



**University of Victoria
Department of Geography**

**Contemporary Geopolitics
GEOG 386, A01
Fall 2016**

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Class Location: Cornett Building, Room B129
Class Time: Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 9:30am-10:20am
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10:30am-11:20am

Course Description

Political geography is concerned with examining the spatial dimensions of power, particularly in relation to state competition for control and dominance over territories, resources and populations. Since the mid-20th century, the world political map has undergone considerable transformations. We have witnessed events of major geopolitical significance, such as the process of decolonization and the formal breakup of European empires, the rise of Cold War geopolitics and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union, the growing importance of China as a global economic power, the emergence of the European Union, and the US-led “War on Terrorism.” This course provides an introduction to global geopolitics by situating contemporary geopolitical events within a broad historical context while also exploring key geographical concepts that help us better understand current geopolitical conflicts. As we explore such geopolitical dynamics, we will be able to see how the spaces of political power shape our everyday lives.

Course Objectives

- Introduce students to various historical and contemporary geopolitical issues that have led to transformations in the world political map.
- Introduce students to a series of regional case studies in order to gain a better understanding of the study of geopolitics.
- Guide students in becoming more critically aware of how and why their own geopolitical imaginations are constructed through world political discourse.

- Gain proficiency of geopolitical concepts and case studies to understand current geopolitical conflicts.

Learning Outcomes

- Ability to use geopolitical concepts to evaluate geopolitical conflicts around the world.
- Ability to assess geopolitical conflicts using a variety of geographic perspectives.
- Describe where and why specific conflicts are taking place across various regions globally.
- Develop critical thinking skills in terms of speaking and writing about geopolitical issues.
- Ability to understand, explain and evaluate geopolitical discourse.

Required Course Text and Readings

- Flint, Colin. (2012). *Introduction to Geopolitics*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Cockburn, Patrick. (2015). *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution*. New York: Verso.

Assignments and Grading Scheme

Your final grade will be based on the following calculation:

Attendance	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	35%
Critical Analysis Term Paper	35%

Grading Scale:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	D	F
90-100%	85-89%	80-84%	77-79%	73-76%	70-72%	65-69%	60-64%	50-59%	49% or Less

Undergraduate GradingAs per stated in the 2015-2016 Calendar**

Details About Assignments

I. Attendance (10%):

Attendance will be taken during each class session. It is your responsibility to ensure you find the attendance sheet circulated during each class meeting and make sure you sign it. Prompt attendance is a professional responsibility and courtesy (see Academic Regulations in the UVic calendar).

II. Midterm Exam (20%) and Final Exam (35%)

There will be two exams over the course of the semester (see schedule below for dates). The exams will be a combination of multiple choice and short-answer essay questions, and they will cover material from the lectures, readings, and films. The midterm exam will only include material covered from the beginning to the middle of the semester. However, there will also be a cumulative final exam at the end of the semester. For the final exam, you will be responsible for all material covered in the course from the beginning of the semester to the end. The final exam date/time/location will be announced during the semester. All class lectures will be posted by midnight the night before each class meeting on the UVic CourseSpaces website (<http://coursespaces.uvic.ca>). You are expected to attend lectures and take notes because some information (concepts, ideas, themes, examples) will be discussed in the class that may not be on the lecture slides.

III. Critical Analysis Term Paper (35%)

You are required to write a term paper for this course on the following required text:

Cockburn, Patrick. (2015). *The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution*.

During Week 8 and 9 we will discuss the arguments and content of the text in class (see schedule below for class discussion date). You should follow these instructions as you write your paper:

- This paper should be a total of 8-10 pages doubled-spaced, 12 pt font size, 2.54 cm margins with proper in-text citations. You should also include a separate reference page for external sources cited in the paper (APA style is required).
- This paper is not a summary of the text. Your term paper is a critical analysis of the content of the book. You should discuss the main claims or arguments of the text. Discuss specific agreements and/or disagreements with the content of what you read and why. You should use any external resources you feel are necessary to support your statements. In your paper, you should also link ideas and concepts discussed during lectures, from the assigned reading, and external sources to your discussion of the text. You should draw upon a fair balance of lectures, the course reading and external sources as you write the paper. Please do not use Wikipedia as a source (points will be deducted for this citation, as it is not a scholarly reference).
- Students may choose to write this critical analysis term paper as a group of two students or individually, but you **MUST** consult the instructor if you decide to write it with another classmate. Be aware that if you choose to write the paper with a partner you will both receive the same grade for this portion of your final grade.
- The term paper will be due in-class as a printed hard copy (no electronic submission) on Friday Nov. 18th. No late papers will be accepted after this date.
- Your essay will be evaluated based upon the following rubric:
 - a. Quality of content in terms of strong critiques and linkages to lectures, the course reading and external sources
 - b. Structure and organization of paper
 - c. Grammar and spelling
 - d. Proper in-text citations and references

Course Experience Survey (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term you will have the opportunity to complete a confidential course experience survey (CES) regarding your learning experience. The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. When it is time for you to complete the survey, you will receive an email inviting you to do so. If you do not receive an email invitation, you can go directly to <http://ces.uvic.ca>. You will need to use your UVic NetLink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your laptop, tablet or mobile device. I will remind you nearer the time, but please be thinking about this important activity, especially the following three questions, during the course.

1. What strengths did your **instructor** demonstrate that helped you learn in this course?
2. Please provide specific suggestions as to how the **instructor** could have helped you learn more effectively.
3. Please provide specific suggestions as to how this **course** could be improved.

UVic's Academic Integrity Policy

Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. It is expected that students, faculty members and staff at the University of Victoria, as members of an intellectual community, will adhere to these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community. This policy is designed to ensure that the university's standards are upheld in a fair and transparent fashion.

Class Schedule

Day	Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Week 1			
Wed	Sept 7th	Introduction	Review syllabus and course requirements
Fri	Sept 9th	History of Geopolitics I	Read Chapter 1 (Flint)
Week 2			
Tues	Sept 13th	History of Geopolitics II	Read Chapter 1 (Flint)
Wed	Sept 14th	The World Geopolitical Map I	*No Assigned Reading
Fri	Sept 16th	The World Geopolitical Map II	*No Assigned Reading
Week 3			
Tues	Sept 20th	Cold War Geopolitics I	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Sept 21st	Cold War Geopolitics I	*No Assigned Reading
Fri	Sept 23rd	Current Geopolitical Relations: Russia, Europe & the US	*No Assigned Reading

		Week 4	
Tue	Sept 27th	Cycles of World Leadership	Read Chapter 7 (Flint)
Wed	Sept 28th	The Next World Leader: US, Europe or China?	Read Chapter 7 (Flint)
Fri	Sept 30th	Geopolitical Codes	Read Chapter 2 (Flint)
		Week 5	
Tues	Oct 4th	Popular Culture and Foreign Policy	Read Chapter 3 (Flint)
Wed	Oct 5th	Nationalism & Ethnic Cleansing I	Read Chapter 4 (Flint)
Fri	Oct 7th	Nationalism & Ethnic Cleansing II	Read Chapter 4 (Flint)
		Week 6	
Tues	Oct 11th	Supranationalism & International Law	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Oct 12th	REVIEW FOR MIDTERM EXAM	*No Assigned Reading
Fri	Oct 14th	Short Film: In Whose Interests?	*No Assigned Reading
		Week 7	
Tues	Oct 18th	MIDTERM EXAM	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Oct 19th	Boundaries of Conflict I	Read Chapter 5 (Flint)
Fri	Oct 21st	Boundaries of Conflict II	Read Chapter 5 (Flint)
		Week 8	
Tues	Oct 25th	Clash of Civilizations	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Oct 26th	CLASS DISCUSSION PART I: THE RISE OF ISLAMIC STATE	Read Chapters 1-5 (Cockburn)
Fri	Oct 28th	Neocolonialism I	*No Assigned Reading
		Week 9	
Tues	Nov 1st	Neocolonialism II	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Nov 2nd	Film: Blood Coltán	*No Assigned Reading
Fri	Nov 4th	CLASS DISCUSSION PART II: THE RISE OF ISLAMIC STATE	Read Chapters 6-9 (Cockburn)
		Week 10	
Tues	Nov 8th	<i>TBA</i>	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Nov 9th	<i>Reading Break</i>	*No Class
Fri	Nov 11th	<i>*Remembrance Day</i>	*No Class

		Week 11	
Tues	Nov 15th	War on Terrorism I	Read Chapter 6 (Flint)
Wed	Nov 16th	War on Terrorism II	Read Chapter 6 (Flint)
Fri	Nov 18th	Arab Spring & Middle East Geopolitics CRITICAL ANALYSIS TERM PAPER DUE	*No Assigned Reading
		Week 12	
Tues	Nov 22nd	Film: The Mumbai Massacre	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Nov 23rd	Messiness of Geopolitics	Read Chapter 9 (Flint)
Fri	Nov 25th	Geopolitics of The Arctic	*No Assigned Reading
		Week 13	
Tues	Nov 29th	Film: The Fog of War	*No Assigned Reading
Wed	Nov 30th	Film: The Fog of War (con't)	*No Assigned Reading
Fri	Dec 2nd	REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM ***Reminder: Complete CES Evaluation	*No Assigned Reading

Note: I reserve the right to make reasonable changes to the syllabus over the course of the semester.

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.