

INTRODUCTION TO GEOPOLITICS

Geography 318
Fall 2009
TR 9:30-10:45
444 Science Hall
Office Hours: TR 11:00-12:00, 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 traditional, historical and critical approaches to geopolitics, we will examine the modern history of global geopolitical visions from the turn of the 20th 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 popular sources such as news media and film 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), especially because we will be doing a good deal of small-group in-class work. If you missed content on a particular slide, or didn't understand something from lecture, please ask for clarification during the lecture, after class, 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 a midterm exam, a final exam, and one term paper.

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 US geopolitical imagination across imperial, cold war, post-cold war, and post 9/11 eras.

Required Readings

Books: John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics*, 2nd ed. (London and NY: Routledge, 2003).
Gearoid O Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge (eds), *The Geopolitics Reader*, 2nd 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 *E-Reserves*.

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 News Hour with Jim Lehrer on PBS TV. The News Hour is on at M-F at 6:00 pm, and BBC News is on at 5:30 and 11:00 pm.
- (c) Read a newspaper with a strong international (versus US) focus on a **daily** basis. My first recommendation is the

International Herald Tribune (<http://www.ihf.com>) or the
New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com>).

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 2 examinations (midterm and final) and 1 term paper. The percentage distribution is as follows:

<u>Exams:</u>	2 @ 25%	50%
<u>Analytical Papers:</u>	2 @ 20%	40%
<u>Class Participation:</u>		10%

Note: late papers will suffer a third of a letter grade reduction per day unless unavoidable circumstances arise. In 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

Week 1 (Thursday, 9/3)	Syllabus Handout and Overview
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Week 2 (9/8, 9/10)	Introduction to Geopolitics
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Readings: Agnew, chapter 1.
Flint, chapter 1.
O Tuathail et al., General Introduction.

Recommended: G. O Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, chapters 1-2. (***E-Reserves***)

Week 3 (9/15, 9/17)	Visualizing Global Space Geopolitical Codes/Decoding Geopolitics
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Reading: Agnew, chapter 2.
Flint, chapters 3-4.

Note: Analytical Paper One assigned and discussed in class, 9/17

Week 4 (9/22, 9/24)	Turning Time into Space
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Reading: Agnew, chapter 3.
Flint, chapter 5-6.

Video: *Star Trek*, "A Private Little War" (1968)

Week 5 (9/29, 10/1)	A World of Territorial States The Pursuit of Primacy
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Readings: Agnew, chapters 4-5.
Flint, chapter 2.

Note: Analytical Paper One Due in class, 10/1

Week 6 (10/6, 10/8)	MIDTERM REVIEW AND EXAM
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Week 7 (10/13, 10/15)	Imperial Geopolitics
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Readings: O Tuathail et al., Part One.
Agnew, chapter 6 (pp. 85-101).
Gerry Kearns, "Imperial Geopolitics," in John Agnew et al. (eds), *A Companion to Political Geography (E-Reserves)*.
Sarah O'Hara and Michael Heffernan, "From Geo-Strategy to Geo-Economics: The 'Heartland and British Imperialism before and after Mackinder,'" *Geopolitics* 11 (2006): 54-73.

Week 8 (10/20, 10/22)	Cold War Geopolitics
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Readings: O Tuathail et al., Part Two.
Agnew, chapter 6 (to end).
Klaus Dodds, "Cold War Geopolitics," in John Agnew et al. (eds), *A Companion to Political Geography (E-Reserves)*

Note: Analytical Paper Two assigned and discussed on 10/22.

Week 9 (10/27, 10/29) 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**).

Films: *Red Nightmare* (1962)
Dr. Strangelove (1964)

Week 10 (11/3, 11/5) 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 (11/10, 11/12) 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**).
* Gearoid O Tuathail, "The frustrations of geopolitics and the pleasures of war: behind enemy lines and American geopolitical culture," *Geopolitics* 10, 2005: 356-377.

Films: *Black Hawk Down* (2001)
Behind Enemy Lines (2001)

Week 12 (11/17, 11/19) Critical Geopolitics after 9/11

Readings: Agnew, chapter 7.
Flint, chapter 7.
O Tuathail et al., pp. 151-174; 265-284.
Simon Dalby, "The Pentagon's New Imperial Cartography," in D.

Gregory

and A. Pred (eds.), *Violent Geographies* (NY: Routledge, 2007),
pp. 295-308.
President Bush, October 2005 speech (**E-Reserves**)

Note: Analytical Paper Two due in class, 11/17.

Week 13-14 (11/24, 12/1, 12/3)	Popular Geopolitics after 9/11
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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**).
Cynthia Weber, "Securitizing the unconscious: the Bush doctrine of preemption and *Minority Report*," *Geopolitics*, 10 (2005): 482-499.

Films: *Minority Report* (2002)
The Kingdom (2007)
(New films such as *GI Joe* may be substituted for the films listed)

Note: Thanksgiving Day is 11/26

Week 15 (12/8, 12/10)	Concluding Remarks and Review
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Readings: Agnew, chapter 8.
Flint, chapter 8.

SECOND EXAM IN CLASS, 12/15