

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY
POLSCI 3PG3
Winter 2023, Term 2

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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 the course students should be able to:

- Have 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.
- Apply spatial analysis to investigate political issues and case studies.

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 followed by student-led weekly discussion. In the first session of the class, we will explore the central themes associated with the topic. In the second session, 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 6 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 by the end of the class. **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.

Weekly Reading Post (25%), due weekly

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 2–6; three from Week 8–13). 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 to Learn by Tuesday noon (12:00 PM EST) of the week. **No late post is accepted.**

Group Research Project: MacVideo Presentation (25%)

You will be working in a group of 4-6 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, March 10
- (B) Instructor evaluation (10%); MacVideo submission by 11:59 PM (EST) on Friday, April 7
- (C) Peer evaluation (5%)
- (D) Intra-group peer review (5%)

Detailed guidelines, format, and evaluation procedures will be provided in Week 5.

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 to Learn at 00:00 AM (EST) on Monday, April 17, and final answers should be submitted on Avenue by 11:59 PM (EST) on Sunday, April 23. 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 (Jan 11) Course Introduction

Required Readings: None

Optional Readings: None

Notes: No weekly post due; please upload a short self-introduction video (up to 2 min) to the designated space on A2L by midnight, Jan 15 (Sun), to earn bonus 1 mark for your final grade.

Week 2 (Jan 18) Political Geography of the 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)
- Dodds, K., Broto, V. C., Detterbeck, K., Jones, M., Mamadouh, V., Ramutsindela, M., ... & Woon, C. Y. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic: territorial, political and governance dimensions of the crisis. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 8(3), 289-298.
- Donini, A & Monsutti, A (2020). Pandemic as revelation: What does it tell us about people on the move? *Global Challenges*, Special Issue no.1.
https://globalchallenges.ch/issue/special_1/pandemic-as-revelation-what-does-it-tell-us-about-people-on-the-move/

Notes: Weekly post due

Week 3 (Jan 25) State, Territoriality, Sovereignty

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 post due

Week 4 (Feb 1) Spatiality of Colonialism and Postcolonial Critique

Required Readings:

- Jones, M. et al (2014). *Introduction to Political Geography*. Routledge. (Ch8 Geographies of empire, pp. 136-156)
- Yeh, E. (2013). *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*. Cornell University. (Ch1 State space: power, fear, and the state of exception, pp. 29-51)
- Rotz, S. (2017). 'They took our beads, it was a fair trade, get over it': Settler colonial logics, racial hierarchies and material dominance in Canadian agriculture. *Geoforum*, 82, 158-169.

Notes: Weekly post due

Week 5 (Feb 8) Globalization, Borders, (Im)mobility

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 post due

Week 6 (Feb 15) Geopolitics: Security, Fear, and Terror

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.
- Mitchell, K. (2010). Ungoverned space: Global security and the geopolitics of broken windows. *Political geography*, 29(5), 289-297.

Notes: Weekly post due

Week 7 (Feb 22) Winter mid-term recess, No Class

Notes: No weekly post due

Week 8 (Mar 1) Geoeconomics: Neoliberalism, Hegemony, Empire

Required Readings:

- Kim, D. J. (2019). The perils of geoeconomics. *The Washington Quarterly*, 42(1), 153-170.
- 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 post due

Week 9 (Mar 8) Political Economy and Politics of Development

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 post due

Week 10 (Mar 15) Nature, Resources, and Environmental Politics

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: Weekly post due

Week 11 (Mar 22) Politics of Place and Identity

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 post due

Week 12 (Mar 29) Spatiality of Contentious Politics

Required Readings:

- Leitner, H., Sheppard, E., & Sziarto, K. M. (2008). The spatialities of contentious politics. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33(2), 157-172.
- Mislán, C., & Dache-Gerbino, A. (2018). The struggle for 'our streets': The digital and physical spatial politics of the Ferguson movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 17(6), 676-696.
- Hou, J. (2019 Dec 13). Be water, as in liquid public space. <https://medium.com/@houjeff/be-water-as-in-liquid-public-space-8148a2c80026>
- How Hong Kong Protesters Evade Surveillance With Tech | WSJ (6 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32KTKXZZ-BI>

Notes: Weekly post due

Week 13 (Apr 5) Geography of Intersectionality: Gender, Race, Class

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)
- Tuana, N. (2019). Climate apartheid: The forgetting of race in the Anthropocene. *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 7(1), 1-31.

Notes: Weekly reading post due; MacVideo submission to designated place on Avenue by 11:59 PM (EST), April 7

Week 14 (Apr 12) Group Research Project Evaluation and Final Discussion

Required Readings: None

Optional Readings: None

Notes: No weekly post due

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignments should be submitted to the designated folders on Avenue to Learn by the time they are due.

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-
69-0	F

Late Assignments

Late submission of the group project proposal is subject to a penalty of 10% deduction per day, inclusive of weekend days. Late submission for weekly reading posts and the group project (MacVideo) will NOT be accepted. 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, April 30.

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.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, 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 this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we may be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to

submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

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 requiring a RISO accommodation 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.

University Policies

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.

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.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

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.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail

sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

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.