

HIST 31552

John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the 1960s

Course Outline

This module examines the course and conduct of American foreign policy during the administrations of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, and the consequences of their management of foreign affairs. The course will focus on the series of East-West crises that marked Kennedy's brief term in office, and the challenges of managing American global commitments during both administrations. Throughout the 1960s the United States projected its values, power and influence in settings as diverse as Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, with dramatically mixed results.



In this module you will develop a nuanced understanding of this crucial, and controversial, period in the history of American foreign relations. To do so we will examine both president's backgrounds and beliefs, and the approach that they and their advisors – the so-called 'best and the brightest' – brought to government. Furthermore, we will also consider many other actors in the foreign policymaking process (both at home and abroad), the changing economic and strategic position of the United States, and the influence of the domestic political scene.

You will be expected to engage with the historiographical debates surrounding both presidencies and major events of the period, and to understand how these relate to key intellectual concerns in studying U.S. foreign policy. Utilising an extensive range of primary documents you will establish your own assessment of the era, as well as considering how recent developments in the way diplomatic history (and American history more generally) is studied – such as a focus on gender, religion, race, and ideology – affect how the topic is understood.



Method of Assessment

- Article/Literature Review (1000 words) 25%
- Research Essay (3,000 words) 75%

Indicative Reading

There is no text-book for this module, but some good overviews of the period include:

- H.W. Brands, *The Wages of Globalism: Lyndon Johnson and the Limits of American Power* (1995)
- Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (2000)
- Geoffrey Hodgson, *JFK and LBJ: The Last Two Great Presidents* (2015)
- Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (1976)
- Diane B. Kunz (ed), *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations During the 1960s* (1994)
- Mitchell Lerner (ed) *A Companion to Lyndon B. Johnson* (2012)
- Stephen Rabe, *John F. Kennedy: World Leader* (2010)
- Mark J. White (ed), *Kennedy: The New Frontier Revisited* (1998)

Sample Coursework Topics

Recent essay projects written for this module have covered subjects such as:

- US public diplomacy in Europe
- US intervention in Vietnam
- Civil rights and Kennedy's African policy
- Kennedy, Johnson and the Alliance for Progress in Latin America
- Gender and Lyndon Johnson's management of foreign policy
- Kennedy's legacy in the Middle East

Further Information

If you have any questions about the course, please get in touch with:

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(Note: Dr Tunstall Allcock is on leave and will not be available for the June drop-in sessions)

