

GEOG 4712: POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Instructor:

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Course Introduction

This course focuses on international and global perspectives within political geography, not simply the locations of conspicuous capes or strategic bays. It is designed to promote critical thinking skills through emphasis on the enduring problems and emerging challenges that produce international relations and economic globalization. The course is designed for the upper-division level. It surveys some important aspects of the sub-discipline of Political Geography and conventional topics in International Affairs. The course does *not* engage in a systematic inventory of regional issues and local conflicts. Instead, contemporary developments in the world's regions (especially Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as Southwest Asia and sub-Saharan Africa) are used to illustrate concepts from lectures and readings. Conceptually, the course includes attention to conventional issues like 'geopolitics' and 'globalization' while it also addresses theoretical questions concerning the 'hyphen' between 'nations' and 'states'. Critically, the course seeks to develop rigorous thinking about such explicitly spatial themes as these while also challenging simplistic claims like 'the world is flat'. Accordingly, assignments incorporate a range of texts, old and new, popular and scholarly, as well as politically charged images and sounds from web-based archives; significant cartographic artifacts and novel geographic visualizations are also key components in the course.

In Part I, the class considers imperialism and geopolitics using conventional and critical perspectives. Historically, the course surveys the 19th century 'grand chessboard' and 'classical' geopolitics before considering newer forms of power. Keywords including 'state', 'scale' as well as 'great game' geopolitics and notions of objective and perceived strategic value are the prime areas of study initially. Empirically, cases including Germany, Ghana, Great Britain, India, Russia, Rwanda, the Soviet Union, Turkey, and the United States are used to illustrate competing geopolitical perspectives and strategic assumptions. Next, questions about the Cold War and ideas about 'containment' strategies will be presented in terms of their geographic components, threat perceptions, and territorial designs. In Part II, current thinking on topics including: ethno-nationalism, uneven development, civil war, resource conflict, state failure, food security, transboundary disputes, world-systems analyses, and neoliberal urbanization will be the focus. Overall, readings, lectures, and recitations are designed to introduce, conceptualize, and criticize key ideas, practices, and processes affecting global affairs and linking them to uneven geographic outcomes.

Recitation and Performance

In response to student requests, the course was restructured in 1996 as a two lectures/one recitation per week format; during the summer we will hold two recitation-style meetings/week. This experiment is successful when all students come to the discussion sections having read the material, completed the 'key terms and concepts' worksheet, and prepared additional questions or critical comments. Mandatory recitation meetings provide an opportunity to discuss and debate materials in general and to seek conceptual clarification. **RECITATIONS BEGIN THE WEEK OF JULY 5.** Details about the format and requirements of the research paper will also be given in recitation and we will take attendance. Success in this course is a function of the well-proven formula: attendance, staying current with the readings, and asking for help when needed. Use of the lecture notes from the website is no substitute for class attendance. You must complete the 'Recitation Sheets' to receive credit for participation, as simply showing up is no substitute for thoughtful engagement with the material.

Sources and Web-based Materials

There is no textbook, though we will read various text-like chapters as well as research articles on electronic reserve; brief supplements or web-links (i.e. *Economist* articles) will be added to the homepage throughout the

term as relevant events unfold. Details on accessing the electronic files are given on the course webpage - http://www.colorado.edu/geography/class_homepages/geog_4712_sum10/ PDF files of the class materials (text-only and key diagrams/maps) used in lecture are also available via the website for pre-lecture printing and this should help to alleviate frantic note-taking. The username for these notes is geog4712 and the password is xxxx (see print copy or ask the TA).

Grades, Exams, Deadlines

Grades are assigned on the basis of 30% midterm; 30% final examination; 30% term paper and 10% recitation performance. It is imperative that all students come prepared to the discussion section with the reading completed. The same readings will be the basis for the questions on over half of the mid-term and final examinations. The midterm will be **Monday July 19 15th**. Written proposals for the paper are due in hard copy form on **Thursday July 15 at 5pm**. Final term papers must be submitted by **Friday July 30 at 5pm**. The final exam will be **August 6, in class**.

Course Description

We begin with a brief history of “geopolitics”, particularly as the field developed in the West alongside exploration, colonization, and imperialism. Here, arguments from the Social Darwinist school, including ‘environmental determinism’ and ‘organic states’ are introduced to contextualize both early and contemporary approaches to geopolitical reasoning. Such arguments are also considered using more modern ‘critical’ approaches and are introduced alongside arguments about U.S. power relative to German *geopolitik* and global strategy surrounding the Cold War. Looking at the post-Cold War world, we then examine uneven outcomes associated with neoliberal globalization and new forms of conflict. Here, we consider various ‘transitologists’ and ‘shock therapists’ to understand recent developments in ‘post-Soviet Russia’, the ‘Middle East’, and ‘Africa’. Questions about ‘Europe’s limits’ and Turkey’s ‘proper place’ in the community of nations and the European Neighborhood are also detailed in this section. After the midterm, we turn to comprehensive frameworks for understanding the variable geography of contemporary global economic and political changes, including “uneven development” and “world-systems theory.” Then we use these theories, among others, to understand contemporary changes within particular world regions and across spatial scales. We examine economic changes first, particularly under the rubric of “globalization”, and look at what effects these dramatic changes have on localities in different parts of the (Third) world. Finally, we analyze the reasons why “nationalisms” and conflicts seem to be booming, both literally and figuratively despite popular decrees about “globalization’s flatteners” and the “end of the nation-state”. We conclude with considerations of how the political geography of the 21st century world might evolve and how nations/states might transform or vanish.

The course has an integrative character and requires basic knowledge about international affairs. It seeks to answer big questions about how global social, political, and economic processes unfold to transform individuals or communities and produce particular national places or urban spaces. Reading a substantive newspaper or magazine, such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist* or the *BBC News* webpage (news.bbc.co.uk/) helps dramatically to acquire (or develop) knowledge of global conflicts and current events. *The International Crisis Group* (www.crisisweb.org), *World Press Review* (www.worldpress.org), *ReliefWeb* (www.reliefweb.int), *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* (www.iwpr.net), and *International Relations and Security Network* (www.isn.ethz.ch) provide up-to-date, nuanced, transparent sources of background material and localized analysis of conflict and displacement worldwide.

fine print:

Honor Code and Plagiarism

The College of Arts and Sciences passed an Honor Code a few years ago. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

<http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

Turnitin.com

A key element of this code is that CU students will not plagiarize (using the words and thoughts of others as your own). As part of the effort to control plagiarism and to ensure that submitted works from students are fully their own, the University has subscribed to TurnItIn.com. It is the instructor's intent to submit the student papers in Geog. 4712 to TurnItIn.com and to give a grade of F in the course to any student in violation of the CU Honor Code. Note that you cannot submit the same paper or part of a paper for two different classes without the express permission of both instructors. If a student has any questions about this procedure or about any matter regarding proper citation and the Honor Code, he or she should talk to a TA or the instructor.

Disability Accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices.

Religious Accommodation

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you believe that you might have such a conflict, please see the instructor.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy is especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with the politically sensitive subject matter of this class. Diversity of opinion is welcomed.

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