

## **GEG 420 Geopolitics**

Spring 2011. Tues and Thurs 11:00 – 12:15, Room 306, Merrick Bldg.

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Office hours: Thursday 3:30 — 4:30 or by appointment

### **Course Summary**

In this course we examine the development of world politics throughout the twentieth century and the modern geopolitical imagination that animates it. Our approach is broadly historical, geographical and global in scale, and combines questions of geoeconomics in addition to geopolitical inquiry. We focus on the tension between two logics of political power that structure modern global politics, in both of which geography plays an important part: a territorial logic of power that has its basis in the direct control of territory, people and resources, and a more diffuse, geoeconomic logic of power that derives from the command of a rather “de-territorialized” market-based global economy.

The ultimate aim is to develop conceptual and theoretical tools to explain contemporary developments in world politics. We look at the historical development of geopolitics and the geopolitical imagination over the past century in order to ask questions such as: What are the historical connections between the practice of imperialism and the rise of geopolitics as a “science”? What were the economic and the political factors that led to the rise of fascism and “national socialism” in Italy and Germany? Why did the alliance between the US and the USSR in the common struggle against fascism transform into a political, economic and military rivalry, which frequently risked universal destruction? How do we explain geopolitical rivalry in the post-Cold War era, after the demise of the USSR and the “triumph” of liberal capitalism? How do we explain the wave of militarism sweeping current US politics and the increasing ties between private corporations and the “war on terror”? Indeed, how can we envisage the emergence of other forms of rivalry and competition, namely those emanating from state-less groups with a global reach? By the end of the semester, the student should have developed the analytical skills and historical knowledge necessary to think through current geopolitical dynamics. The course does not assume any background or extensive knowledge of the topic, but the student’s critical interest and willingness to engage in critical discussion.

### **Lectures and readings**

All students are required to attend all lectures, and to cover the assigned readings before class.

Required books (available at the University Bookstore):

John Agnew, 2003 (2nd edn.). *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics*. New York: Routledge.

David Harvey, 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Robert J. McMahon, 2003. *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Neil Smith, 2005. *The Endgame of Globalization*. New York: Routledge.

Additional readings will be placed on Blackboard or distributed in class.

Films will be shown outside class sessions, at a time that is convenient to all students (more on this in class).

The films that will be screened are: Casablanca; Notorious; The Spy Who Came in from the Cold; The Manchurian Candidate; Dr. Strangelove; Apocalypse Now; The Russia House; Three Kings; Wag the Dog; *Recommended*: Gattaca; V for Vendetta; Syriana; Casino Royale (2006 version); Babel; Children of Men; Rendition; A Mighty Heart.

### **Evaluation**

1) Midterm 40%; 2) Final 40%; 3) Participation 20% including attendance and participation in discussion sessions with the course TA (more on this in class).

## Syllabus

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**Tues Jan 18** Introduction to the course: thinking about geopolitics

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### I. Geopolitics, geoeconomics, and the modern geopolitical imagination

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**Thurs Jan 20** New imperialism? New American century?

Reading:  
Harvey, chap 1  
Smith, chap 1

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**Tues Jan 25** Geoeconomics of liberal imperialism

Reading:  
Smith, chap 2

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**Thurs Jan 27** Territorial power and capital accumulation

Reading:  
Harvey, chap 3

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**Tues Feb 1** The modern geopolitical imagination: global, differentiated, hierarchical world

Reading:  
Agnew, chap 1-3

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**Thurs Feb 3** The territorial trap: nation-states and global power

Reading:  
Agnew, chaps 4-5

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**Tues Feb 8** Historical geopolitics and the development of imperialism

Reading:  
Agnew, chap 6  
Harvey, chap 2

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### II. Geopolitics of bourgeois imperialism

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**Thurs Feb 10** Geopolitics, imperialism and environmental determinism

Reading (on Blackboard):  
Peet, The social origins of environmental determinism

Basin, Politics from nature  
Heffernan, Fin de siècle, fin du monde?  
Natter, Geopolitics in Germany, 1919-1945

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**Tues Feb 15** Global Monroe Doctrine? The development of US hegemony

Reading:  
Smith, chap 3

Monroe, Annual Message to Congress, Dec 1823 (Monroe Doctrine)  
Roosevelt, Annual Message to Congress, Dec 1904 (Roosevelt Corollary)  
*Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36(1): Special Issue: Presidential Doctrines. (*Selections*)

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**Thurs Feb 17** Fascism

Reading (on Blackboard):  
Paxton, The Five Stages of Fascism  
Agamben, State of Exception, chap 1

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### III. US hegemony and the Cold War

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**Tues Feb 22** Containment and rivalry in postwar geopolitics

Reading (on Blackboard):  
X, The sources of Soviet conduct  
Varga, Anglo-American rivalry and partnership  
*Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36(1): Special Issue: Presidential Doctrines. (*Selections*)

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**Thurs Feb 24** Postwar idealism and realpolitik: the United Nations

Reading:  
Smith, chap 4  
Mazower, Prizefighters (on Blackboard)  
Anderson, Our Man (on Blackboard)

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**Tues March 1** Cold War in Europe, hot wars elsewhere

Reading:  
McMahon, chaps 1-5

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**Thurs March 3** The Second Cold War: the rise and fall of détente

Reading:  
McMahon, chap 7-8

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**Tues March 8**  
**MIDTERM EXAM**

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**Thurs March 10**  
**General Discussion**

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**March 15, 17**  
**SPRING RECESS MARCH 12-20**

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### IV. Contemporary geopolitics

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**Tues March 22** Geopolitics and geoeconomics of neoliberal globalization

Reading:  
Smith, chap 5  
Agnew, chap 7  
Barnett, The Pentagon's new map (on Blackboard)

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**Thurs March 24** American Empire or end of US hegemony?

Reading:

Smith, chap 6

Project for the new American century, Statement of principles (www)

Haas, The age of nonpolarity (on Blackboard)

Further reading (on Blackboard):

Huntington, The lonely superpower, Ignatieff, The burden, Khanna, Waving goodbye to hegemony, Zakaria, The future of American power

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**Tues March 29** The return of civilizational geopolitics?

Reading (on Blackboard):

Huntington, The clash of civilizations?

Holmes, In Search of New Enemies

Further reading (on Blackboard):

Said, The clash of ignorance; Achcar, The clash of barbarisms; Mitchell, McJihad;

Ahmad, Islam, Islamism and the West (available with instructor)

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**Thurs March 31** The persistence of naturalized geopolitics:

Reading (on Blackboard):

Kaplan, The revenge of geography.

Geography Writes Back: Response to The Revenge of Geography

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**Tues April 5** The new militarism, the persistence of war

Reading (on Blackboard):

Judt, The New World Order

Lieven, We do not deserve these people

Bacevich, Debellicised

Powers, War and Its Consequences

Further Reading:

Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*; Johnson, *Nemesis*

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**Thurs April 7** Human rights intervention and democracy assistance

Reading (on Blackboard):

Mamdani, The Politics of Naming

Bartholomew and Breakspear: Human Rights as Swords of Empire?

Further reading (on Blackboard):

Mamdani, Blue-Hatting Darfur; Sussman, The Myths of 'Democracy Assistance';

Carothers, The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion; Žižek, Against human rights

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**April 12, 14**

**Annual Meeting of the AAG, April 12-16**

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**Tues April 19** Corporate warriors and warrior corporations

Reading (on Blackboard):

Radden Keefe, Iraq: America's Private Armies

Meek, Hooyah!!

Holmes, Free-Marketeering

Sheppard, Foot Soldiers of the New World Order

Further reading:

Singer, *Corporate Warriors*; Drohan, *Making a Killing*

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**Thurs April 21** Terrorism, the war on terror and torture

Reading (on Blackboard): one from each a, b or c:

a. Cole, A Larger War on Terror?/Raban, The Truth About Terrorism

b. Glass, Cyber-Jihad/Shatz, Laptop Jihadi

c. Johnson, Otherwise Dealt With/Waldrone, Is This Torture Necessary?/Cole, What to Do About the Torturers?

Further reading:

Singer, *Corporate Warriors*; Drohan, *Making a Killing* (Selections)

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**Tues April 26** A different kind of geopolitics? Accumulation by dispossession

Reading:

Harvey, chaps 4 and 5

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**Thurs April 28** Geopolitics in the age of the Matrix

Reading (on Blackboard):

Žižek, Welcome to the desert of the real

Burstyn, The New Imperial Order Foretold

Bamford, Who's in Big Brother's Database?

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