

De-centering the U.S. in the Global Politics Classroom: Utilizing Synchronous and Asynchronous Approaches

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I share two approaches here, focusing on synchronous and asynchronous classroom meetings. The prompts I provide serve as a starting point, intended to be adapted and refined as needed based on the focus of the class and available resources. The first approach utilizes the combination of learning management systems (LMS) discussion boards and individual assignments to facilitate sequential exploration of bringing various perspectives to the global politics classroom. The second approach utilizes think-pair-share (TPS), which is more hands-on and utilizes structured and timed in-person discussions to learn and explore various perspectives in global politics classrooms.

I utilize Canvas (which could be replicated for any different LMS like Moodle or Blackboard) to facilitate student collaboration and discussion. The platform's discussion boards are valuable for asynchronous exchanges, allowing thoughtful, diverse contributions. Table 1 below provides a structured four-week iterative instruction set where students start with individual participation, and the instructor collaborates with the students one-on-one through feedback, recommendations, and suggestions on individual week-1 assignments. After receiving individualized feedback and recommendations, the student engages with the class in discussion boards. The whole process is reiterated to ensure that the student explores various perspectives on global politics and effectively and professionally communicate their understanding and reflections with their classmates. The four-week instructions are scalable regarding time, assigned tasks, and deliverables.

The structure of the weekly prompts, outlined in Table 1, is designed to progressively increase the level of involvement and critical thinking required from the students. As they advance through the weeks, their responses become more detailed, reflective, and embedded with various perspectives, incorporating a broader range of sources and deepening their critical analysis. I recommend sharing a brief video message each week with the class explaining the objective and expected outcome of each step of this iterative assignment to ensure that the learners know the assignment's focus.

Table 1: Weekly-Level Discussion Prompts with Engagement Levels

Week	Prompt (Times New Roman 12, Left Aligned, 1.5 Spacing)	Engagement Level	Structuring Your Response
<p>Week 1 (250 words or more)</p>	<p>How has the global context (economic trends, political alliances, etc.) shaped different eras of U.S. foreign policy? Choose one historical period and provide examples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify a specific historical period (e.g., Cold War). - Explain how global factors influenced the U.S. Foreign policy decisions. - Use US-based sources and historical accounts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (For Example) Analyze the impact of the Cold War on U.S. foreign policy, focusing on factors like the rise of communism and containment strategies. -Use sources like presidential speeches, government documents, and historical texts. <p>Approach: <u>Individual Homework</u></p>
<p>Week 2 (350 words or more)</p>	<p>Compare and contrast how different forms of government (democracy, authoritarianism, etc.) interact with and respond to U.S. foreign policy. Use two specific examples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze two different government types and their interactions with U.S. foreign policy. - Consider factors like national interests, cultural values, and political pressures. - Use sources from both countries and academic studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (For Example) Compare how democratic India and authoritarian China interact with U.S. foreign policy. -Consider India's focus on regional stability and China's strategic competition with the U.S. -Use sources like government statements, news articles, and academic analyses from both countries. <p>Approach: <u>Discussion Board</u></p>
<p>Week 3 (450 words or more)</p>	<p>Explore a specific foreign policy decision by the U.S. and analyze how it was shaped by domestic (government, public opinion) and global (international organizations, other nations) factors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choose a specific foreign policy decision and analyze its domestic and global influences. - Consider the roles of different stakeholders (politicians, citizens, international actors). - Use diverse sources, including government documents, public opinion polls, and international reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (For Example) Analyze the U.S. decision to intervene in the 2011 Libyan civil war, considering domestic factors like humanitarian concerns and political pressure, as well as global influences like U.N. involvement and regional dynamics. -Use sources like congressional hearings, public opinion surveys, and U.N. reports. <p>Approach: <u>Individual Homework</u></p>
<p>Week 4 (700 words or more)</p>	<p>Assess the efficacy of U.S. foreign policy in addressing a contemporary global challenge (e.g., climate change, terrorism, trade disputes). Discuss the strategies used, their outcomes, and areas for improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Select a current global challenge that U.S. foreign policy has aimed to address. -Assess the U.S.'s strategies, successes, and shortcomings. -Use various sources, including government reports, international agreements, and expert analyses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (For Example) Examine the U.S. approach to combating climate change through foreign policy, focusing on initiatives like the Paris Agreement and bilateral agreements with major emitters like China and India. -Use international treaties, government policy documents, and climate science research sources. <p>Approach: <u>Discussion Board</u></p>

(Approach 2: In-class Activity)

The second approach focuses on in-class activities where the instructor utilizes the Think-Pair-Share approach to build a community, de-centering the classroom activity about global politics and bringing in diverse perspectives from all over the world. To facilitate this in-class activity, it is imperative that the instructor creates a vibrant and welcoming environment for their learners and that the learners are warmed up (maybe through ice-breakers and different activities) and feel more at ease. All these TPS activities are highly scalable based on the available class meeting time, the number of students in the class, and the primary focus of the lecture on that specific date. I have provided four PPS activities, but I would encourage the instructors to customize and scale them as needed for their in-class activities. If you have any questions or would like to know more about these in-class activities, don't hesitate to contact me; I would be delighted to collaborate and iterate these activities to create more cohesive, inclusive, and functional for our learners. Thank you so much.

Think-Pair-Share Worksheets for American Foreign Policy:

Goal: Foster active engagement and critical thinking around U.S. foreign policy by de-centering the U.S. perspective and incorporating diverse viewpoints.

Instructions:

These worksheets are designed to be adaptable for different year levels and class sizes. Please adapt the involvedness of the prompts and required sources based on course focus and learning outcomes.

Think (Individual, 5-10 minutes):

- ✓ Read the prompt carefully and reflect on your initial thoughts.
- ✓ Consider relevant course materials, personal experiences, and additional sources (optional).
- ✓ Jot down your ideas and perspectives.

Pair (Small Group Discussion, 10-15 minutes):

- ✓ Find a partner and share your reflections.
- ✓ Listen actively and engage in respectful dialogue.
- ✓ Discuss, expand upon, and refine your ideas together.
- ✓ Prepare key points to share with the class.

Share (Whole Class Discussion, Professor-led):

- ✓ Representatives from each pair share their key points and insights.
- ✓ The professor facilitates discussion, encouraging diverse perspectives and critical analysis.
- ✓ Explore common themes, areas of disagreement, and potential solutions.
- ✓ Connect the discussion to broader foreign policy concepts and real-world examples.

Worksheet Templates:



Level 1: Introduction to American Foreign Policy:

Topic 1: How does the U.S. view its role in the world?

Think:

Q.R. Code Placeholder

- ✓ What are some different ways the U.S. describes its foreign policy goals? (e.g., promoting democracy and protecting national interests)
- ✓ Can you think of historical examples where the U.S. acted on these goals?

Pair:

- ✓ Discuss how other countries with different histories and cultures might perceive these goals.
- ✓ Brainstorm alternative perspectives on the U.S. role in the world.

Share:

- ✓ Share your different perspectives and consider their implications for understanding U.S. foreign policy.

Topic 2: How does domestic politics influence U.S. foreign policy?

Think:

- ✓ Can you think of recent examples where domestic issues impacted U.S. foreign policy decisions?
- ✓ Imagine you are a political advisor. How would you explain the potential consequences of these decisions to the public?

Pair:

- ✓ Discuss how different political viewpoints within the U.S. might approach the same foreign policy issue.
- ✓ Consider how public opinion and elections influence foreign policy.

Share:

- ✓ Share how domestic factors can create complexities and diverse perspectives within U.S. foreign policy.

Level 2: Comparative Politics and American Foreign Policy:



Topic: How does the U.S. interact with different political systems worldwide?

Think:

- ✓ Choose two countries with contrasting political systems (e.g., democracy, Authoritarianism).
- ✓ How might their different governing structures impact their interactions with the U.S.?

Pair:

- ✓ Research a specific foreign policy issue involving the U.S. and your chosen countries.
- ✓ Compare and contrast how countries approach the issue based on their political systems and interests.

Share:

- ✓ Discuss how different political systems create diverse dynamics in U.S. foreign relations.
- ✓ Consider the limitations of a U.S.-centric perspective when analyzing international relations.



Level 3: American Foreign Policy in a Globalized World:

Q.R. Code Placeholder

Topic: How do global challenges impact U.S. foreign policy?

Think:

- ✓ Choose a specific worldwide challenge and analyze its potential impact on the U.S. and other countries.
- ✓ Can you provide historical examples of how the U.S. collaborated with other countries to address a global challenge?

Pair:

- ✓ Research how regions and countries perceive the chosen global challenge and potential solutions.
- ✓ Discuss the effectiveness of past U.S. responses and the potential for international cooperation.

Share:

- ✓ Analyze how global challenges require de-centering the U.S. perspective and considering diverse solutions.
- ✓ Discuss the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism in addressing global issues.

A few additional Steps:

- ✓ I encourage my students to use diverse sources beyond US-centric perspectives (e.g., international news, NGOs, regional scholars).
- ✓ I recommend modifying the engagement levels and required sources based on class size, available time, mode of instruction, and resource availability.
- ✓ I strive to promote respectful dialogues, encourage students to challenge their assumptions, and build a community in my classroom.

I utilize these scalable Think-Pair-Share worksheets to stimulate active engagement, encourage critical thinking, and foster a more nuanced understanding of American foreign policy in a globally interconnected world.