Key Debates in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations”
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This junior seminar will explore some of the most contentious and enduring debates in the history of U.S. foreign relations. The course will be divided into five segments focused on particular topics. For each segment, students will read various works introducing conflicting interpretive and methodological points of view. They will then read primary materials that will enable them to make their own judgments about the disputed topics.

In this way, students will gain in-depth experience with historiography as well as primary sources. More important, they will come to appreciate how and why scholars of different methodological and ideological persuasions interpret primary sources in conflicting ways. Although the course is focused on the work of historians, we will frequently examine the work of political scientists and ask how the peculiarities of different disciplines affect the interpretations that result. All of this work will make students more sophisticated readers and researchers and help them to frame future research projects. The course will also advance students’ knowledge of issues that are intensely relevant in contemporary politics.

The course will begin with two or three sessions designed to orient them to the study of U.S. foreign relations. Above all, I will endeavor to introduce the major interpretive schools that have dominated the field and to show how they have developed over the last fifty years or so. The class will then shift to its first case study – the causes of U.S. intervention in Cuba in 1898, the decision that marked the beginning of America’s rise to world power. We will sample three different schools of thought, reading texts that emphasize U.S. domestic politics (Ernest May’s *Imperial Democracy*), American fears of Cuban independence (Louis Pérez’s *The War of 1898*), and racial and gender ideologies among U.S. policymakers (Kristin Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood*). We will then spend a week exploring a sample of primary documents that will be provided in a course reader.

The other segments of the course will take a similar approach in addressing debates over the decision to drop the atomic bomb, the reasons for U.S. failure in Vietnam, the end of the Cold War, and the implications of American unilateralism in the twenty-first century.

Each student will be required to write a brief paper (3-5 pages) commenting on the debate over the Cuban intervention. Each will then write another paper of 3-5 pages on another case study of his/her choice. Most important, each student will be required to write a term paper of approximately 15 pages on a third case. For that assignment, students will conduct research beyond the required readings. The two short assignments will account for 30 percent of the term grade, and the larger paper will account for 40 percent. Class participation will account for the remaining 30 percent. In order to qualify as a
Substantial Writing Component class, the seminar will require that students re-write the first short assignment.

The following texts will be required in whole or in part. Since the course will attempt to convey a wide range of scholarly perspectives, most books will be excerpted to a manageable size. Some excerpted books may be made available through a photocopy packet that will also include substantial selections of primary sources.

**Cuba**
Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*
Ernest May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power*
Louis Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography*

**Atomic Bomb**
Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*
Herbert Feis, *The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II*
J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs Against Japan*

**Vietnam**
Christian Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*
Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience*

**End of the Cold War**
John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*
Richard Ned Lebow, *We All Lost the Cold War*

**Unilateralism**
Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*
Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young, eds., *The New American Empire*
Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power*

Mark Lawrence earned his Ph.D. in 1999 from Yale University. His research interests include the Vietnam War, U.S. policy toward Third World nationalism during the 1960s, and nuclear history. Dr. Lawrence has taught a variety of courses including: The United States since 1865, The Vietnam Wars, American Foreign Relations, The Cold War in the 1960s, and The Nuclear Age. His geographic area(s) of study include the United States and modern Europe. Dr. Lawrence’s thematic fields include Empire and Globalization, and International Relations. He is the recipient of the American Historical Association's George Louis Beer Prize and Paul Birdsall Prize for his book, *Assuming the Burden:*
Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam and the winner of President's Associates Teaching Excellence Award, 2003-2004. Dr. Lawrence’s recent publications include Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam, which was published by the University of California Press in 2005.