

## **IR-246: POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY**

### **DESCRIPTION**

The implications of human and physical geography for political affairs on both the global and country scales. Includes consideration of the geographical divisions of the Western dominated world economy; geopolitical models of world power and inter-state competition; and the territorial foundations of states and nations. Special attention to environmental factors in contemporary global and regional politics, to geographical aspects of political conflict, and to the implications of “globalization”.

Textbook: Muir, Richard. 1997. *Political Geography: A New Introduction*. London: Macmillan

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

#### **Introduction**

**Week 1:** Influence of geographical factors on world politics (resources, demography, environmental change, critical locations, logistics, distance, boundaries, frontiers, various interpretations of the relationship between space and power, land and sea power, economic cores and peripheries, territorial states, nation and territory, global vis-à-vis local)

#### **Core and periphery – geographical divides in the “world economy” and the political implications**

**Week 2:** Historical origins of the Capitalist West or “Why Europe?” Elaboration of the world economy, 1550-1950 – Wallerstein’s “World Systems” model and its critics – global geographical differentiation of wealth and power.

**Week 3:** “Core” (US and Canada, European Union, Japan), “Semi-periphery” (regional powers and “emerging economies” – China, Russia, India, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Turkey, Australia, South Korea, Malaysia, Gulf oil states etc), “Periphery” (poorer

“South” – most of Africa, parts of Middle East and South East Asia, Central Asia etc) –  
A survey of geographical divides in the world economy after the Cold War.

### **Global Geopolitics**

**Week 4:** The “classical geopolitics” of Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman, Saul Cohen – environmental determinants of world power and politics – concepts of “world island”, “heartland”, “rimland” – influence of geopolitical perspectives on great power policies (Britain and Tsarist Russia, Britain and Germany, Cold War containment and the Russian response)

**Week 5:** “Geopolitics” after 1990. Increasing significance of environmental concerns (examples of the water issue in the Middle East, and oil as a global strategic resource)

**Week 6:** “Clashes of civilizations?” – Samuel Huntington’s scheme of world divisions and the responses.

### **“Nations” and “Territorial States”**

**Week 7:** Nation and nationalism – the issue of collective identity and the will for political expression of that identity on a particular territory – the concepts of Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, and Benedict Anderson.

**Week 8:** The history, characteristics, and future of the territorial state.

**Week 9:** Territorial nation and territorial state – the great post-Cold War global issue of political stability – geopolitical fracture zones (the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Levant, much of Africa).

### **The geographies of political conflict**

**Week 10:** Arab-Israeli affairs.

**Week 11:** Iraq and the Persian Gulf.

### **Global and local**

**Week 12:** The phenomena of economic and cultural “globalization” – What are they, and what are their implications for “core”, “periphery”, “geopolitics”, “territorial state”, and “nation”.

### **Additional references**

Taylor, Peter. 1993. *Political Geography: World Economy, Nation-State and Locality*. Longman.

Taylor, Peter. 1996. *The Way the Modern World Works: World Hegemony to World Impasse*. Wiley.

Huntington, Samuel. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon and Schuster.

O Tuathail, Gearoid. 1996. *Critical Geopolitics*. Routledge.

Dodds, Klaus. 1999. *Geopolitics in a Changing World*. Prentice Hall.

Braden, Kathleen and Shelley, Fred. 1999. *Engaging Geopolitics*. Longman.

McNeill, John. 2000. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. WW Norton & Company.

Mittelman, James. 2000. *The Globalization Syndrome*. Princeton University Press.

Gilpin, Robert. 2000. *The Challenge of Global Capitalism: The World Economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Princeton University Press.