

GIA/UAP 5264:

GLOBAL CHANGE AND LOCAL IMPACT

Fall 2007

Dr Toal, Mondays: 6:30 to 9:00 pm.
Location TBA, 1021 Prince Street,
Alexandria.

Course Description.

The title of this course enunciates the spatial problematic at the heart of what today passes as 'globalization.' It was not always called such. Earlier in the twentieth century, it was called 'modernization' and even earlier 'modern times' or 'the modern.' Let us term it simply *modernity*. Modernity does not begin in the twentieth century (the fifteenth century is a better starting point) but that century saw its greatest successes and excesses, its high notes and often murderously reactionary backlashes (*counter-modernity*, which is as much a form of modernity as that which it claims to restrain). Our analysis of modernity in this course will be a spatial one, one that is distinctive from 'International Relations' and 'International Political Economy.' The rubric we will use is 'geopolitics,' a floating signifier that has had many distinctive congealments of meaning in the twentieth century. Our initial approach is to use the term 'geopolitics' naively as a point of entry to the spatial problematics at the heart of international affairs. What are some of these problematics?

The terrorist attacks of September 11th represent a type of extreme event that became crucial turning points in international affairs. Eras are demarcated by the date and mentalities supposedly classifiable on its basis. On September 11 we experienced a very local impact. Less than a mile from our location, the fires from one attack burned. A few hundred miles north, a complex of buildings many of us had visited was destroyed. Yet, as you know, these attacks were far from local. First, they were planned in terrorist training camps thousands of miles away in Afghanistan and executed by young Arab nationals from Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia as blows in a 'global Jihad' (GJ). Second, the attacks became a global media event, projected to the farthest reaches of the planet in a matter of hours. A minority of people on the planet were not aware of them the following day. Third, the attacks became the occasion for the launching of a 'global war on terror' (GWOT) that has reverberated across the planet, from the Afghan mountains and remote spaces of Waziristan to nightclubs in Bali and London, Jewish settlements in occupied territories, Kurdish villages in northern Iraq, jungle villages in the Philippines, coastal communities in Columbia, and small American towns dealing with

their war dead. A world wide web of terrorist networks and war-on-terror networks are re-defining our contemporary experience of the modernity/counter-modernity dialectic.

We often forget but our contemporary dilemmas have long histories. Consider the dense geopolitical networks that defined the extreme twentieth century events in Sarajevo in 1914, Munich in 1939, Stalingrad in 1942 and 1943, Berlin in 1948-49, and Chernobyl in 1986, Berlin in 1989 and Sarajevo again in 1992-95. To better understand our contemporary dilemmas and problematics, this course provides a critical geopolitical introduction to the history and geography of the twentieth century world politics. Historians, Geographers and Philosophers are our guides. It begins by first examining how geopolitics can be studied in a critical manner and how we need to avoid the 'territorial trap' that so much of our contemporary commentary falls into when trying to conceptualize world politics as 'international relations' or IR. We will literally examine the geo-politics of making worlds, or, in other words, the spatial politics of acts of worlding, the active cultural construction of a world within available and inherited grids of intelligibility. The course then outlines an academic literature on how to think critically about geopolitics and geopolitical questions, connecting the discursive problematic of how we see the world to questions of sovereign power and material interests. After this theoretical introduction we begin our review of the history of the twentieth century and its geopolitical discourses. We have a lot of ground to cover: imperialist discourses, the rise of fascism, genocide and the barbarism of World War II, the uneasy peace and hot wars in the Third World during the Cold War, the 'triumph' of Western democracies and the current GJ/GWOT dialectic. Our course is not a planetary survey: it is decidedly eurocentric in focus but not in philosophical conceptualization. Europe and its American variant, as we will see, was the incubatory of so much that characterizes contemporary modernity and counter-modernity. As we proceed through our survey, we shall strive for greater theoretical sophistication, with the introduction of key concepts like 'biopolitics' and its practical application by Giorgio Agamben using notions like 'bare life,' 'homo sacer' and 'state of exception' to understand extreme events like Auschwitz, and the barbarities of the current GJ/GWOT. It is not the goal of this course to help our current leaders fight the GWOT more effectively (though this might be an incidental bonus). Nor is it the goal of the course to provide an introduction to geopolitics as the practice of statecraft (one tradition only, not only morally dubious but geo-strategically ineffective in many ways). Rather, the goal of this course is to broaden your understanding of twentieth century modernity/counter-modernity as a contemporary inheritance, to deepen your grasp of the horrors and barbarism that travels within the operation of this inheritance, to complexify your conceptualization of the spatial problematics inherent in modernity, and to provide you with the theoretical vocabulary and tools to think critically about the 'global change, local impact' dilemmas of the present.

This is MPIA foundation course which provides the background students will need as they pursue further studies in the Masters of Public and International Affairs (MPIA) degree or other SPIA degrees in Urban and Regional Planning, Public Administration and Political Science. Science and Technology Studies are also welcome in this class.

The [Virginia Tech Honor Code](#) operates in this course. Plagiarism or providing unauthorized assistance to other students in this class is strictly prohibited and are violations of the Honor Code. Students who have special needs should bring these to my attention so procedures and practices can be established that address these needs.

Course Organization & Grades.

This class is an in-person seminar but we will be making extensive use of our Blackboard web site at learn.vt.edu to supplement our regular meetings. Here you will get the course syllabus, supplemental readings and notes, audio lectures and your assignments.

Students will be evaluated on the basis of three written assignments and their participation in the course (see below). Each assignment is worth 20% so 40% of the grade will be determined by participation. This will be determined by (i) weekly class commentaries, (ii) in-class discussion and (iii) class facilitation.

Course Texts

Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge, *The Geopolitics Reader*. Second edition. Routledge, 2006.

Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. Vintage, 2000. 978-0679757047.

John Agnew, *Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power*. Temple University Press, 2006. 1592131530.

Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Derek Gregory and Allan Pred, *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror and Political Violence*. Routledge, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-415-95147-0

Some articles will also be assigned. Course texts are available in the Northern Virginia Center bookstore.

Weekly Course Outline and Reading Schedule.

Week 1. INTRODUCTION 21 AUG

Class introductions. Discussion of class administration and procedures.

Week 2. GLOBAL/LOCAL POLITICAL GEOGRAPHIES 27 AUG

Noel Castree, "Differential geographies: place, indigenous rights and 'local' resources," *Political Geography* (2004)

Matthew Coleman, "U.S. statecraft and the U.S.–Mexico border as security/economy nexus." *Political Geography* (2005)

Matthew Sparke, 'Geopolitical Fears, Geoeconomic Hopes, and the Responsibilities of Geography.' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2007)

Matthew Coleman, "A Geopolitics of Engagement: Neoliberalism, The War on Terrorism, and The Reconfiguration of US Immigration Enforcement" *Geopolitics* (2007)

Week 3. CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS 3 SEPT

Klaus Dodds and James Sidaway, "Locating Critical Geopolitics," *Society and Space*. (1994) 12(5): 515-524.

Andrew Charlesworth, "Contesting Places of Memory: The Case of Auschwitz." *Society and Space*. (1994) 12(5)

Joanne Sharp, 'Hegemony, Popular Culture and Geopolitics: the *Reader's Digest* and the Construction of Danger.' *Political Geography* (1996)

Gearóid Ó Tuathail, 'Introduction,' *The Geopolitics Reader*.

Week 4. No Class: Parental Leave. 10 SEPT

Week 5. GREAT POWER IMPERIAL GEOPOLITICS. 17 SEPT

1-2, *Geopolitics Reader*

Mazower, Ch 1-4.

Week 6. NAZI GEOPOLITICS. 24 SEPT

3-6, *Geopolitics Reader*

Mazower, Ch 5-7.

Assignment one provided.

Week 7. THEORIZING WITH GIORGIO AGAMBEN. 1 OCT

Gerry Kearns, "Bare Life, Political Violence, and the Territorial Structure of Britain and Ireland." Ch 2 of Gregory/Pred.

Anna Secor, "An Unrecognizable Condition Has Arrived." Ch 3 of Gregory/Pred.

Selections from Giorgio Agamben

Assignment one due.

Week 8. POST-WAR EUROPE. 8 OCT (Fall Break but class will meet)

Mazower, Ch 8-11.

Week 9. COLD WAR GEOPOLITICS. 15 OCT

Part Two, 7-15, *Geopolitics Reader*

Week 10: TWENTY FIRST CENTURY GEOPOLITICS. 22 OCT

Part Three, 16-21, *Geopolitics Reader*

Assignment 2 given.

Week 11: THE GEOPOLITICS OF GLOBAL DANGERS. 29 OCT

Part Four, 22-28, *Geopolitics Reader*

Assignment 2 due.

Week 12: AMERICAN HEGEMONY. 5 NOV

Agnew, *Hegemony*

Week 13: THE COLONIAL PRESENT 1. 12 NOV

Gregory, Ch 1-5.

Week 14: THE COLONIAL PRESENT, 2. 19 NOV (Thanksgiving Week)

Gregory, Ch 6-9.

Week 15: 26 November: NO CLASS Assignment 3 posted online

Week 16: GLOBAL/LOCAL GEOGRAPHIES OF VIOLENCE. 3 DEC

Ch 10, 11, 18, 19 of Gregory/Pred.

Assignment 3 due by 10 December at 9 am.

The Written Assignments.

This course is structured around three assignments. Assignments may be divided into two or more sections. Assignments can be accessed by clicking on the 'Assignments' button in Blackboard.

The Assignment Due Date.

Students are expected to complete their assignment by Monday at 9 am of the week they are due. Assignments should not exceed 1,500 words. This is not a lot of space but it is enough for the concise & precise analytical assignments required in this class. Those that do exceed this limit will get a poorer grade. Keep a copy of all your assignments and be prepared to produce these if asked. Late assignments will not be accepted and shall receive zero points.

Time management skills are essential to your success in this course. Write "[your name], Assignment #: GIA/UAP 5264" clearly on the subject line of the email. Assignments that fail to do so will be penalized.

Those that do not have the word 'assignment' may get lost since it is a key word that delivers them to a specific folder for grading. Assignments that fail to do so will be penalized. When submitting assignments, use only a reliable email system, one you know works, and not one you have never used before. All assignments should be single spaced and in Times New Roman 12 point font or higher. Remember, it is your responsibility to get the assignment in on time. If you sent the assignment but the email system failed, the responsibility is yours.

Grading Criteria for Assignments.

1. Quality of Conceptualization: Ability to assimilate and use concepts developed in the readings and course notes.
2. Quality of Argumentation: Ability to make an informed and persuasive argument using the readings and course materials. Documentation of points made by explicit references to passages in the texts.
3. Organization: clear set of points, clear introduction and conclusion.
4. Quality of the writing: clarity, grammar, spelling, referencing (open bracket, author, date, page number, close brackets and then period), etc. Use single spacing with line breaks for paragraphs.
5. Length: keep it under 1,500 words; this is deliberately short to force you to learn what to leave out, to make your words count, to work out your arguments clearly before writing.

How to Write Analytical Assignments.

- ARGUMENT NOT DESCRIPTION; you will not be asked what questions but why and how questions. This is NOT a class where you are asked for your personal opinion, feelings or beliefs. It does not value confessional or normative discourse ("well I feel Oprah that..." or "Oh this is terrible and why can't everybody simply get along" or "this person is evil") but analytical understanding and argumentation. it is not confessional.

You are asked to formulate arguments based on the readings and our interaction. Anyone can have an opinion or editorialize about the state of the world. Only those who have first undertaken the hard work to become informed and develop understanding can begin to formulate a coherent and logical argument and set of positions. Thus no "I believe" or "I feel" or "I agree with Patty Sue" since this class is not about your personal beliefs or feelings but about your ability to analyze issues and concepts.

- **ENGAGE THE READINGS:** Refer specifically to the texts under consideration (cite author, date and page); use detail in the service of argumentation. Your assignment should demonstrate that you've read the text and understood it.
- **AVOID HISTORICAL NARRATIVE;** assignments are an organized series of argumentative points. Avoid lazy organization of assignments as historical chronologies... "in 1898 this happened, then in 1945 this happened, then in 1963 this happened..." Assignments that merely recite one event after another are not what is required. What is required is the ability to use historical events and details as part of an organized argument. These events and happenings are important because of the general argument you are making.
- **AVOID TRITE CONCEPTUALIZATION;** the object of this course is to provide you with analytical concepts that will help you grasp and make sense of global conflicts. This requires you to move beyond simpleminded and crude conceptualizations like explaining conflict in terms of 'pride,' 'stupidity,' 'hate' or 'ancient hatreds that go back thousands of years.' All of these concepts are flawed and ultimately explain nothing; deeper, more refined ones concerning identity, territory and power do.
- **AVOID 'ENGLISH COMPOSITION ESSAY' ASSIGNMENTS; ANALYSIS IS REQUIRED.** Do not repeat the assignment question in the opening paragraph. Get to the point and state your overall thesis at the outset and then use points or subheadings to organize your answer. Vague abstract airy description will get you nowhere; this is merely evidence that you have not done the readings. Get to the core of the question under consideration and make a robust defensible argument.
- **AVOID THE LATE NIGHT DULL HEAD SYNDROME!** One consistent pattern that has emerged from this course over the years is that assignments that are submitted closest to the deadline (i.e. in the early hours of Friday morning) tend to be the weakest and most incoherent. Assignments that are submitted early tend to be stronger (there are exceptions but the pattern is remarkably consistent). Organize your time and get your assignment done in regular working hours. Staying up all night to get your assignment done is not effective time management. Not surprisingly, it doesn't help with logical and coherent assignments either.
- **CONCISE AND PRECISE:** Concentrated analytical writing is a skill this class is designed to engender. Get-to-the-point in your assignments. Make every sentence count. Demonstrate that you have grasped the material and worked out what you want to argue

before writing rather than trying to figure out what you want to say as you write. Verbose writing is not appreciated in this class.

Participation.

Weekly Commentaries on Discussion Boards.

- Each course topic will have a discussion board created for it to allow you to discuss the course readings. Complete the reading assigned for the class; it is unfair to your fellow students if some do not come to class fully informed and ready to contribute to a discussion of the reading. If you cannot do the reading, please do not take this course.
- Write and post a 250 word commentary on the weekly readings on the class discussion board by 10 a.m. of the day of classes. These commentaries should be considered 'think-pieces' or 'reaction papers' to the weekly readings; use them as a means of working out your thoughts on the readings. Ideally they should be analytical and argumentative (or questioning if the readings were unclear) but some degree of opinion will be allowed as long as it is grounded in the texts under consideration.
- Review all the posted weekly commentaries before class.

Net Etiquette.

- Respectful communication at all times. All course communications -- email or discussion board postings-- should observe net etiquette. Conversation in this course should be serious and scholarly. The discussion board is an intellectual forum and is not for personal chit chat. Use proper punctuation and capitalization not cheap cyber-speak ('hey u guys'). Write and speak as you would in a formal classroom not as you would in a hallway or bathroom. The purpose of conversation is to facilitate learning and the communication of ideas. Flippant conversation is discouraged. Students are asked to think before they write. 'Flaming' is a serious issue and will be dealt with appropriately by the Dean of Students and others in your college. It can result in you being expelled from this class and brought before a university tribunal. Remember that what you write is a permanent record; in 'flaming' cases it can and will be used against you.
- Reading before posting on the discussion board. Reading books not internet access is at the core of this course. Students thus should spend the bulk of their time reading. The discussion board is a space designed to further conversation and exchange on the readings. Students should come to this after having read the course materials. Common evidence that students have not completed the reading are statements like "I believe this" or "I feel that" or "I agree or disagree with Johnboy.." etc. Its easy to have opinions; what this class is interested in is informed and substantiated positions on the conflict under discussion.

- No anonymous questions. Please use your full name when posting at all times. Anonymous comments and questions will not be answered.
 - No personal grievance postings. The discussion board is not to be (ab)used for personal complaints about grading, assignments or similar issues.
 - Email for assignments only. Email is ONLY to be used to submit assignments and communicate with the instructor about non-course content related matters (e.g. notice of illness, personal emergencies, etc.). Other emails will not be answered.
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Grading Scale and Grade Determination.

100-90: A; 90-85 A- ; 85-80 B+ ; 80-75 B ; 75-70 B- ; 70-65 C+ ; 65-60 C ; 60-55 C- ; 55-50 D+ ; 50-45 D ; 45-40 D- ; 39-0 FAIL.

A assignments:

- answers all aspects of the assignment comprehensively.
- is an argument and not a descriptive narrative: has a clear organization of its points.
- demonstrates a full conceptual and empirical understanding of the topic under investigation.
- demonstrates a strong grasp of the readings.
- uses detail effectively.
- organizes answers in a logical and explicit manner.
- is written in a clear and coherent way, without vague sentences, awkward constructions and incomplete sentences.
- is precise and concise: uses up to but not beyond 1,500 words.

B assignments:

- answers assignment clearly though not comprehensively.
- reasonable clear organization of points but with room for improvement.
- good overall understanding of concepts and empirical details but still too much narrative not argument.
- good grasp of the readings; some evidence of minor errors of understanding.
- some vague passages and trite explanations; over-emphasis on marginal issues and concepts.
- sometimes prolix thus exceeding the 1,500 word limit.

C assignments:

- somewhat confused structure and coherence.
- relies too much on descriptive historical narrative.
- trite concepts ("these people have hated each other for thousands of years")
- evidence of incomplete reading.

- vague understanding of key concepts.
- errors of detail and information.
- poor composition.
- short assignments or rambling incoherent assignments.
- needlessly verbose and unnecessarily long.

D assignments:

- historical narrative only ("this happened, then this...")
- little evidence of reading.
- incomplete answers
- poor explanations.
- serious errors of understanding.
- incoherent sentence construction and writing skills.

FAIL assignments:

- no evidence of any reading.
- unusually short or vague assignments.
- fundamental errors of understanding and knowledge.

Common marking symbols.

? = unclear.

C = confusing or confused.

FRAG = incomplete sentence fragment.

AWK = awkward expression or poorly expressed argument.

ARG = argument needed or argument in need of work.

DET = details needed; cite reference, page of reading(s).

ORG = poor organization; organization needed.

CON = poor conceptualization; more advanced conceptualization needed.

SMPL = simplistic reasoning or explanation.

Note that all assignment feedback will be capitalized to distinguish it from the original assignment text (the font may be larger because grading required it to be seen clearly). The capitalization is not an indication of shouting! Assignment feedback comments are designed to get the student to the next grade level (unless the assignment obtains the top grade). Students are expected to be beyond needing basic encouragement and reinforcement. Thus, feedback comments *will always be critical but constructive*. Feedback comments should not be interpreted as 'negative' or 'personal': I only know your work. They are professional comments designed to push you to become even better at writing assignments and making arguments. This course sets high expectations for its students. Because of this, you will learn a great deal in it if you accept that it will be challenging and work hard.