

INTRODUCTION TO GEOPOLITICS

Geography 318

Fall 2018

TR 2:30 – 3:45, 444 Science Hall

Office Hours: TR 11-12, or by appointment

Professor Robert Kaiser

430 Science Hall

bob.kaiser@wisc.edu

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 result. 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 and critical approaches to geopolitics, we will examine the modern history of global geopolitics 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 US geopolitical understandings of the post-9/11 world, including the Bush and Obama presidencies and the emergent geopolitics under Trump.

Please note that because we will be critically analyzing contemporary geopolitics as events unfold during the semester, the class schedule and readings are only tentative, and may change rather dramatically as events unfold.

This class is **Practice-Based!** We will be critically analyzing articles, speeches, and movies throughout the semester in class. This means that **ATTENDANCE IS VITAL!!!**

Please Note: I will distribute copies of my powerpoint slides via Canvas after lecture. However, the slides only convey some of the content from the lecture, and this is especially true for our class because we will be doing a good deal of small-group in-class work and discussion. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make up for the content missed.

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.

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

- Define and distinguish between traditional and critical approaches to 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 understandings of the world
- Trace the continuities and discontinuities of US geopolitics across imperial, cold war, post-cold war, and post 9/11 eras.

Graduate students: Graduate students who take this course will be assessed separately from undergraduate students (essays, exams and common work). In addition, extra work will be required. Please see Professor Kaiser for details.

Required Readings

John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics*, 2nd ed. (London and NY: Routledge, 2003). This book can be found online at Amazon, and there is an electronic version as well as hard copies.

Recommended: J Dittmer and J Sharp, eds. 2014. *Geopolitics: An Introductory Reader*. I have included selected readings from this on the content pages of our Canvas site, but it is also a valuable resource for the course.

Articles will be assigned throughout the semester, and will be available to you on the weekly content pages using Canvas.

Current Events:

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

- (a) Watch the News Hour or BBC world news on PBS. The News Hour is on M-F at 6:00 pm. They have also begun a weekend program.
- (b) Read a newspaper with a strong international (versus US) focus on a **daily** basis. My first recommendation is the *International Herald Tribune* (<http://www.iht.com>) or the *New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com>), but you can also read BBC online, *Al Jazeera*, or other daily international news sources.
- (c) Listen to NPR's *All Things Considered* (morning or afternoon edition) – FM 88.7, 5-7, 7-9, or 4-6 – they repeat content, so mainly listening for an hour a day should be sufficient.

Current events 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), 1 research project and class participation. The percentage distribution is as follows:

<u>Exams:</u>	2 @ 25%	50%
<u>Research Project:</u>		25%
<u>Class Participation:</u>		25%

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.

Class Participation will consist of your involvement in small group and general class discussions (**15%**), as well as your contributions to the weekly discussion page at our Canvas site (**10%**).

Detailed Schedule

September 6	Introduction to Geopolitics
--------------------	------------------------------------

Readings: Agnew, chapter 1.

Week 1 (9/11, 9/13)	9/11 in US geopolitics Visualizing Global Space: Mackinder's "geographical pivot"
----------------------------	--

Reading: Agnew, chapter 2.
H. Mackinder. 1904. "The geographical pivot of history."

Week 2 (9/18, 9/20)	Orientalism/Mapping Time onto Space Star Trek and the Vietnam War
----------------------------	--

Reading: Agnew, chapter 3.
Edward Said. 1979. *Orientalism* (excerpted in *Geopolitics: An*

Introductory Reader, pp. 75-79).

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

NOTE: **Research Project Handout and Discussion During Week 2.**

Week 3 (9/25, 9/27)	A World of Territorial Nations and States Pursuit/Assertion of Primacy
----------------------------	---

Readings: Agnew, chapter 4-5
President George H.W. Bush, *1991 State of the Union Address* (New World Order speech).

Recommended: M Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, chapter 4.
Jason Dittmer, "America is safe while its boys and girls believe in its creeds! Captain America and American identity prior to World War 2." Excerpt from *Geopolitics: An Introductory Reader*, pp. 80-88.
J. Agnew, "An excess of national exceptionalism," *Political Geography Quarterly* 2 (1983): 151-166.

Week 4 (10/2, 10/4)	Cold War Geopolitics, The Early Years
----------------------------	--

Readings: Agnew, chapter 6 (pp 102-113).
Klaus Dodds, "Cold War Geopolitics," in John Agnew et al. (eds), *A Companion to Political Geography. The Truman Doctrine*.

Recommended: J Dittmer and J Sharp, eds. 2014. *Geopolitics. An Introductory Reader*, pp. 91-118.

Week 5 (10/9, 10/11)	Popular Geopolitics of the First Cold War
-----------------------------	--

Readings: Ellen Schrecker, McCarthyism: political repression and the fear of communism, *Social Research* 74 (2004): 1041-86.
R Jacobs, "'There are no civilians; we are all at war': nuclear war

shelters and survival narratives during the early cold war,"
The Journal of American Culture 30 (2007): 401-16.
M Farish, "The ordinary cold war," *The Journal of American History*
(December 2016): 629-655.

Videos: *Red Nightmare*
Dr. Strangelove (1964)

NOTE: RESEACH PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS ON 10/9

Week 6 (10/16, 10/18)	REVIEW AND MIDTERM
------------------------------	---------------------------

Week 7 (10/23, 10/25)	Critical Geopolitics of the Post-Cold War 90s
------------------------------	--

Readings: Agnew, Chapter 7.
Dittmer and Sharp, pp. 169-208.

Week 8 (10/30, 11/1)	Popular Geopolitics of the Post-Cold War 90s
-----------------------------	---

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.
G O'Tuathail, "The frustrations of geopolitics and the pleasures of war," *Geopolitics* 10 (2005): 356-377.

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

Week 9 (11/6, 11/8)	Critical Geopolitics after 9/11: The Bush Years
----------------------------	--

Readings: Dittmer and Sharp, pp. 209-236.
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 War on Terror speech

Week 10 (11/13, 11/15)	Post 9/11 Critical Geopolitics: The Obama Years
Week 11 (11/20)	Trump's Geopolitical Vision

Readings: "President Obama's speech on the future of the war on terror, *The Washington Post*, 23 May 2013.
J. Goldberg (2016). "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April issue (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>).
"A Trump Doctrine?" *The Atlantic* May 2017.
Other readings TBA

THANKSGIVING, NOVEMBER 22

Week 12-13 (11/27, 11/29, 12/4)	Popular Geopolitics after 9/11
--	---------------------------------------

Readings: 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.
Cynthia Weber, "Securitizing the unconscious: the Bush doctrine of preemption and *Minority Report*," *Geopolitics*, 10 (2005): 482-499.
Mark Salter, "The geographical imaginations of video games," *Geopolitics* 16 (2011): 359-388.

Films: *The Kingdom*
Minority Report
Captain America 2: The Winter Soldier

NOTE: RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE IN CLASS ON 11/29.

Week 13-14 (12/6, 12/11) REVIEW AND SECOND EXAM