

# INTRODUCTION TO GEOPOLITICS

## Historical and Critical Approaches

Geography 318  
Fall 2006  
TR 11:00-12:15  
444 Science Hall  
Office Hours: TR 1:00-2:00, or by appointment

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### Course Outline

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the main concepts and research themes in contemporary geopolitics. As one of the primary perspectives within the field of political geography, geopolitics represents a broad engagement with the interactive relationships between power and place, and the construction, contestation and reconfiguration of political spaces that results. During the semester we will examine the formation of geopolitical images of the world, where these images come from, and how they have shaped our thinking and politics over time. Following an introduction to historical and critical approaches to geopolitics, we will examine the modern history of global geopolitical visions from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Beginning with imperial geopolitics and especially Mackinder's heartland thesis, and continuing with cold war and post-cold war geopolitics, we will critically analyze the ways that academics, politicians and the media have shaped our understanding of the geopolitical world. We will end the semester with a critical analysis of emergent geopolitical understandings of the post-9/11 world, and future alternative geopolitical visions.

Please note that I will *not* distribute copies of my Powerpoint course slides via [Learn@UW](#) or email. I will, however, distribute study guides just prior to the two exams, as well as relevant handouts throughout the term. The rationale for this policy is to structure the course so that your note-writing abilities are enhanced, and to encourage you to come to class (as the slides only convey some of the content from the lecture). If you missed content on a particular slide, or didn't understand something from lecture, please ask for clarification during the lecture or during my office hours.

*I am always open to feedback, or calls for assistance or advice. Please come to my office hours or make arrangements to meet in my office if there is anything about the course you would like to discuss.*

### Course Requirements and Objectives

You are required to complete class readings prior to the day for which they are assigned, and to come to class prepared to discuss the topic of the day. In addition to the required readings (see the course schedule below), you are required to follow the international news on a daily basis, and we will begin most class periods with a review of the relevant news of the day. Your grade will be based on two research papers, a midterm and a final exam.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Define and distinguish between traditional, historical and critical geopolitics
- Discuss the main elements of the geopolitical imagination that shape our understanding of the world and our place in it
- Describe, provide examples of, and critically analyze the formal, practical, and popular geopolitics that interact to produce our geopolitical images of the world
- Trace the continuities and discontinuities of the geopolitical imagination across imperial, cold war, post-cold war, and post 9/11 eras.

### Required Readings

**Books:** John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London and NY: Routledge, 2003).  
 Gearoid O Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge (eds), *The Geopolitics Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London and NY: Routledge, 2006).  
 Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics* (London and NY: Routledge, 2006).

**Bookstore:** Books are available for purchase at Rainbow Bookstore—426 W. Gilman St., just off State Street; Tel: 257-6050

**Articles:** Supplemental articles will be assigned incrementally throughout the semester, and will be made available to you on electronic reserve in College Library via e Reserves: <http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/College/circreserve/ereserves/dept.htm#G>

**Current Affairs:** It is a requirement of this course that you do **at least one** of the following:

- (a) Visit the BBC News web site **daily** given its international focus, and its analytical quality (compared to CNN). The BBC site is available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>.
- (b) Watch the BBC News or the Lehrer News Hour on PBS TV. The News Hour is on at M-F at 6:00 and 11:00 pm, and BBC News is on M-R at 11:00 pm or 12:30 am.
- (c) Read a newspaper with a strong international (versus US) focus on a **daily** basis. My first recommendation is the International Herald Tribune if you can only consider a free

web site. It is available at: <http://www.iht.com>. If you can afford a newspaper subscription, consider reading the *New York Times* (which is available at a reduced rate in the Memorial Union. You can also access the newspaper free of charge at: <http://www.nytimes.com>), and it is in various UW libraries as well.

- (d) Visit the OneWorld.net site every day for a brief skim: <http://www.oneworld.net/>.

**Current affairs** will be discussed in the context of course concepts and themes throughout the semester, as an applied complement to more general readings, and will be used for analytical essays and in exams.

### Grading

Your final grade for the class is based on a combination of examinations (midterm and final) and 2 analytical essays. The percentage distribution is as follows:

<b>Exams:</b>	2 @ 30%	60%
<b>Research Papers:</b>	2 @ 20%	40%

**Note:** late papers will suffer a 10% reduction per day unless unavoidable circumstances arise. If the case of illness, family emergency or other similar circumstance, please contact me as soon as possible, preferably before an assignment is due. Please also be aware that if you miss lecture for any reason, *you* are responsible for the material covered. Please also note that the UW policy on academic honesty states that students can be expelled for one case of cheating or plagiarism. If you are unclear as to what constitutes cheating and/or plagiarism, please see me.

## Detailed Schedule

<b>Week 1 (9/5, 9/7)</b>	<b>Political Geography and Geopolitics as Fields of Study</b>
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Readings: Agnew, chapter 1.  
Flint, chapter 1.

<b>Week 2 (9/12, 9/14)</b>	<b>What Is Critical Geopolitics?</b>
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Readings: O Tuathail et al., General Introduction.  
G. O Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, chapters 1-2. (*E-Reserves*)

<b>Week 3 (9/19, 9/21)</b>	<b>Visualizing Global Space</b>
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**Geopolitical Codes/Decoding Geopolitics**

Reading: Agnew, chapter 2.  
Flint, chapters 3-4.

**Note: Research Paper One Assigned Tuesday, 9/19.**

**Week 4 (9/26, 9/28)                      Turning Time into Space  
A World of Territorial States**

Reading: Agnew, chapter 3.  
Flint, chapter 5-6.

**Week 5 (10/3, 10/5)                      The Search for Hegemony**

Readings: Agnew, chapters 5.  
Flint, chapter 2.

**Week 6 (10/10, 10/12)                      MIDTERM REVIEW AND EXAM**

**Note: Research Paper One Due Tuesday, 10/10**

**Week 7 (10/17, 10/19)                      Imperialist Geopolitics**

Readings: O Tuathail et al., Part One.  
Agnew, chapter 6 (pp. 85-101).  
Gerry Kearns, "Imperial Geopolitics," in John Agnew et al. (eds), *Political Geography Reader* (E-Reserves).

**Week 8 (10/24, 10/26)                      Cold War Geopolitics**

Readings: O Tuathail et al., Part Two.  
Agnew, chapter 6 (to end).  
Klaus Dodds, "Cold War Geopolitics," in John Agnew et al. (eds), *Political Geography Reader* (E-Reserves)

**Week 9 (10/31, 11/2)****Popular Geopolitics of the Cold War**

- Readings: Joanne Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), chapters 2, 4-6 (E-Reserves).  
Klaus Dodds, "Screening geopolitics: James Bond and the Early Cold War Films (1962-1967)," *Geopolitics*, vol. 10 (2005): 266-89 (E-Reserves).

**Note: Research Paper Two Assigned Tuesday, 10/31.**

**Week 10 (11/7, 11/9)****Geopolitical Visions of the Post-Cold War World**

- Readings: O Tuathail et al., Part Three (pp. 117-150).  
Simon Dalby, "Geopolitics and global security," in G. O Tuathail and S. Dalby (eds), *Rethinking Geopolitics* (NY and London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 295-313 (E-Reserves).  
James Sidaway, "What is in a gulf? From the 'arc of crisis' to the gulf war," in G. O Tuathail and S. Dalby (eds), *Rethinking Geopolitics* (NY and London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 224-239 (E-Reserves).

**Weeks 11/12 (11/14, 11/16, 11/21)****Popular Geopolitics of the Post-Cold War**

- Readings: Joanne Sharp, "Reel geographies of the new world order: patriotism, masculinity, and geopolitics in post-Cold War American movies," in G. O Tuathail and S. Dalby (eds), *Rethinking Geopolitics* (NY and London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 152-69 (E-Reserves).  
Klaus Dodds, "Enframing Bosnia: the geopolitical iconography of Steve Bell," in G. O Tuathail and S. Dalby (eds), *Rethinking Geopolitics* (NY and London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 170-197 (E-Reserves).  
Bridget Robison, "Putting Bosnia in its place: critical geopolitics and the representation of Bosnia in the British print media," *Geopolitics*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 378-401 (E-Reserves).

**Note: Thanksgiving, November 23.**

**Week 13 (11/28, 11/30)****Critical Geopolitics after 9/11**

- Readings: Agnew, chapter 7.  
Flint, chapter 7.  
O Tuathail et al., pp. 151-174; 265-284.

President Bush October 2005 speech (**E-Reserves**)

**Note: Research Paper Two Due Tuesday, 11/28.**

<b>Week 14 (12/5, 12/7)</b>	<b>Popular Geopolitics after 9/11</b>
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Readings: *Geopolitics*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2003). Special issue devoted to 9/11, selected articles (**E-Reserves**).  
Jason Dittmer, "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics," *Annals of the AAG*, vol. 95, 3 (2005): 626-43 (**E-Reserves**).

<b>Week 15 (12/12, 12/14)</b>	<b>Re-Visioning the World Geopolitically</b>
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Readings: Agnew, chapter 8.  
Flint, chapter 8.

<b>December 18, 12:25-2:25</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>
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