



George Mason University  
Geography and Geoinformation Science  
Course Syllabus  
GGS 301-001: Political Geography  
Fall 2018

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**Instructor:**

Name: Jonathon Hathaway  
Office: Exploratory Hall, Rm 2219  
Email: [jhathawa@gmu.edu](mailto:jhathawa@gmu.edu)  
Phone: 703-850-6821

**Course Basics:**

Meeting times: Tuesdays, 4:30-7:10pm  
Location: Robinson Hall B113  
Web Location: Blackboard  
Office hours: By appointment only

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**Required Text:**

Flint, C. and Taylor, P.J. (2018). *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-state and Locality*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

**Course Overview:**

This course examines political patterns and processes from a geographical perspective. We look at the political organization of territory in different parts of the world and examine the spatial relationships between political patterns and a variety of related phenomena, including resources, militarization, ethnicity, economic development, and policy making. We will also examine ways in which long-standing political-territorial arrangements are being challenged or undermined.

Each week we will examine a different concept, such as the nation-state, territory, neoliberalism, or hegemony. This will be discussed in relation to concrete case studies to illustrate these concepts at play. Students are expected to have read the assigned readings before coming to class. This is an upper level class and there will be a high reading load, for which you should be prepared. Apart from the main text book (see above), there will be additional readings found on Blackboard.

**Course Objectives:**

Based upon the readings, lecture notes, and independent study, students will be able to:

- 1) To identify geopolitical, social, economic, cultural and historical trends (issues) in major world political regions, as well as underlying reasons of selected inter-state conflict.
- 2) To understand through assessment and research the geostrategic value of these regions to U.S. national interests and foreign policy.
- 3) To examine major global and transnational issues that present major threats to U.S. national security, and political and economic stability of the world family of nation-states.
- 4) To develop the ability to effectively and authoritatively research and present executive summaries of geopolitical trends and issues in the world arena.
- 5) Be able to apply key concepts in political geography to understanding the political world around you.

I am always open to feedback, or calls for assistance or advice. Please make arrangements to meet in my office if there is anything about the course you would like to discuss.

**Student Requirements:**

To successfully complete this course, students must complete all assigned readings and exercises as well as attend class; neither the textbook nor lecture notes alone will suffice. Students are encouraged to participate in class discussion, but may also be called upon at any time to offer their comments and views on class topics. **NOTE: assigned readings are to be completed prior to class.**

**Course Schedule (subject to change):**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Homework and Reading</b>
<b>1</b>	28 AUG	Intro/Course Overview Understanding Globalization	Review Syllabus Friedman
<b>2</b>	4 SEP	IR Theories World Systems Theory	Baylis Flint & Taylor
<b>3</b>	11 SEP	Territorial States Nation, nationalism and citizenship	Flint & Taylor Huntington
<b>4</b>	18 SEP	Frozen Conflicts <b>Role Playing Exercise #1</b>	Melvin
<b>5</b>	25 SEP	Power International & Regional Institutions <b>Paper Topic Due</b>	Ikenberry Walt
<b>6</b>	2 OCT	Global Patterns/Trends in Conflict <b>Mid-Term Assigned</b>	NIC; Mearsheimer; Beckley; Jervis,
<b>7</b>	9 OCT	<b>NO CLASS</b>	
<b>8</b>	16 OCT	Political Geography of Democracy <b>Mid-Term Due</b>	Flint & Taylor
<b>9</b>	23 OCT	Competition for Critical Natural Resources	NIC; Jones; Pearce; Xu
<b>10</b>	30 OCT	International Political Economy <b>Role Playing Exercise #2</b>	Gilpin; Halper
<b>11</b>	6 NOV	Geographies of War and Peace	Hardin; Perkins; <i>FSI</i> ;
<b>12</b>	13 NOV	Place and Identity Politics	Flint & Taylor
<b>13</b>	20 NOV	Cities as Localities	Flint & Taylor Lubin
<b>14</b>	27 NOV	Imperialism <b>Research Paper Due</b>	Flint & Taylor
<b>15</b>	4 DEC	<b>Group Presentations</b>	N/A
<b>16</b>	18 DEC	<b>Group Presentations</b> <b>EXAM PERIOD</b>	N/A

## **Detailed Weekly Readings:**

### Week 1:

Friedman, Thomas. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Chapter 1 (While I Was Sleeping).

### Week 2:

Baylis, John. *The Globalization of World Politics*, Chapter 6 (Realism), Chapter 7 (Liberalism), and Chapter 9 (Marxist Theories).

Flint & Taylor Chapter 1 (*skim*)

### Week 3:

Flint & Taylor Chapters 4 and 5

Huntington, Samuel. "Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No 3 (Summer, 1993): 22-49.

### Week 4:

Melvin, Neil, "Nagorno-Karabakh-The Not-So-Frozen Conflict." *OpenDemocracy.net*, 9 October 2014. Accessed 29 June 2018.

## **Role Playing Exercise #1 Nagorno Karabakh Conflict**

### Week 5:

Ikenberry, G. John. "A Crisis of Global Governance?" *Current History*, Vol. 109 (November 2010): 315 – 21.

Walt, Stephen, "Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning." *In The Origins of Alliances*, 17-21, 27-32. New York: Cornell Press.

### Week 6:

National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds, Game-Changer 3* (The Potential for Increased Conflict).

Mearsheimer, John. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Chapter 10 (Can China Rise Peacefully?).

Beckley, Michael. "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts." *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Spring 2015): 7 – 48.

Jervis, Robert. "Offense, Defense, and the Security Dilemma." *In International Politics*, edited by Robert Art and Robert Jervis, 104-124. New York: Pearson.

### Week 7: NO CLASS

### Week 8:

Flint & Taylor Chapter 6

### Week 9:

National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds, Megatrend 4* (Growing Food, Water, and Energy Nexus).

Jones, Bruce, David Steven, and Emily O'Brien. *Fueling a New Order?: The New Geopolitical and Security Consequences of Energy*. Washington: Brookings, 2014.

Pearce, *When the Rivers Run Dry*, Chapter 19 (The First Modern Water War).

Xu, Beina. "Here's Your Pocket Guide to the South China Sea Tensions." *Defense One*, May 15, 2014.

Week 10:

Gilpin, Robert. "The Nature of Political Economy." In *International Politics*, edited by Robert Art and Robert Jervis, 282-299. New York: Pearson.

Halper, Stefan. *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

**Role Playing Exercise #2 Territorial Dispute**

Week 11:

Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." In *International Politics*, edited by Robert Art and Robert Jervis, 480-485. New York: Pearson.

Perkins, Ivan. "Staying Power: How to Prevent Coups." *Foreign Affairs*, August 6, 2014.

The Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index 2018 (skim)*.

Week 12:

Flint & Taylor Chapter 8

Week 13:

Flint & Taylor Chapter 7

Lubin, Judy. The "Occupy" movement: Emerging protest forms and contested urban spaces.

*Berkeley Planning Journal*, Vol. 25, Iss. 1 (2012): 184-197.

Week 14:

Flint & Taylor Chapter 3

Week 15: N/A

### **Classroom Expectations:**

- 1) NO LAPTOPS or TABLETS or PHONES are to be used by students during lecture.
- 2) CELL PHONES must be SILENCED before class begins.
- 3) NO TEXTING, which is obvious given expectation #1. I want your full and undivided attention. This also means that if you need to sleep, stay at home.
- 4) BE ON TIME - Students are expected to be on time for class. Should circumstances arise that make you late, do not disrupt the class as you enter; take the first isle seat that is available and do not walk across the room.
- 5) CHIT-CHAT IS UNACCEPTABLE during lecture. If you have a question or comment, raise your hand and let me know.
- 6) KEEP THE ROOM CLEAN. If you pack it in, pack it out; leave your seat better than you found it.
- 7) COMPLETE THE READING. Do all readings prior to the class that it is assigned and be prepared to discuss during class.

### **Deliverables:**

#### **Role Playing Exercise (15%)**

Students will formulate and represent the decisions of a state as part of a multilateral role-playing exercise. These scenarios will attempt to integrate some aspect of geopolitical events with course content and key learning objectives. The instructor will provide students with context and background information prior to the exercise. Students will be expected to conduct independent research to identify national interests and policy positions. Following the exercise, students will have the opportunity to discuss the decision-making process and actions taken during the exercise, and review those in the context of key theories and core concepts learned in the course.

#### **Take home mid-term exam (20%)**

Students will be given a set of take-home mid-term exam essay questions 2 October, with the mid-term responses due no later than 1200 EST, 16 October. Students will select three out of five essay questions, with each response being 1.5 – 2.5 pages in length not including citations (12-point Times New Roman font, 1.5 spacing). Although the mid-term exam is open-book, students must respond to the questions on their own (and not as a group effort).

#### **Group Presentation (20%)**

Students will be divided into small groups at the beginning of the course and will assemble a briefing appropriate for a senior policy maker (10 minutes in length) on an issue covered in the Lecture Topics. Each group will be expected to define the problem and its sub-components; to briefly explain its relevance to U.S. strategic interests; to demonstrate how the geography is utilized to understand the issue; and make policy recommendations for the near future. Each group will submit a copy of briefing slides/materials to the instructor via email prior to **3 December**. Presentations will be given in class 4 December.

#### **Analytical Paper on a Geopolitical topic (reference the Lecture Topics). (30%)**

Students will prepare an academic research paper on a geostrategic issue. Students will submit the topic for the writing requirement no later than 25 September. On no more than 1 page, the student will describe the topic and a short description on the relevance of the topic to the course of study. The instructor must approve the topic.

Papers will be graded on the following qualities:

1. Well-defined thesis or problem/issue statement.
2. Clarity of the paper's logic in making a reasonable argument and drawing a conclusion or recommendation for policy.

3. Use of appropriate evidence to support the analysis, to include the quality of the sources of evidence.
4. Application of a theory or concept learned during the course, such as an international relations theory.
5. Present one or more countering points of view.
6. Use of appropriate citations and endnotes, using formats consistent with APA.
7. Absence of mechanical issues (grammar, punctuation, spelling/typos, within page limit constraints).

The research paper will be 5 to 7 pages in length, 1.5 spacing. Papers will be written in 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1” margins on the top/bottom and sides. Students will use APA Style and a cover page. A bibliography is required. Title page and bibliography do not count towards the page count.

**Late Policy on Assignments:**

A maximum of a one week extension with a minimum of a two letter-grade deduction beginning at the start of class the day it is due. To receive the highest credit possible, assignments must be turned-in on-time (at the beginning of class the day it is due). It is best to begin work on assignments as soon as possible to allow yourself plenty of time to prepare a well-researched product. These exercises are not meant to be difficult, but they do require a bit of thought, time, and effort.

**Class Participation (15%):**

Student participation is a critical component of this course. Students bring a wealth of knowledge and individual experiences that will help fellow students in shaping their mental framework for assessing global issues and constructing their own viewpoints. Students are responsible for reading the assigned “required” chapters and articles before class. In order to receive maximum credit for participation, students must demonstrate mastery of the concepts in the “required” readings.

**Attendance at Academic Conference/Think Tank/Cultural Event (Extra Credit)**

Students may attend up to three conferences, cultural activities or think tank events related to Political Geography during the course of the semester and receive extra credit. The instructor must approve the event prior to attendance. Students will not be excused from any class to attend an event for the purpose of receiving extra credit. Students must prepare and submit a 1-page (12pt font, single spaced) summary of the key discussion points within 1 week of the event to receive the extra credit. Each 1-page summary will add 1 percent credit towards the final class grade (up to a maximum of 3 percent).

**Grading Scheme and Policy:**

Participation	150
Role Playing Exercise	150
Mid-term Exam	200
Group Presentation	200
Analytical Paper	300

**Point Translation:**

980 - 1000 = A+	780 - 799 = C+
920 - 979 = A	720 - 779 = C
900 - 919 = A-	700 - 719 = C-
880 - 899 = B+	600 - 699 = D
820 - 879 = B	0 - 599 = F
800 - 819 = B-	

**Academic Integrity:**

GMU has an Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/>) with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

**Office of Disability Services:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**Resources:**

The Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

University Libraries, Ask a Librarian: <http://library.gmu.edu/ask>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu>

University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>