

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Geography

GEOPOLITICS
GEOGRAPHY 2142B
2016

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Lecture:	Monday	11:30 to 1:30 Room SSC 3028
Tutorial:	Wednesday	11:30 to 12:30 Room SSC 3028
Office Hours:	Tuesday	2:30 to 4:00 or by appointment

According to the Calendar description, Geography 2142B consists of “**An exploration of the geographical setting in which political decisions are taken.** In this syllabus you will find detailed information about the organization and requirements of this course.

Introduction

The subject matter of geopolitics is about political decisions conditioned by **geographical settings**; these settings are visually represented by maps. Therefore, maps are an important **means of geopolitical investigation.**

In spatial terms, geopolitics is the study of boundaries and areas. In conceptual terms, geopolitics comprises the study of international relations and the outcome of power struggles at local and global scales. Geopolitics explores **events** such as the emergence of new states, the fragmentation of countries (e.g. the former Czechoslovakia, and the former Yugoslavia), and regional conflicts affecting several countries. The most important and long-lasting **geopolitical event** of the 20th century is the Cold War (from 1945 to the 1990s). We will analyze the evolution of the Cold War and its impact on present day conflicts.

Objectives

We will discuss the **history** of geopolitics as an academic discipline, and the tenets of the international order. This groundwork will allow us to contextualize contemporary aspects of security and conflict, the idea of state sovereignty, and the uneven geopolitics of human rights. We will analyze the West’s sponsorship of capitalist dictatorships during the Cold War years; the globalization of local wars (NATO and UN involvement in local conflicts), and the uses and abuses of the term terrorism by governments and the media.

Geopolitical incidents tend to shift and change alongside taken-for-granted geographical templates such as “axis of evil,” “outposts of tyranny,” “rogue state,” “iron curtain,” and so on. In order to grasp the import of recent events, we will analyze them from the historical perspective of the concepts and logic of **geopolitical practice** in the world

stage. Throughout the course we will emphasize two aspects of geopolitics: the **analysis** of statecraft and the theoretical basis of such **practice**.

Required READING MATERIALS

- *Geopolitics Reader, 2014*, London & New York: Routledge. Edited by Jason Dittmer & Joanne Sharp
- Extra materials available in OWL

DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	ASSIGNED READINGS
Jan. 4	Introduction	Course objectives and content
Jan. 11	Historical context (Imperial Geopolitics)	Reader: Introduction (p. 1-23) The geographical Pivot of History (p.32)
Jan. 18	The Three Ages of Geopolitics	Reader: What Geography Ought to Be (p. 49), Why Geopolitik (p.54), Orientalism (p. 75), Captain America (p.80)
Jan. 25	Cold War Geopolitics	Reader: Introduction (p. 91), The Domino Theory Principle (p. 108), Antidomino (p. 109), Non-alignment in the 1970s (p. 119)
Feb. 1	Cold War and Latin America’s Right-Wing Dictatorships	Available in OWL: Our Sons of Bitches; The Condor Years; School of the Americas and Terror in El Salvador
Feb. 8	Mid-term examination	In class (two hours)
	Feb. 15-21	READING WEEK
Feb. 22	Geopolitics after the Cold War: Terrorism and Identity (Iraq’s war)	Reader: Introduction (p. 169), The Clash of Ignorance (p. 191), The Pentagon’s New Map (p. 209)’ Neoliberal Geopolitics (213), Geopolitics by Another Name (p. 223)
Feb. 29	Geopolitics of control in the West Bank	Reader: Geopolitics and Family in Palestine (p. 312); Available in OWL: Walls as Technologies of Government
March 7	Re-conceptualizing Geopolitics	Reader: Introduction (p. 273), The revenge of Geography (p. 291), Religion and Geopolitics (p.332)
March 14	21 st Century Critical Geopolitics	Reader: Militarism, Realism, Just War or Nonviolence? (p.338),
March 21	Invasions and “regime change” in the Middle East	Available in OWL: “The Mess They Made”
March 28	Geopolitics and Environment	Reader: Anthropocene Geopolitics (p. 351)
April 4	Course review	Course summary

(Subject to minor changes)

EXAMINATION:

Mid-term exam (**two hours**) in classroom. Short answers

The final examination for the course will be given on the date and time determined by the university (**three hours**). It will consist of short and long answers encompassing all course material. No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) Completion of required reading
- 2) Completion of assignment
- 3) Attending tutorials

MARKING SCHEME:

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|----------------------|-----|
| 1) Midterm | 30% |
| 2) Assignment | 35% |
| 3) Final examination | 35% |

Assignment: Newspaper report

The report should not exceed six typed pages, double-spaced. It consists of a summary and analysis of a **political international** event. During two to four weeks you have to compile newspaper articles (editorials, interviews, reportage, etc.) about a single event. To complete the analysis you are allowed one **Canadian** newspaper of your choice (London Free Press, Globe & Mail, Toronto Starr, and National Post). Suitable subjects could be the exploits of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the rise and exploits of the Islamic State, the Ukraine's conflict, Latin America's conflicts (Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, or Mexico), Iran's nuclear ambitions, and so on. **These are examples**; you are **allowed** to choose any of these examples or **any other** subjects that fits the assignment's requirements. You need to consult with me or the TA about your chosen topic if different from the above.

(Note: all courses require a written component)

REPORT DUE DATE: March 21

How will you develop a structured and meaningful report? The following are some guidelines to help you organize the content of your reports:

- a) Define the historical context in which the event takes place. It will help you to develop a framework for your report.
- b) Pinpoint the **dates and location** of the event depicted in the news. Use maps.
- c) Make a point of marking the **names and ranks** of the principal protagonists named in the news.
- d) Comment on the ideological prejudices (bias) of some columnists or reporters if pertinent. Be aware that in some cases **advertising** is disguised as news stories through the purchase of space known as "jeansa" or advertorials in newspapers. These articles generally present an issue in a very subjective and often exaggerated

form. Advertising includes a new type in the form of paid articles or broadcasts disguised as news.

- e) You are allowed and encouraged to express at the end of the report your own opinion about the news.
- f) All of the above must be written, **not in point form**, but in essay style. You have to use all the information gathered in a meaningful and well expressed narrative.
- g) The March 2nd and 16th tutorials will help you identify your topic and polish your newspaper report.

It is imperative that you collect (or print) the articles and hand them together with the report.

The REPORT deadline is final. There are no EXTENSIONS

A guide to critical reading and review of the articles:

There are two basic styles of review: **descriptive and critical**. The two review styles are not mutually exclusive. The purely descriptive review or summary of the article/chapter’s content tends to be less engaging than the critical review, which offers both information, and is analytical. The critical review typically balances the strengths and weaknesses in light of the author stated aims. It analyses ideas, opinions and judgments, use of evidence to support them, and a consideration of how they fit with our present knowledge of the subject. The better reviews tend to move beyond description.

TUTORIAL SCHEDULE

Jan. 13	Discussing and debating readings
Jan. 20	Analyzing Cold War events
Jan. 27	Cold War videos
Feb. 3	Discussing and debating “Our Sons of Bitches”; “State Terrorism”; The Condor Years”
Feb. 15-21	READING WEEK
Feb. 23	TBA
March 2	Discussion on news stories known as "jeansa"
March 16	How to analyze Newspapers’ articles (preparing assignment)
March 23	Maps and Film
March 30	Discussing final exam

During tutorials we will discuss the required readings. You need to prepare a short summary and pinpoint the principal arguments of each reading. In the tutorials you are encouraged to talk about what you like or dislike. **Tutorials are different from lectures.** NOTE: tutorials are not given every week and may be changed

Recommended: **READING MATERIALS**

- Agnew, J. 1998 *Geopolitics: re-visioning world politics*. London and New York: Routledge
- Agnew, John & Virginie Mamadouh 2008 (Eds.) *Politics: critical essays in human geography* Aldershot ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate
- Blouet, Brian W. 2001 *Geopolitics and globalization in the twentieth century*. London: Reaktion
- Dittmer, Jason 2010 *Popular culture, geopolitics, and identity*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers
- Dinges, John 2004 *The Condor years: how Pinochet and his allies brought terrorism to three continents*. New York: New Press
- Farish, Matthew 2010 *The contours of America's cold war*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Flint, Colin 2005 *The geography of war and peace: from death camps to diplomats*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press
- Graham, Stephen 2004 *Cities, war, and terrorism: towards an urban geopolitics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing
- Ingram, Alan & Klaus Dodds (Eds.) 2009 *Spaces of security and insecurity: geographies of the War on Terror*. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate
- Livingstone, Grace 2009 *America's backyard: the United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror*. London: New York: Zed Books
- Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack 2001 *School of assassins: guns, greed, and globalization* Rev. and expanded ed. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books
- O'Loughlin, J. 1994 (Ed) *Dictionary of Geopolitics*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press
- O Tuathail, G. Dalby, S. 1998 *Rethinking Geopolitics*. London and New York: Routledge
- Pain, Rachel & Susan J. Smith (Eds.) 2008 *Fear: critical geopolitics and everyday life*. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate
- Schmitz , David F. 1999 *Thank God they're on our side : the United States and right-wing dictatorships, 1921-1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press
- Walberg, Eric 2011 *Postmodern imperialism: geopolitics and the great game*

NOTE ABOUT EMAILS:

If you have questions about the report or the lectures, the TA and I will be available to answer them during office hours. The use of email is limited to extensions or to make an appointment different from office hours. I will answer emails during office hours, not on weekends. **I do not discuss marks in emails. Please note: any consultation about reports, exams, or content of lectures, readings and the like, have to be done in person after or during class or in office hours.**

GRADES

How do I grade? I regard the mark of 'C' (60%-69%) indicative of average work, both competent and acceptable. You have completed all of the assignments and readings and demonstrated a general understanding of the course material as evidenced in the essays, labs and final exam. A grade of 'B' (70%-79%) reflects evidence of an above average effort and performance. Not only have you fulfilled the assignments in a more meticulous fashion, you have demonstrated a more thorough understanding of the material and gone a few extra steps beyond the average student as evidenced on the test and in your written work. An 'A' (80%-89%) is reserved for outstanding effort and achievement. Exceptional diligence, a thorough knowledge of the course material, and the ability to apply and convey concepts in an effective, logical and literate fashion are clearly evident. Hard labour and exceptional effort are necessary but not, by themselves, sufficient to warrant an 'A.' An 'A+' (90+ %) is extremely rare. An exceptionally outstanding performance on the examination, and essays demonstrating a superb command of English and a critical mind capable of synthesizing complex facts and ideas to arrive at particularly astute conclusions, will earn this prestigious grade.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

Support Services: Registrarial Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>

Student Development Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Requests for a final mark revision have to be done according to Calendar's rules regulations and timetable. The request has to be in written form, specific and must enumerate the points of contention.

a) Your course mark is only final when you receive it from the Registrar, and even then it can be changed on receipt by the Registrar of a Marks Revision Form. In all cases the final marks are not final until the department chair has signed off.

b) Make-up dates will only be granted upon receipt of certified medical causes or bereavement. For further details consult the Academic Calendar. Your documents need to be presented at the office of Academic Counselling Student Centre, SSC 2105, and SSC 2114. UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform_15JUN.pdf

Non-medical absences from midterms, tutorials, laboratory experiments, or late essays or assignments, will only be considered upon receipt of certified bereavement. For further details consult the Academic Calendar. Your documents need to be presented at the office of Academic Counselling Student Centre, SSC 2105, and SSC 2114.

d) Accommodation for medical illness of work worth less than 10% of the total course grade will be granted and no medical documentation for such accommodation will be required.

APPEALS, PLAGIARISM, DROPS, EXTENSIONS, EXEMPTIONS & LATE PENALTIES: You are advised to read the course calendar to familiarize yourself with the university's regulations and procedures concerning appeals ('relief'), plagiarism and penalties. Should you feel your final grade in the course is biased, inaccurate or unfair you have the right to appeal your mark. Be aware that marks may be raised--*as well as*

lowered--- through an appeal process. Please refer to the *Western Calendar* prior to doing so. Plagiarism in all its forms is, of course, unacceptable and those who tempt fate will be persecuted to the fullest extent allowed under the university's regulations. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Please Note: Course content and dates may vary due to unforeseen circumstance

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for more information on these resources and on mental health.