

## POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

GEOG 310

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.30 – 10:50  
329 Davenport

Dr. Colin Flint

[flint@illinois.edu](mailto:flint@illinois.edu)

126 Davenport Hall

Tel. # 333-0415

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11:00-12:00, or by appointment

Conflict is part of our everyday lives, whether concerns over terrorism, active military service, or making travel, business and career plans in a world in which war is commonplace. How can we gain an understanding of why war is fought, how it is portrayed or justified, and what the alternatives are? This class will help you address these questions, and others, through an examination of geopolitics. Geopolitics is the strategic evaluation and control of territory, and also a way of “seeing the world” in a manner that promotes difference, competition, and ultimately conflict. Therefore, we will approach geopolitics critically, trying to understand how and why particular theorists and politicians have portrayed the world in a certain manner, the way these visions have permeated our world view, and the everyday implications of the pervasiveness of geopolitical thought. We will also look at those who have criticized geopolitical thinking. The class will be based upon weekly readings and response papers, to generate a setting where we all have read and thought about the material. I will “lecture” on Tuesdays and lead a class discussion on Thursdays. Evaluation is based on the response papers, mid-term and final take-home exams, and class participation.

### Learning Objectives

After taking this class students will:-

- understand the various meanings of geopolitics
- understand various theoretical approaches to geopolitics
- use a number of geopolitical frameworks to interpret contemporary conflicts
- contextualize conflict and conflict resolution in both time and space
- understand the recursive relationship between geography and conflict
- understand how geographic settings simultaneously enable and constrain political agents
- understand the possible causes and consequences of war and other conflicts

## **Instruction methods**

To provide the information necessary for your work the course will consist of lectures, readings, a video, and in-class discussions.

## **Required Readings:**

John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics*. Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2003.

G. O'Tuathail, S. Dalby, and P. Routledge (Eds.) *The Geopolitics Reader*, Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2006.

Christopher Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, First Anchor Books, 2003.

These books are on reserve in the undergraduate library. So is *The Fog of War* DVD.

## **Electronic Reserve:**

All items other than the books and DVD are available through electronic reserve.

## **Course Outline:**

### Week 1, January 18 & 20: Introduction

### Week 2, January 25 & 27: What is Geopolitics?

Ch. 1, Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

Introduction, Atkinson and Dodds, in *Geopolitical Traditions* by K. Dodds and D. Atkinson (Eds.), Routledge, 2000, pp. 1-13 **only**.

M. Gilmartin and E. Kofman, Critically Feminist Geopolitics in L. Staeheli et al (Eds.) *Mapping Women, Making Politics*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 113-125.

**(First paper due on January 25<sup>th</sup>).**

### Week 3, Feb. 1 & 3: Geopolitical Frameworks

Chs. 2 & 3, Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

Introduction, G. O Tuathail, *Geopolitics Reader*, pp. 1-14.

J. Hyndman, Mind the gap, *Political Geography* 23, 3 (2004).pp. 307-322. UIUC Electronic Journals: Elsevier Science Direct.

### Week 4, Feb. 8 & 10: Geopolitics and the State

Ch. 4, Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

P.J. Taylor, Problematizing city/state relations: towards a geohistorical understanding of contemporary globalization, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 32 (2007), pp. 133-150. UIUC Electronic Journals: EBSCO.

Week 5, Feb. 15 & 17: Primacy and Hegemony

Ch. 5, Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

P.J. Taylor and C. Flint, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality*, Prentice Hall, 2000, pp. 62-74.

C. Flint, The “War on Terrorism” and the “Hegemonic Dilemma,” in *Globalization and Its Outcomes*, J. O’Loughlin et al (Eds.), Guilford press, 2004, pp. 361-385.

Week 6, Feb. 22 & 24: Imperialist Geopolitics

Ch 6, Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

Part 1, pp. 15-55 *Geopolitics Reader*.

Week 7, Mar 1 & 3: Cold War Geopolitics

Ch. 6, Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

Part 2, pp. 57-115 *Geopolitics Reader*.

**MID-TERM DUE IN CLASS March 10**

Week 8, March 8 & 10: Post Cold War Geopolitics

Ch 7 Agnew

Part 3, pp. 117-173 *Geopolitics Reader*.

C. Flint, Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Geographic Research Questions and Agendas, *The Professional Geographer* 55, 2 (2003), pp. 161-169. UIUC Electronic Journals: Blackwell Synergy.

Week 9, March 15: Environmental Geopolitics **NO CLASS MARCH 17**

Part 4, pp. 175-230 *Geopolitics Reader*.

P. LeBillon, The political ecology of war, *Political Geography* 20, 5 (2001), pp. 561-584. UIUC Electronic Journals: Elsevier Science Direct

Spring Break No classes March 22 & 24

Week 10, March 29 & 31: Critical Geopolitics

M. Farish, Another Anxious Urbanism, in S. Graham (Ed.) *Cities, War, and Terrorism*, Blackwell, 2004, pp. 93-109.

J. Dittmer, Captain America’s Empire, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, 3 (2005), pp. 626-643. UIUC Electronic Journals: Ingenta.

J. Glassman, On the borders of Southeast Asia, *Political Geography* 24, 7 (2005), pp. 784-807. UIUC Electronic Journals: Elsevier Science Direct

Week 11, April 5 & 7: Anti-Geopolitics

Ch. 8, Agnew, *Geopolitics*.

Part 5, pp. 231-284 *Geopolitics Reader*.

J. Hyndman, Aid, conflict, and migration: the Canada-Sri Lanka connection, *The Canadian Geographer* 47, 3 (2003), pp. 251-268. UIUC Electronic journals: Wilson Select Plus.

Week 12, April 12 & 14: *Fog of War* movie/discussion

No reading – my guess is you deserve a break. No response paper, either. But we will have a discussion.

Week 13, April 19 & 21: The Geopolitics of Just War Theory

G-W, Falah, C. Flint, and V. Mamadouh, Just War and Extra-Territoriality: The Popular Geopolitics of the U.S.'s War on Iraq as reflected in Newspapers of the Arab World, *Annals, Association of American Geographers*, 96, 1 (2006), pp. 142-164. UIUC Electronic journals: EBSCOhost.

C. Flint and G-W Falah, How the United States Justified its War on Terrorism: Prime Morality and the Construction of a 'Just War'" *Third World Quarterly*, 25, 8 (2004), 1379-1399. UIUC Electronic journals: EBSCOhost

Week 14, April 26 & 28: Militarization and Geopolitics

Christopher Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*.

LAST WEEK TO SUBMIT A WEEKLY RESPONSE PAPER.

Week 15, May 3: Militarization and Geopolitics. Class Conclusion

Christopher Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*.

NO WEEKLY RESPONSE PAPER ACCEPTED THIS WEEK.

**TAKE HOME FINAL DUE MAY 10, 3pm in my mailbox in Davenport 220**

Other than the take home final there is no final exam scheduled in the final exam period.

**Academic Integrity**

By remaining in this class after being presented this syllabus, it is understood that you will follow and be bound by the most recent version of the UIUC Student Code, and especially the policies on academic integrity (Section 4). It is my policy that plagiarizing from any other sources (including published works and web-sites) is a form of cheating that will definitely result in an "F" for the assignment and maybe even the course. Your written work must be independently produced, and must not display cross-over or direct

similarity with the work of a classmate; this too is a form of cheating that will definitely result in an “F” for the assignment and maybe even the course.

### **Requirements and Grading**

You are required to read all the assigned materials and discuss them in class. You are required to participate in the classroom discussions. Attendance and participation is expected. **Class Participation counts towards 10% of your final grade.** Woody Allen’s rule (80% of life is just showing up) does **not** apply to this class.

**Weekly Response Papers count towards 45% of your final grade.** They are due at the beginning of each Tuesday class. The best 8 out of a maximum of 12 response papers will count for your final grade (You may elect to do more than 8 and let me calculate the best 8, or you may skip up to 4 papers). A response paper must be no longer than one page of double-spaced text. Each paper must identify two key points of *each* of the week’s reading, identify and explain two ways in which the readings relate to each other (in other words, the way the readings support, contradict, or illustrate points made in the other readings for that same week); and discuss one way in which the week’s readings relate to a *specific* reading from any *previous* week. Note: Multiple pieces in *Geopolitics Reader* count as one reading.

**A Take Home Mid-Term exam counts towards 20% of your final grade.** This exam will be assigned on February 22 and is due in class on March 10. It will consist of 3 or 4 questions and the student’s response will be approximately 4 double-spaced typed pages.

**Take Home Final Exam counts towards 25% of your final grade.** This exam will be assigned on April 21 and will be due on or before May 10 at 3pm. It will consist of approximately five questions and the student’s response will be approximately 5 double-spaced typed pages.