

Mayville State University
GEOG 390, Political Geography (5035)
Spring, 2024
3 Credit Hours

Course and Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Thomas Craig, Assistant Professor of Geography

Contact Information: Old Main 320, thomas.craig@mayvillestate.edu, 701-788-4809

Hours of Availability: 11:30 am - 12:30 pm M-F ([Zoom](#)), or by appointment

Meeting Times and Location: M or W, 1:00-1:50 pm, Old Main 310

How to address your instructor: Given my rank at MSU and my degree, I prefer to be called: "Dr. Craig"

Course Description

Political geography concerns how politics is geographical and geography is political. Topics include international relations and geopolitics, electoral geography and redistricting, the nation-state and other forms of political organization, and practices of political territorialization and bordering.

Purpose of the Course

Political Geography focuses on space and power. All politics are geographical, from the boundaries of our Congressional electoral districts, to the functions of international borders and work of supranational organizations. Through a survey of key concepts and perspectives, and assisted by the interdisciplinary lens of geopolitics, we will investigate how we shape the world through political processes and relations occurring at global, regional, national, and local scales. We will raise questions about how power and space shape relationships between states and individuals, and how it may change in the future. In short, we'll explore how political power makes geographies and how, in turn, geography may be said to make politics. Topics include state sovereignty and territoriality in an age of globalization, geographies of empires and imperialism, nationalism and supranationalism, democracy and electoral geographies, and geopolitics.

Pre-/Co-requisites

GEOG 103

Course Objectives

To successfully complete this course, the learner will be expected to meet the following objectives, as aligned to Social Science Education Program Approval Standards through North Dakota's Education Standards and Practices Board (ND ESPB):

- *Understand* the development of group identities, such as nations and states, and examine the linkages between these identities and the political organization of territory.
- *Compare* ideas that legitimize the governance of territories by certain groups and/or individuals.
- *Identify* political, economic, and environmental forces that undermine the nation-state system.
- *Analyze* the effects of boundaries on economic, political, and social processes.
- *Trace* the evolution of empires and geopolitical ideas over time.

Standards Alignment (Social Science Education Program Approval Standards-ND ESPB):

- 15035.1 In the social studies composite major curriculum the program requires the study of a broad base of social studies including history (eighteen semester hours) and at least two of the following three core areas: political science and civics (twelve semester hours), economics (twelve semester hours), and geography (twelve semester hours). Additional electives to the social studies composite may include: sociology (six semester hours) or psychology (six

semester hours) or anthropology (six semester hours) or global studies (six semester hours).

Required Materials and Technologies

- Dittmer, J. and Bos, D. (2019). *Popular Culture, Geopolitics and Identity*, 2nd Edition. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jones, R. (2017). *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.
- Smith, S. (2020). *Political Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Hoboken, NY: Wiley/Blackwell.
- All other materials will be provided on Blackboard.
- Students must meet all university technology requirements.

Course Expectations

Instructor/Student Communication

Students are accountable for all academic communications sent to their Mayville State University e-mail address.

Outside of class, I prefer to be contacted by email. I will do my best to respond in a timely manner (within the working day if received between 7am and 4 pm; evening and weekend communication may take longer).

Assignments and Assessments

Readings, Notes and Journals – 39%

You will complete a series of readings most weeks (please see Course Schedule). For each reading, you will need to supply 1) a set of notes summarizing the respective material from Smith's *Political Geography: A Critical Geography*, and 2) a journal post on the respective readings from Jones's *Violent Borders* or Dittmer and Bos's *Popular Culture, Geopolitics and Identity*.

Notes: Your notes should reflect a thorough reading of each chapter. This includes presenting the main ideas of the chapter, as well as examples and/or support of these concepts. Outlining might prove your best bet as a format. It may be important to focus on those words in bold, as these tend to be important terms within the discipline. Also, you should include questions you have where you are confused or would like more information, as well as your own thoughts on or connections to the material (what was interesting?). **Please put questions/thoughts in a different font color or put them in bold!** You should avoid writing word-for-word from the book (except for maybe headings and subheadings or quotes that are important to you).

Journals: Your journal writing, again, should reflect a thorough reading of the material. Journal entries will be completed on Blackboard using the journal tool. You will need to address five prompts about your reading, writing a brief paragraph (4-5 sentences) for each prompt.

Notes and journals are due by the end of the day on Sunday (11:59 pm) during assigned weeks. Submit your notes and journals in the Blackboard folders "Notes" and "Journals" (separate drop boxes). Notes and journals are worth 10 points and 5 points, respectively.

Attendance and Participation – 13%

In addition to your writing each week, you are expected to attend and participate in weekly seminar discussions. Much of these meetings will be guided by the questions you pose in your notes and journals, however, it is expected you will be able to address, follow-up, and engage with topics you and others have brought to the table for conversation. Each of these meetings is worth 5 points.

Film Reflection Papers (GLAs) – 8%

You will complete two reflection papers. Reflection papers will be based on two films, including *Brexit* (2018) and *Avatar* (2009). Films will be viewed **outside** of weekly seminar meetings. An agreeable time will be determined by students. Each paper will consist of a two-page, double-spaced reflection to the major themes/issues presented in the films and will be worth 20 points each. More information will be provided on Blackboard.

Podcast/Research Project – 20%

To show your learning this term within Political Geography, you will be working to create a class podcast series based on one of the most prominent issues in the subfield today: borders and human rights. Information will be provided to teach you how to create and produce a podcast. You will identify one border in the world and describe the issue(s) in that place through storytelling, interviews, and scholarly research. You will meet with the instructor individually to go

over your plan and discuss any issues with research and/or editing throughout the term. These podcasts will be due at the end of the term, and we will spend our time during the last week of class to listen to and reflect on each respective episode. In total, the various elements of this project will be worth 100 points. More information will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

Formal Assessments – 20%

You will complete two formal, written assessments. Each assessment will be take-home and will be submitted on Blackboard. Each exam will be worth 50 points (100 points total). Each assessment will only cover respective material (i.e. not comprehensive). The format will 2 broad questions, each worth 25 points, that will expect you to show not only your knowledge and comprehension of material, but also your application and analysis to given situations. You will have one week to complete each assessment:

Assessment #1 – Begins Monday, March 7th at 5:00 pm; due Monday, March 14th at 5:00 pm.

Assessment #2 – Begins Monday, May 2nd at 5:00 pm; due Monday, May 9th at 5:00 pm.

You will be able to use materials on your exam and be expected to use MLA citations when and where necessary. Again, you will need to do more than just regurgitate from our readings and show higher-ordered thinking in your responses. More information will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

Method of Evaluation/Grading

Grading Policies

I will do my best to turn around work completed in this course in a timely manner (optimally within a week of a respective deadline, but no more than two weeks). Moreover, I will attempt to leave helpful comments when and where necessary. Most evaluation is based on a rubric, which will be available for you to review.

To maintain timely feedback, **no late submissions will be accepted** (although understanding extraordinary circumstances). **All deadlines will be by the end of their respective due dates (i.e. 11:59 pm CST).**

Attendance/Participation Policies

To successfully complete this course, your attendance and active participation is required. Participation in classroom discussions or activities will result in stronger connections to theory and practice, adding to the quality of your learning experience.

Grading Scale

The overall course evaluation is based on 500 total points, with the following grading scale: A (100-90%), B (89-80%), C (79-70%), D (69-60%), F (<60%) (percentages are rounded).

Breakdown of Grades

Assignments/Assessments	Total # of Assignments	Points Possible for each	Total Possible Points (% of Grade)
Notes	13	10	130 (26%)
Journals	13	5	65 (13%)
Attendance/Participation	13	5	65 (13%)
Film Reaction Papers	2	20	40 (8%)
Podcast/Research Project	-	100	100 (20%)
Assessments	2	50	100 (20%)
Total Points Possible	-	-	500 (100%)

Tips for Success

Faculty often take for granted the rules of the game for academic success. By virtue of our faculty status, we successfully navigated the university setting for years. But it was not always that way. I remember feeling like a fish out of water throughout my undergraduate years. I did not understand what “office hours” were, so I rarely went to them. I also did not write to my professors with questions that I was too afraid to ask in class. Indeed, I knew little if nothing about what resources existed on my campus, and I often wondered how other students found out about things like scholarship opportunities, internships, study abroad, and so on. So here are just a few items to consider regardless of whether you are embarking on your first or final semester as an undergraduate:

- If you have a question about course content, ask it! I am an expert in my field of study, and I want to share my expertise with you.
- If you have a question that is not about the course, and feel comfortable enough, ask that too! If I do not know the answer, I can likely point you to someone on our campus who does.
- The library and its staff are the single greatest resource we have on campus. The library is a living bibliography of the entirety of human knowledge and condition. Whatever topic you find interesting (regardless if you find it in this course!), the library staff can help you find relevant information. You just need to ask them.
- Get to know the Writing Center! Writing successfully at the college-level is something you likely do not yet know how to do well. It is a process. The Writing Center and its staff can help demystify your assignments and help you to write more clearly and effectively. Again, you need only ask them.

Enrollment Verification

The U.S. Department of Education requires instructors to conduct an activity which will validate student enrollment in this course. Class attendance will be used to verify enrollment in on-campus courses. If you do not attend, your enrollment in this course will be at risk.

Important Student Information

Navigate to Blackboard > My MaSU tab > Student Resources tab to find a document entitled, "Important Student Important Information," which includes information about:

- ✓ Academic Grievance Concerns and Instructor English Proficiency
- ✓ Starfish - Student Success System
- ✓ Students with Documented Disabilities
- ✓ Student Learning Outcomes / Essential Learning Outcomes
- ✓ Academic Honesty
- ✓ Emergency Notification
- ✓ Continuity of Academic Instruction for a Pandemic or Emergency
- ✓ Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)
- ✓ Diversity Statement (Title IX)

Course Timeline/Schedule

Week	Meeting Date	Topic	Readings/Films	Item(s) Due
1	1/12	Syllabus/Schedule		
2	1/17	No Class	MLK Jr. Day	
3	1/24	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-14) Jones, Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-28) 	Notes and Journal
4	1/31	Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 2 (pp. 15-33) Jones, Chapter 2 (pp. 29-47) 	Notes and Journal
5	2/7	The Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 3 (pp. 34-56) Jones, Chapter 3 (pp. 48-69) Film: <i>Brexit</i>** 	Notes and Journal
6	2/14	Power/Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 4 (pp. 57-79) Jones, Chapter 4 (pp. 70-88) 	Notes, Journal, and Film Reflection
7*	2/23	State/Borders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 5 (pp. 80-94) Jones, Chapter 5 (pp. 89-118) 	Notes and Journal
8	2/28	Urban Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 6 (pp. 95-115) Jones, Chapter 6 (pp. 119-139) 	Notes and Journal
9	3/7	Social Movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 7 (pp. 116-138) Jones, Chapter 7 and Conclusion (pp. 140-180) 	Notes and Journal
SB	3/14	Assessment #1	No Class – Spring Break – Due by 5 pm	Assessment #1
10	3/21	Decolonizing Political Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 8 (pp. 139-161) Dittmer and Bos, Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. xvii-20) Film: <i>Avatar</i>** 	Notes and Journal
11	3/28	Geopolitics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 9 (pp. 162-178) Dittmer and Bos, Chapter 2 (pp. 21-44) 	Notes, Journal, and Film Reflection
12	4/4	Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 10 (pp. 179-198) Dittmer and Bos, Chapter 4 (pp. 69-94) 	Notes and Journal
13	4/11	Intimate Geopolitics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 11 (pp. 199-217) Dittmer and Bos, Chapter 5 (pp. 95-118) 	Notes and Journal
14*	4/20	Biopolitics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 12 (pp. 218-234) Dittmer and Bos, Chapter 6 (pp. 119-140) 	Notes and Journal
15	4/25	Future of Political Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, Chapter 13 (pp. 235-253) Dittmer and Bos, Chapter 8 (pp. 165-190) 	Notes and Journal
16	5/2	Podcast Presentations		Podcasts
17	5/9	Assessment #2	No Class – Finals Week – Due by 5 pm	Assessment #2

*Meeting will be on Wednesday that week

**Time will be scheduled outside regular meeting time to view films

Appendix

Other Required Items, if Applicable:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for On-Campus Courses

The health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty is our top priority. Mayville State University is committed to continuing face-to-face instruction for on campus courses each semester while minimizing exposure risk and promote health and safety for students, faculty, and staff. Please refer to the *Comets Choose 2.0 Guidelines* and the *COVID-19 Classroom Guidelines for On-Campus Courses* documents for additional information regarding implementation procedures for Comets Choose 2.0 and classroom expectations and modifications necessary to minimize exposure risk and promote health and safety for students and faculty within on-campus classes in light of COVID-19.

Mask/Face Covering Requirement: The use of a mask/face covering is strongly recommended in this class, regardless of an individual's vaccination status. This requirement will remain in place in this class or designated learning space until you are informed otherwise. If masks are deemed compulsory during the term, non-compliance with this class requirement will result in a student code of conduct violation and associated consequences outlined in the MSU Student Handbook.

In the event that a rebound in COVID-19 local infections necessitates a change in course format, plans for remote options for this course include synchronous, online instruction. Meeting days and times may change.

Division-Specific Items

Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) Addressed in This Course

The Academic Program Student Learning Outcomes document can be found in your course shell. It contains all learning outcomes pertaining to Essential Studies courses and all majors and minors. The document has an index, so you can quickly find the degree you are pursuing. The geography program and minor are being reviewed and restructured in 2021-22. No SLO is currently being assessed with this course.

Late Arrivals

The grading system for students adding this course after the first day of instruction will be modified. The student will be graded only on the activities that transpired while the student is enrolled. Students will not be penalized for missed assignments, but the student is still responsible for learning the course material that was covered during their initial absence.