

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY
POLSCI 3PG3
Term 1, Fall 2020

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Seminar: Tuesdays, 14:30-15:30;
Fridays, 14:30-16:30

Classroom: Virtual class on Zoom

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Course Description

Situated at the intersection of political science and geography, political geography is an interdisciplinary knowledge field devoted to the study of space-power relations. The course introduces key theories, concepts, approaches and research agendas that define this sub-discipline and explores why and how geography matters to political analysis. It goes beyond the prevailing perception that views “space” as given and static, merely serving as the physical container of social, political and economic activities. Instead, it attends to spatial expression, spatial ordering, spatial constitution and spatial contestation of power that have come to define the world order we live in today. By revisiting salient geographical concepts in political science – territory, border, frontier, place, geopolitics, geoeconomics and development – and navigating the scales of the global, national, local, and the body, the course demonstrates critical ways to unpack power dynamics at work and enhance our understanding of conceptions such as state, sovereignty, nationalism, dominance, and resistance. At its core, this course aims to highlight the potential of political geography to decentralize Western- and state-centric understanding of world politics.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of political geography, including its origin, development, key concepts and major critiques.
- Critically examine space-power relations through different theoretical lenses, including poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, political economy, and feminism.
- Synthesize various perspectives and write critical commentaries on political issues.
- Conduct research and apply spatial analysis to case studies.
- Utilize multi-media technologies to present ideas and convey arguments.

Required Materials and Texts

All required readings are available in electronic format on the Avenue to Learn.

Class Format

The course will be majorly in lecture form with student-led weekly discussion. In the first section of the class, we will explore the central themes associated with the topic. In the second section, we will review reading posts from cohorts, clarify ideas, address confusions and debate questions with the assistance of the leading group in charge of the discussion.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Attendance and participation – 20%, ongoing
2. Weekly reading post (6 posts) – 25%, due weekly on Sundays at 12:00 PM (EST)
3. Group project: MacVideo presentation – 25%
4. Final examination – 30%

Course Evaluation – Details

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Students have to regularly attend the virtual class and actively participate in the class discussion. Your attendance and participation will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

(A) Exit cards/Quizzes (10%):

There will be 7 exit cards/sets of quizzes given throughout the semester, 5 of which would be counted towards your evaluation. They are straightforward questions and require only short answers. You should be able to answer them if you attend class consistently and do the required readings accordingly. You should complete the exit card/quizzes on Avenue by 11:59 PM (EST) of the day it is released. No late submission is accepted.

(B) Leading group discussion (10%):

Students will form a group of 3 people to lead the class discussion on a week of your choice. Working as a group, you will review your classmates' reading posts (see below), summarize their main questions/arguments, and propose discussion questions for the class. The student-led discussion session should be around 30 minutes.

If you expect recurrent problems participating in the virtual class, you should reach out to the instructor by the end of Week 1 to discuss the possibility of alternative accommodation.

Weekly Reading Post (25%)

Students are expected to complete the required readings prior to the class. You will have to choose **SIX** weeks to write reading posts (three from Week 1-5; three from Week 7-12). Your reading posts cannot overlap with the week in which you are leading the group discussion. Each reading post should be 400 to 500 words and should include a brief summary of the readings and two articulated questions or critical discussions of a particular topic/argument based on the readings. You may draw connections between readings and lecture notes. The reading post will have to be uploaded onto the designated space on Avenue by Sunday noon (12:00 PM EST) of the week. No late post is accepted.

Group Project: MacVideo Presentation (25%)

You will be working in a group of 4-5 people to conduct research on a topic relevant to our course and produce a MacVideo as the final product (up to 10 minutes). Your group

will have to select a political event or phenomenon in history or at the current time (i.e. territorial conflict, trade agreement, development project, social movement, etc.) and explore its causes, trajectories, and effects. You will have to engage with course materials as well as other credible resources and effectively demonstrate how geographical thinking could enhance critical analysis of your chosen topic. The topic of the group project must be approved by the instructor. The group project will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- (A) A proposal no longer than 2,000 words (5%); due 11:59 PM (EST) on Friday, November 6
- (B) Instructor evaluation (10%); MacVideo submission by 11:59 PM (EST) on Monday, November 30
- (C) Peer evaluation (5%)
- (D) Intra-group peer review (5%)

Detailed guidelines, format, and evaluation procedures will be provided in Week 4.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be a take-home exam. It will consist of three short-essay questions (10 points each), and you will be given a week to complete it. The exam questions will be released on Avenue at 00:00 AM (EST) on Thursday, December 10, and final answers should be submitted on Avenue by 11:59 PM (EST) on Wednesday, December 16. To excel in the exam, you will have to draw on both lecture notes and reading materials to demonstrate your comprehensive understanding and critical engagement.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (Sep 8 & 11) Introduction to Political Geography

Sep 8: Course introduction

Sep 11: Learning political geography in the time of pandemic

Required Readings:

- Jones, M. et al (2014). *Introduction to Political Geography: Space, Power, and Politics*. Routledge. (Ch1 Introduction: power, space and “political geography,” pp. 1-16)
- Goebel, M. (2020 May 5). [Pandemic and political geographies](#).
- Donini, A & Monsutti, A (2020). [Pandemic as revelation: What does it tell us about people on the move?](#) *Global Challenges*, Special Issue no.1.

Notes: 1) Please upload a short self-introduction video (up to 2 min) to the designated space on A2L by midnight, Sep 13 (Sun), to earn bonus 1 mark for your final grade. 2) Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Sep 13 (Sun)

Week 2 (Sep 15 & 18) State, Territoriality, Sovereignty

Sep 15: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Sep 18: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Flint, C. & Taylor, P. (2018). *Political Geography: World-economy, Nation-state and Locality (7th edition)*. Routledge. (Ch4 Territorial states, pp. 129-149 **ONLY**)
- Branch, J. (2014). *The Cartographic State*. Cambridge University Press. (Ch4 Mapping the territorial state, pp. 68-99)

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Sep 20 (Sun)

Week 3 (Sep 22 & 25) Spatiality of Colonialism and Postcolonial Critique

Sep 22: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Sep 25: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Jones, M. et al (2014). *Introduction to Political Geography*. Routledge. (Ch8 Geographies of empire, pp. 136-156)
- Banner, S. (2009). *Possessing the Pacific: Lands, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska*. Harvard University Press. (Ch6 British Columbia: Terra nullius as kindness, pp. 195-230)
- Yeh, E. (2013). *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development* (Ch1 State space: power, fear, and the state of exception, pp. 29-51). Cornell University.

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Sep 27 (Sun)

Week 4 (Sep 29 & Oct 2): Globalization, Borders, (Im)mobility

Sep 29: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Oct 2: Lecture; Guess speaker: Michael Gordon

Required Readings:

- Strauss, M. J. (2015). Nations outside their borders: How extraterritorial concessions reinforce sovereignty. In Szary, A. & Giraut, F. (Eds), *Borderities and the Politics of Contemporary Mobile Borders* (pp. 53-67). Palgrave Macmillan.

- Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G., & Cassidy, K. (2019). *Bordering*. John Wiley & Sons. (Ch3 Firewall bordering at state-managed border control points, pp. 64-96)

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Oct 4 (Sun)

Week 5 (Oct 6 & 9) Geopolitics: Security, Fear, and Terror

Oct 6: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Oct 9: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Dodds, K., Kuus, M. & Sharp, J. (Eds.) (2016). *The Ashgate Research Companion to Critical Geopolitics*. Routledge. (Introduction: Geopolitics and its Critics, pp. 1-14)
- Smith, S. J., & Pain, R. (2009). Critical geopolitics and everyday fears. In Farrall, S. & Lee, M. (Eds.), *Fear of Crime: Critical Voices in an Age of Anxiety* (pp. 45-58). Routledge-Cavendish.
- Nadarajah, S. (2009). Disciplining the diaspora: Tamil self-determination and the politics of proscription. In Ingram, A. & Dodds, K. (Eds.). *Spaces of Security and Insecurity: Geographies of the War on Terror* (pp. 109-129). Ashgate.

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Oct 11 (Sun)

Week 6 (Oct 13 & 16) Fall Midterm Recess; No Class

Week 7 (Oct 20 & 23) Geoeconomics: Neoliberalism and Hegemony

Oct 13: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Oct 16: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Luttwak, E. N. (1990). From geopolitics to geoeconomics: Logic of conflict, grammar of commerce. *The National Interest*, 20, 17-23.
- Saxe-Fernández, J. (1996). NAFTA: The intersection of the geopolitics and geoeconomics of capital. *Social Justice*, 23(1/2 (63-64), 63-78.
- Beeson, M. (2018). Geoeconomics with Chinese characteristics: The BRI and China's evolving grand strategy. *Economic and Political Studies*, 6(3), 240-256.

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Oct 25 (Sun)

Week 8 (Oct 27 & 30) Political Economy and Politics of Development

Oct 27: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Oct 30: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Short, J.R. (2003). *An Introduction to Political Geography*. Routledge. (Ch1 Uneven development: the capitalist worldpool, pp. 5-34)
- Power, M. (2019). *Geopolitics and Development*. Routledge. (Ch3 Modernising the “Third World”, pp. 80-104 **ONLY**)

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Nov 1(Sun)

Week 9 (Nov 3 & 6) Nature, Resources, and Environmental Politics

Nov 3: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Nov 6: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Robbins, P. (2011). *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (2nd edition). Wiley-Blackwell. (Ch1 Political versus apolitical ecologies, pp. 11-24)
- Watts, M., & Peluso, N. (2013). Resource violence. In Death, C. (Ed.), *Critical Environmental Politics* (pp. 184-197). Routledge.
- Hung, P.Y. (2020). Placing green energy in the sea: Offshore wind farms, dolphins, oysters, and the territorial politics of the intertidal zone in Taiwan. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 110(1): 56-77.

Notes: Group project proposal due 11:59 PM Nov 6 (Fri); Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Nov 8 (Sun)

Week 10 (Nov 10 & 13) Politics of Place and Identity

Nov 10: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Nov 13: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Jones, M. *et al* (2014). *Introduction to Political Geography*. Routledge. (Ch6 Contesting place, pp. 97-116)
- Mitchell, K. (2003). Monuments, memorials, and the politics of memory. *Urban Geography*, 24(5), 442-459.

- Muzaini, H. (2012). Making memories our own (way): non-state remembrances of the Second World War in Perak, Malaysia. In *Geography and Memory* (pp. 216-233). Palgrave Macmillan.

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Nov 15 (Sun)

Week 11 (Nov 17 & 20) Spatiality of Contentious Politics

Nov 17: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Nov 20: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Della Porta, D., Fabbri, M., & Piazza, G. (2013). Putting protest in place: Contested and liberated spaces in three campaigns. In Nicholls, W. *et al* (Eds.), *Spaces of contention: Spatialities and social movements* (pp. 27-46). Routledge.
- Castañeda, O. (Producer), Eichert, B., Rowley, R. & Sandberg, S. (Directors & Producers).(1999). [Zapatista](#). US: Big Noise Films (56min; Access the documentary with your McMaster account)
- Hou, J. (2019 Dec 13). [Be water, as in liquid public space](#).

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12 PM, Nov 22 (Sun)

Week 12 (Nov 24 & 27) Geography of Intersectionality: Gender, Race, Class

Nov 24: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Nov 27: Lecture

Required Readings:

- Mollett, S., & Faria, C. (2013). Messing with gender in feminist political ecology. *Geoforum*, 45, 116-125.
- Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press. (Ch4 Slow violence, gender, and the Environmentalism of the poor, pp. 128-149)

Notes: Weekly reading post due 12PM, Nov 29 (Sun); MacVideo submission to designated place on Avenue by 11:59 PM, Nov 30 (Mon)

Week 13 (Dec 1 & 4) Group Project Evaluation

Dec 1: Lecture (cont.); Leading group discussion

Dec 4: Meet the directors: Q&A session/Peer evaluation

Note: You must watch all the group project videos on Avenue and provide comments/questions prior to the class on Dec 4.

Week 14 (Dec 8) Final Review

Dec 8: Review of the course

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All the assignments should be submitted to the designated space on Avenue to Learn. Late submission will only be accepted without penalty if prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Due to the nature of the assignments in this course, no late assignments will be accepted with the exception of the group project proposal, which is subject to a penalty of 10% deduction per day, inclusive of weekend days. In most cases, SAS and MSAF requests will be granted with a 7-day extension. Please remember that only one MSAF can be used per semester for all your classes. Late submission for the final exam will NOT be accepted unless you have SAS accommodation, under which your due date will be extended to 11:59 PM (EST) on Sunday, December 20.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Extensions on assignments can be arranged in the event of illness or similar circumstances. All extensions must be arranged in advance of the day on which the assignment is due. Late submission without permission from the instructor in advance will NOT be accepted.

Courses with an On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.