

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

POLS 3430
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.00 – 10:15
FL 115

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 10:30-11:30, or by appointment

***“I don’t know who discovered water,
but I’m pretty sure it wasn’t a fish.”***

*~ Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980),
media critic & writer*

You may not know it but you are already a political geographer and will act to create, maintain, and perhaps even change politics and geography throughout your professional careers and personal lives. Part of the power of geography is that it creates winners and losers (in warfare, national struggles, citizenship politics, etc.) without us even needing to be conscious of the role of places, spaces, and geographic scales. So, you are implicated in many political geographies that are a crucial component of the big issues we face today.

Like fish and the manner in which they take water for granted, the dominant power relations in the world are maintained and seen as “natural” and so unchangeable because they require a geography that we rarely question or even recognize. Our aim this semester is to understand how politics creates geographies and how those geographies create winners and losers.

The class will engage key geographic concepts such as scale and place to explore pressing geopolitical topics. The first half of the class will introduce you to a political geography framework and the topics of conflict, global economic relations, nationalism, and citizenship. The class will require short papers and in-class discussion to explore these topics and concepts and connect them to your particular interests. The second half of the class will guide you into the exploration of a topic of your own choosing using the concepts introduced in the class. You may choose a topic within one of five broad themes: International Security; Global Inequalities; Nationalism, Genocide and Transitional Justice; Migration, Refugees and Citizenship; Global Climate Change. This exploration will culminate in an in-class presentation and a 12-15 page research paper.

Learning Objectives

After taking this class students will:-

- understand what is meant by political geography
- understand the world systems approach to political geography
- understand a feminist political geography perspective
- understand the importance of historical processes and structures
- interpret and analyze contemporary geopolitics
- recognize the long-term structure of global North-South relations and the contemporary implications
- be able to integrate the politics of state, nation, and citizenship
- have developed an in-depth understanding of the political geography of a key political question of their own choosing
- have developed a sense of your position and role in multiple political geographies.

Instruction methods

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

Required Readings:

Colin Flint and Peter Taylor (2011) *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality*, 6th edition. Prentice Hall.

A copy of this book is on reserve at the library, is available at the bookstore, but can probably be purchased more cheaply online. **MAKE SURE YOU GET THE 6th EDITION.**

All other items are available through the course Canvas site.

Your Responsibilities

You are responsible for obtaining the lecture notes, and so you should come to class. I expect attendance. Attendance is part of your grade, and your active participation in the class through weekly in-class activities will be part of the grade. You may also download the lecture slides from Canvas (see below) to supplement your notes or print them out in advance to help you take notes.

Coming to class means arriving on time, staying for the duration and being attentive: no talking (*it drives me nuts!*), newspaper reading, text messaging (*I might just go ballistic!!*), or snoring. And, of course, please turn your cell-phones off.

No late assignments will be accepted, unless there is a medical or family emergency documented by the Dean's office— meaning something sudden, drastic, and unforeseen. If

you have scheduled events, such as weddings, family reunions, job interviews, etc., coming up plan ahead and hand in the assignment early!

No cheating! See below.

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 USU Student Code, and especially the policies on academic integrity (Section VI). 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. Self-plagiarism, either for assignments within this class or using material you have written for other classes, is also a violation of academic integrity and counts as a form of cheating.

All cases of cheating will be reported to the Dean’s office

Civility Policy

The expectation of in-class discussion of the course material reflects a belief in informed debate that respects individual opinions and differences. Each member of the Utah State University community is responsible for fostering an atmosphere imbued with dignity, respect, tolerance, appreciation of diversity and positive regard for all members of our collegiate community.

Accessing Canvas.

To access the course page:

1. Type the following url “ <https://canvas.usu.edu>” in to your browser to get to the main Canvas page.
2. Log-in to Canvas using you’re A Number and Password.
3. Select the "Political Geography" link under the Courses window. You will be redirected to the POLS 3430 course page, where you will be able to access the course syllabus, lecture notes/slides, and assignments. If additional readings, discussion groups, and your performance records are added and activated during the semester they will be made available in Canvas too.

You may wish to familiarize yourself with Canvas by reviewing any of the online tutorials, which may be accessed from your Canvas homepage.

Please note that you are responsible for properly accessing material posted to the Canvas system.

Course Outline:

Week 1 & 2, August 31 & September 5: Introduction to Political Geography

Prologue, *Political Geography*, pp. 1-9.

L. Staeheli and E. Kofman, Mapping Gender, "Making Politics" in L. Staeheli et al (Eds.) *Mapping Women, Making Politics*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 1-13.

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

Weeks 2, 3 & 4 September 7, 12, 14 & 19: A World-Systems Approach to Political Geography

Chapter 1, *Political Geography*, pp. 11-46.

M. Cope, "Placing Gendered Political Acts" in L. Staeheli et al (Eds.) *Mapping Women, Making Politics*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 71-86.

First short paper due by 9am Tuesday September 26th.

Week 4 & 5, September 21 & 26: Geopolitics

Chapter 2, *Political Geography*, pp. 47-79.

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

J. Dittmer, Captain America's Empire, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, 3 (2005), pp. 626-643.

Week 5 & 6, September 28 & October 3: Geopolitics continued

Chapter 2, *Political Geography*, pp. 47-79.

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

J. Dittmer, Captain America's Empire, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, 3 (2005), pp. 626-643.

Second short paper due by 9am Thursday October 5th.

Week 6 & 7, October 5 & 10: Geography of Imperialisms

Chapter 3, *Political Geography*, pp. 80-114.

H. van der Wusten, “Violence, development, and Political Order” in C. Flint (Ed.) *The Geography of War and Peace*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 61-84.

There is an **optional** reading in the folder, an excerpt from Teresa Hayter, *The Creation of World Poverty*. Pluto Press, 1981. I read this book as an undergraduate – and it really changed the way I looked at and understood the world.

Week 7 & 8, October 12 & 17: More on the Geography of Imperialism

Chapter 3, *Political Geography*, pp. 80-114.

H. van der Wusten, “Violence, development, and Political Order” in C. Flint (Ed.) *The Geography of War and Peace*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 61-84.

Third short paper due by 9am Tuesday October 24th.

Week 9, October 24 & 26: Territory and States

Chapter 4, *Political Geography*, pp. 115-155.

Week 10, October 31 & November 2: States and Nationalism

Chapter 4, *Political Geography*, pp. 115-155.

Chapter 5, *Political Geography*, pp. 156-192.

J. Fluri and L. Dowler, “House Bound: Women’s Agency in White Separatist Movements” in C. Flint (Ed.) *Spaces of Hate*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 69-85.

Fourth short paper due by 9am Tuesday November 7th.

Week 11, November 7 & 9: Nationalism and Citizenship

Chapter 5, *Political Geography*, pp. 156-192.

L. Staeheli, “Cities and Citizenship” *Urban Geography* 24, 2 (2003), pp. 97-102.

Fifth short paper due at by 9am Thursday November 14th.

Week 12, November 14 & 16: Class Presentations: Final Paper Outlines

Final paper outlines due by 9am Tuesday November 21st.

Week 13, November 20 (yes, the Monday) & 21: Individual Meetings with Professor

There will be a sign-up sheet for times to meet and discuss your final paper based on your outline.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14, November 28 & 30: Class Presentations: Final Paper

First reflection paper due by 9am Tuesday December 5th.

Week 15, December 5 & 7: Class Presentations: Final Paper

Second reflection paper due by 9am Tuesday December 12th

FINAL PAPER DUE Noon Thursday December 14 in my mailbox in Old Main 320

Other than the final paper 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 my rules on cheating. It is my policy that plagiarizing from any other sources (including published works and web-sites) is a form of cheating that will definitely be punished. Your written work must be independently produced, and must not display cross-over or direct similarity with the work of a classmate.

If you cheat on an assignment you will receive an “F” for that piece of work, the Dean’s office will be informed of your misconduct, and your final course percentage will be reduced by 10% and your course letter grade assigned accordingly.

If you cheat for a second time in the class you will receive an “F” for the class and your name will be forwarded to the Dean’s office again.

Requirements and Grading

Your final grade will be assessed in the following manner:

Four short (3 page) activities (12% each)	48%
Final paper outline	4.5%
In-class presentation of final project	8%
Final paper	25%
In-class and on-line participation	4.5%
Reflection paper on in-class presentations (5% each)	10%

No late assignments will be accepted. Just as in the “real world” outside the haven of USU, deadlines are real. So plan ahead. With the exception of the final paper, all assignments must be submitted through the Canvas site. The deadline is strict and managed by Canvas. Send the assignment as a Word document attachment that I can open. If you have quirky software tastes then you must make the document compatible for Canvas. All assignments must be double-spaced, Times Roman 12 font, and one-inch

margins. The final paper must be delivered as a hard copy to my mailbox in the department office. Editing, presentation, spelling, and clarity of writing will be taken in to consideration when assigning a grade to an assignment.

Exceptions will be made for health reasons and family emergencies but documentation from the Dean's office will be required.

Four short papers: Periodically throughout the semester (see the syllabus for specific dates) you will be asked to write a three page paper that uses the concepts discussed in class to engage media outside the classroom to explore the “real-world” manifestations of the ideas described in the book and lectures. The best four papers out of the five assignments will be counted towards your final grade. *This means that you may either complete all five assignments and have the best four scores count (the recommended approach) OR just complete four short papers of your choosing and have these be the scores that count. There is no loss of points for only submitting four short papers but you lose any flexibility if you perform poorly on one.*

Short Paper One: Choose ONE of the activities listed on p.46 of Flint and Taylor.

Short Paper Two: Choose ONE of the activities listed on p.79 of Flint and Taylor.

Short Paper Three: Choose ONE of the activities listed on p.114 of Flint and Taylor.

Short Paper Four: Choose ONE of the activities listed on p.155 of Flint and Taylor.

Short Paper Five: Choose ONE of the activities listed on p.192 of Flint and Taylor.

Final paper outline: This two page document plays the important role of providing you with a “map” for completing an excellent final paper. Your outline will include a brief description of the topic or question you will investigate, the two or three concepts we have discussed in class that you will use in the paper, how the concepts are expected to inform the question, how investigating the question may lead you to critique the concepts, and a list of four or five readings of your choosing that will help you understand the question you chose. The outlines will serve as the basis for your meeting with Professor Flint the following week.

Final paper: The content and structure of the paper will follow the elements described above in the outline. The expectation is for a well-written, fully-edited paper that provides a political geographic understanding of the topic you choose as well as some critique or reflection on the political geography concepts. You may also develop a discussion of the policy implications of your argument. The final paper should be 12-15 pages in length, Times Roman 12 font, double-spaced, 1” margins, and be fully referenced.

In-class presentation of final paper: You will present your final paper to the class using Powerpoint or a similar software. You should present for twelve minutes and be prepared for three minutes of questions and answers. The presentation will be graded on the basis of the clarity and organization of the visual and oral components – or your ability to explain to the audience how and why the concepts help explain (or not) the topic you have chosen.

In-class and on-line participation. I do not take attendance, but it is assumed you will attend each class. Regular absences will result in an F for this part of the grade. More to the point I expect you to be an engaged and active participant in the class. Turning up and checking out (i.e. sleeping, texting, checking stuff out on your laptop, e-mailing, and just generally sitting there tuned out) is less than satisfactory (i.e. a D or F): Well, would you do it in a meeting in a new job?! A score of zero is possible for this part of the class.

Though participation is expected, and part of the grade, you may participate in-class, on-line, or a combination of both (the latter is preferred).

Satisfactory and good participation means being attentive, responding to my questions and prompts, asking questions about the reading and lecture material, participating in class discussions. Doing this in an informed, intelligent, and professional manner is excellent participation. The trick is to use the concepts we discuss in class to frame your questions, discussion, and contributions.

You may also participate in on-line discussion boards for each section of the class through the Canvas site. I will initiate the discussion thread with some specific questions relating to the material. There is a simple rubric by which your comments are evaluated. Simply, do you use the concepts discussed in class to inform your comments (good!) or not (not so good!). The idea of the discussion board is to promote conversation between your peers. Hence, participation means more than just one posting.

Reflection paper on in-class presentations. The presentations by your peers are to be treated as learning experiences as they will provide ways for you to further consider and question the concepts we have used in class and their connection to a particular question. At the end of each week of presentations you will write a one or two paragraphs (no more than one page) in which you will discuss at least one of the papers presented on **each** day of that week (a minimum of **two** papers for the week, but each paper from a different day of the week) and reflect on how they posed new questions or attitudes to political geographic concepts and/or have changed the way you have thought about your own research question.