

# Geog 260: Introduction to Geopolitics

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**Instructor:** Dr. Steven Radil

**Office:** 305B McClure

**Meeting times:** 11:00 am - 12:15 pm TR

**Office hours:** TBD

**Location:** JANSSEN 221

**E-mail:** sradil@uidaho.edu

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## Course Description

In this course, we will introduce a geographic perspective to aid in understanding the dynamics of contemporary global geopolitics, including issues related to global power struggles, persistent nationalist conflicts, border dynamics, the global military actions of the U.S., terrorism, peace movements, resource conflicts, and the politics of climate change. We will develop this perspective by focusing on key geographic concepts, such as *place*, *scale*, and *boundaries*, and use them to better understand why certain people, groups, or countries act in certain ways in certain situations. We will also use a particular theoretical idea in social science, *structure and agency*, in conjunction with the geographic concepts to situate geopolitical conflicts and those involved in them. Our goal is to contextualize these issues and try to understand the limits and possibilities faced by diverse political actors as they negotiate, initiate, or try to avoid conflict.

## Course Objectives

The main objectives for this course are for you to:

- Become familiar with socio-economic, political, and environmental processes in contemporary global political issues;
- Use key social science and geographic concepts to analyze the processes which shape and reshape these issues;
- Think critically about contemporary global political issues and explore your role within them;
- Engage quality information about important issues on a daily basis;
- Improve your writing skills and unleash your inner geopolitical pundit!

## Required Texts and Readings

The basis of class will be lectures supported by a textbook that parallels and complements the material presented in class. The required textbook is: **Introduction to Geopolitics, Third Edition by Colin Flint, published by Routledge in 2017 (ISBN 978-1-138-19216-4 for the paperback)**. This textbook is written specifically as a guide to this class – it will complement all the lecture notes as well as providing additional explanation and exemplification.

The other piece of required reading is the *New York Times*. An important part of your college education is to know what is going on in the world beyond the classroom walls and to engage “quality” information about important issues on a daily basis. In this class we will not simply read the newspaper though. Instead, we will become informed readers of the newspaper by applying our geopolitical ideas and perspectives to the current events being reported. The *New York Times* is available on the web at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). UI students may access the NYT for free although you must first set up an account. For step-by-step instructions on how to activate your free subscription, go to the UI Library website at <http://libguides.uidaho.edu/nytimes>.

## **Course Access and Technology**

With the exception of the required textbook, all other course materials such as lecture slides, additional readings, and various exercises or assignments will be available on BbLearn. BbLearn can be accessed at the following web address: <https://bblearn.uidaho.edu/> (Login using your UI account & password). If you have trouble accessing or using BB Learn, technical help is available through the UI BB Learn FAQs for students: <https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/bblearnhelp/student-help/>. You also can find in-person assistance on the UI campus at the TLC Center, room 128.

## **Your Responsibilities**

**This course is reading and writing intensive and I expect that you will come to class prepared.** You are responsible for knowing all the course material including the assigned chapters from the textbook and all supplemental readings. Further, **you are expected to work with the assigned readings and other materials before coming to class.** Lectures and class discussions will supplement and build upon the assigned readings, not simply summarize what you have been assigned to read.

The nature of this class also means that **consistent attendance is necessary to succeed.** I will take attendance at the beginning of every class; you may miss up to two class meetings without penalty. Coming to class means arriving on time, staying for the duration, and being attentive. I have no patience for talking, texting, tweeting, snapchatting, live blogging, or snoring during lectures, and will not accept these or other kinds of disruptive behaviors. **Please silence your cell-phones.**

**You must also actively participate in the course** beyond simply turning up on time. Participating means: being engaged, asking questions, offering examples, and responding to my questions and activities.

**No late assignments will be accepted. None. I’m not kidding.** Exceptions to this strictly enforced policy are made for students that are representing the university at some sanctioned function or for a documented medical or family emergency. **An emergency is something sudden, drastic, and unforeseen.** If you know you have a schedule conflict, plan ahead and hand in the assignment early!

**No cheating or plagiarism in the exams or essays!** Your written work must be independently produced and must not display cross-over or direct similarity with the work of a classmate or other author. Any cheating or plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and maybe even the course. See me if you're unsure about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, or check out <http://www.wpacouncil.org/node/9>. **Seriously, if you turn in something that's not your own writing, you'll get a zero on it.**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me as soon as possible.

### **Firearms Policy (this is not satire)**

The University of Idaho bans firearms from its property with only limited exceptions. One exception applies to persons who hold a valid Idaho enhanced concealed carry license, provided those firearms remain concealed at all times. If an enhanced concealed carry license holder's firearm is displayed, other than in necessary self-defense, it is a violation of University policy. Please contact local law enforcement (call 911) to report firearms on University property.

The University of Idaho's leadership remains committed to maintaining a safe work, living and learning environment on campus and will not tolerate any threatening use of firearms or any other weapons. While authorized license holders may be at ease carrying a loaded firearm, **please be aware that many people are not familiar with such weapons and are uncomfortable in their presence. Especially me.**

### **Course Assignments**

Your performance in this course will be assessed through the following activities. More information about all these assignments will be offered during the semester.

**Geopolitical Quizzes:** At the end of each unit, there will be a short multiple-choice quiz on BbLearn that covers the content of the unit. There are four units so there are five quizzes.

**Geopolitical Briefs:** You will write four short essays (or 'briefs') over the course of the semester. The briefs are one-page exercises that require you to analyze a recent *New York Times* article using a concept from the class. You will also have the option to rewrite **one** of these briefs to improve your grade. More information about these assignments will be provided during class.

**Geopolitical White Paper:** The culmination of the class involves you selecting a geopolitical issue of your choosing, providing an overview of the issue to place it in its proper historical and geographic context, and performing an in-depth analysis. A 'super-

sized' version of the Geopolitical Briefs, the White Paper assignment will be between 6-8 pages and will require you to integrate multiple concepts from the course. In conjunction with this assignment, you will also prepare a formal one-page proposal of your selected topic; the topic must be approved by me before you move forward with the White Paper. More information about this assignment will be provided during class.

**Weekly Class Activities and Participation:** Attendance is required and will be taken during all class meetings. However, you may miss two meetings without penalty. Active participation in class is also essential to succeed in this course. Every Thursday, we will use our time to explore the assigned material in depth. During these meetings, you will have the chance to expand your understanding of the course material through in-class discussions and activities. You are expected to contribute with questions and thoughtful and informed reactions. Your overall contributions and participation will comprise a significant portion of your overall grade.

### **Grading Criteria**

Your grade will be determined on the percentage of points you receive for the required assignments and exams. Your final grade will be calculated using the following breakdown:

Geopolitical Quizzes (4)	20% (5% each)
Geopolitical Briefs	40% (1 <sup>st</sup> 8%, 2 <sup>nd</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> 10%, 4 <sup>th</sup> 12%)
Geopolitical White Paper	20%
Weekly Activities & Participation	10%

The final grades will be assigned according to the following system:

A: 90-100%    B: 80-89%    C: 70-79%    D: 60-69%    F: anything below 60%

**Course Calendar**

All dates are subject to change.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Readings, Assignments, &amp; Activities</b>
1	1	<b>Aug 21</b> Course introduction; What is Geopolitics?	<b>Aug 23</b> Types of geopolitics	Reading: Prologue Discussion: Everyday geopolitics
2	1	<b>Aug 28</b> Place and politics	<b>Aug 30</b> Place	Reading: Ch.1 Discussion: Place in the NYT
3	1	<b>Sep 4</b> Scale and politics	<b>Sep 6</b> Scale	Reading: Ch.1 Discussion: Scale in the NYT
4	1	<b>Sep 11</b> Structure & agency and politics	<b>Sept 13</b> Structure & agency	Reading: Ch.1 Discussion: Introduce Geopolitical Briefs
5	2	<b>Sep 18</b> Geopolitical agency	<b>Sep 20</b> Geopolitical codes	Reading: Ch.2 Discussion: Geopolitical codes  <b>Geopol Brief #1 due TH</b> <b>Quiz #1 online all week</b>
6	2	<b>Sep 25</b> Justifying Geopolitical codes	<b>Sep 27</b> Orientalism	Reading: Ch.3 Discussion: Codes in the media
7	2	<b>Oct 2</b> Nations, states, and nation-states	<b>Oct 4</b> Top down and bottom up nationalisms	Reading: Ch.4 Discussion meeting: Types of nationalisms
8	2	<b>Oct 9</b> Nationalism and gender	<b>Oct 11</b> Nationalism in the media	Reading: Ch.4 Discussion meeting: Representing the nation
9	3	<b>Oct 16</b> Territorial geopolitics	<b>Oct 18</b> Boundary processes	Reading: Ch.5 Discussion meeting: Borders and boundaries  <b>Geopol Brief #2 due TH</b> <b>Quiz #2 online all week</b>

<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Readings, Assignments, &amp; Activities</b>
10	3	<b>Oct 23</b> Networks and social movements	<b>Oct 25</b> Peaceful social movements	Reading: Ch.6 Discussion: Social activism
11	3	<b>Oct 30</b> Networks and terrorism	<b>Nov 1</b> Terrorism and counter-terrorism	Reading: Ch.6 Discussion: Counter-terrorism policy  <b>Geopol White Paper proposal due TH</b>
12	3	<b>Nov 6</b> Global geopolitical structures	<b>Nov 8</b> Model of world leadership	Reading: Ch.7 Discussion: World leadership
13	4	<b>Nov 13</b> Environmental geopolitics	<b>Nov 15</b> Environmental security	Reading: Ch.8 Discussion: Climate change treaties  <b>Geopol Brief #3 due TH</b> <b>Quiz #3 online all week</b>
14	--	<b>Nov 20</b> <b>Fall Break</b> <b>No Class</b>	<b>Nov 22</b> <b>Fall Break</b> <b>No Class</b>	--
15	4	<b>Nov 27</b> Resource conflicts <b>4<sup>th</sup> Essay Due</b>	<b>Nov 29</b> Energy conflicts	Reading: Ch.8 Discussion: Resource wars
16	4	<b>Dec 4</b> Messy geopolitics and wrap-up	<b>Dec 6</b> Course wrap up	Reading: Ch.9  <b>Geopol Brief #4 due TH</b> <b>Quiz #4 online all week</b>
17		<b>Dec 11-15 (Finals Week)</b> <b>Geopol Brief rewrite due (optional)</b> <b>Geopolitical White Paper due</b>		