

Political Geography

GGS 301_001 Spring 2026

Professor

Dr. Christine Rosenfeld
(she/her)

Email

crosenfe@gmu.edu

Office Hours

Email to arrange.
2216 Exploratory Hall
or by [zoom](#)

Teaching Assistant

Ayda Zaroujtaghi

Email

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Student Expectations

- Come to class, interact, display respect
- Read email daily
- Reach out if you're stuck
- Communicate accommodations or concerns
- Obtain reliable access to a computer and internet
- Course materials are [private to this class](#)
- Use your GMU email account; include full name and course # in email

Required Texts

Readings are free and accessible at [canvas.gmu.edu](#).

Course Delivery

In-person

Meeting Time & Location

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:00-1:15 pm
2312 Exploratory Hall

Course Description

This 3-credit course provides an overview of the subfield of human geography called political geography. Subtopics include state formation and fragility, statelessness, nationalism, boundary disputes, etc. Theory foundational to political geography will be discussed alongside historical and contemporary case studies. Special attention is paid to the unevenness of power at various scales as expressed through politics. ***Course satisfies the Mason Core Social and Behavioral Sciences requirement; it has a Just Societies flag.***

Learning Outcomes

- Identify deeper context of geopolitical disputes
- Describe how power works and is expressed through politics and across space
- Apply theoretical concepts to current events
- Explain how political processes affect people, especially marginalized groups
- Navigate a scholarly journal article
- Explain how individuals, groups or institutions are influenced by contextual factors
- Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs
- Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles and theories in the analysis of significant human issues, past or present
- Define key terms related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as related to this course's field/discipline and use those terms to engage meaningfully with peers about course issues
- Articulate obstacles to justice and equity, and strategies for addressing them, in response to local, national, and/or global issues in the field/discipline

Grade Point Cutoffs

A+	980-1000	B-	800-829
A	930-979	C+	780-799
A-	900-929	C	700-779
B+	880-899	D	600-699
B	830-879	F	0-599

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Grading/Requirements

120 pts, 12%

Participation

For this class, participation means that you show up and when you show up, you're actively engaged with me and your classmates, contributing verbally and non-verbally. If you need to miss class, email the professor to make alternative arrangements. Failure to regularly attend class may result in a failing course grade.

200 pts, 20%

(Un)Just Politics StoryMap & Discussion

You will create a StoryMap with various place-markers and associated write ups that present a case study related to a spatial pattern of unjust politics. You will post your StoryMap to the discussion board, review classmates' work, and reply to classmates.

320 pts, 32%

Exams

There are 2 exams (not cumulative). Exams occur in person during class time. Format is a mix of short essay, fill in/definition, T/F, multiple choice, and/or matching.

280 pts, 28%

Perusall Social Annotation

You must complete 7 Perusall social annotation assignments for class readings. If you complete extra social annotations, your top 7 scores will be counted.

80 pts, 8%

Triangulating Your PG Knowledge

You will gather information from various sources and analyze the similarities, differences, accuracies, audiences, and utility of information from each source.

Late Work Policy



Each student starts with 3 late work tokens, which allow you to turn in a graded item up to 48 hours past the original due date without penalty. When using a late token, you do NOT need to email the professor or TA in advance; simply turn in the item on Canvas. Does not apply to exams.

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Academic Standards

George Mason University has academic standards with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity and all students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code. Cheating and/or plagiarism—passing off work as your own that is not—will result in an F for your final grade in this class. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism and familiarize yourself with the Honor Code. The official GMU policies are available from the Office of Academic Integrity: <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/>. Please consult with me about questions **prior** to turning in assignments.

Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative AI tools is permitted in this class as long as it aligns with the learning outcomes or goals associated with assessments as determined by the professor. You are fully responsible for the information you submit based on a generative AI query (such that it does not violate academic standards, intellectual property laws, or standards of non-public research you are conducting through coursework). Your use of

generative AI tools must be properly documented and cited for any work submitted in this course. [Here is how to cite AI.](#)

For any submitted work, no more than 20% of sources may be AI and no more than 20% of your written work may be directly quoted from any source, AI or not. Assignments may ask you to triangulate AI-sourced information; if so, assignment directions will explain.

Diversity Statement & Accommodations

GMU promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study, and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion (see [religious holiday calendar](#)), age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard, and respected. *Share your name and gender pronouns and how best to address you in class and via email and update your PatriotWeb profile.*

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Students who are pregnant or experiencing pregnancy-related circumstances are welcome to reach out to the professor to discuss adjustments. The university directs you to the [Pregnant and Parenting Adjustment Form](#).

Additional Policies

See [Common Policies Addendum](#) linked here and on Canvas for a review of items including **Title IX; Diversity and Accommodations; FERPA**; and detailed **Academic Standards**.

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Course Schedule

Weeks	TR, 12-1:15	Case Studies & Topics	Due by Tuesdays 12:00 pm
Week 1	1/20, 1/22	Welcome & Foundations	
Week 2	1/27, 1/29	Venezuela + Guyana <i>UNCLOS, political economy, international dispute settlement, shock doctrine, state of exception</i>	Social Annotation
Week 3	2/3, 2/5	Jammu & Kashmir <i>Boundary disputes, political ecology, nationalism</i>	Social Annotation
Week 4	2/10, 2/12	North & South Korea +South China Sea <i>Land boundary dispute, maritime boundary dispute, UNCLOS</i>	Social Annotation
Week 5	2/17, 2/19	Yugoslavia + Kosovo <i>State formation, nationalism, cohesion, separatism</i>	Social Annotation
Week 6	2/24, 2/26	Exam Review, EXAM 1	Exam 1 on Thursday
Week 7	3/3, 3/5	Types of Political Power <i>Sovereign, disciplinary, biopower</i>	Social Annotation
Week 8	3/10, 3/12	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
Week 9	3/17, 3/19	The Sahel + South Sudan & Sudan <i>Fragility, failed states, frontier, civil war</i>	Social Annotation
Week 10	3/24, 3/26	Haiti + Dominican Republic <i>Fragility, failed states, colonialism, statelessness</i>	Social Annotation
Week 11	3/31, 4/2	Nagorno-Karabakh + Abkhazia <i>Unrecognized states, patron/parent/puppet states</i>	Triangulating Your Knowledge Assignment
Week 12	4/7, 4/9	Myanmar <i>Statelessness, migration, civil war</i>	Social Annotation
Week 13	4/14, 4/16	Western Sahara + Kenya <i>Unrecognized states, statelessness, colonialism</i>	Social Annotation (Un)Just Politics StoryMap & Discussion Board (Sun, 4/19)
Week 14	4/21, 4/23	TBA	
Week 15	4/28, 4/30	Exam Review, EXAM 2	Exam 2 on Thursday