You are to write two papers for this course. Each paper must follow the Guidance for Short Papers and the Proofreading Guide that are handed out separately. The papers will be graded according to the attached Grading Standards, which correlate to the two guidances. Hence, the necessity of following the guidance should be intuitively obvious to the least casual observer.

PAPER ONE: A five-seven page narrative paper on any one single, significant event in American foreign policy (or national security) between 1790 and 1970. “Significant” does not necessarily mean “famous” or “well-known”: there are hundreds of much lesser known events that mattered greatly to the United States and to other countries, and I encourage you to identify and write about one of these. A paper on an obvious event will not receive as much credit as a paper on one of the important but more obscure (except to historians or political scientists) events.

The “event” can be one single discrete happening or the development and execution of a policy over a defined period of time. It does NOT have to be a crisis of any sort.

The paper should cover the origins of the event, who was involved and why, how the event transpired and how it was shaped by the participants, whether it was seen as a success or failure at the time, and ‘the rest of the story” – a summary of what happened in the long run, whether it remained a success or failure, unintended consequences, etc.

Due Date: Thursday, 1 October, at the beginning of class.

PAPER TWO: An eight-ten page paper similar to Paper One, save that the emphasis is much more on the decision-making processes at the presidential level. The paper should discuss in detail who was involved, their positions, the role that they played. It should cover the interaction among the participants as the event played out, discuss the differences in their advice and actions, and the role of the president and his immediate advisors. The paper should conclude as Paper One, with the short and long term results of the event. But keep in mind that for this paper the processes of decision-making are as important as, if not more so than, the substance of the final decision(s) and event.

Due Date: Thursday, 3 December, at the beginning of class.
Research suggestions: Once you select your event, you can learn much about how and why it unfolded and the roles of those involved by reviewing particularly the biographies and autobiographies of the participants, as well as books on presidential administrations, books on foreign policy, and articles in academic journals on diplomatic history, foreign affairs, and the like. If there were any legal considerations over the policy (e.g., the interpretation a treaty or a challenge to the exercise of power by the Executive or Congress), you may find illuminating articles in a law review. Any of Lane Library’s reference librarians will cheerfully assist you identify relevant book and journal articles, and I strongly recommend that you seek their help.

NB: You should endeavor to remember that after 1945 much involving foreign and national security policy was classified for some period of time (and may still be), and that the declassification of materials many years later will probably affect what was written contemporarily with the event and/or in the immediate aftermath. Therefore, if you are writing about an event between 1945 and 1970, you must use the most recent materials available, although accounts written soon after event are important as well.