

TARAS SHEVCHENKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF KYIV
FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY
COUNTRY STUDIES AND TOURISM DEPARTMENT

Spatial dimension of power in the global world

Course guidelines

KYIV– 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The **goal** of the discipline is to familiarize students with current theoretical concepts in political geography, especially those grounded in the post-modern perspective on space and power under the influence of globalization. The course focuses upon deconstruction of traditional views on the state-centred world. Instead, a much closer attention is paid to the non-government, spatially de-centred forms of political power and their representation at global and regional levels. It aims at examining the role of *multinational companies* and their potential to influence economies, mobilizing force of *religions* and *political ideologies*, power dimension of *scientific knowledge* as a means of political control, *socio-emotional and mental dimensions to political behaviour* at various geographic levels. The course is designed to help students develop the integral competence of the MA programme in *Political Geography and Geopolitics*, namely the ability to set and successfully solve complex research tasks and practical problems in the sphere of state, regional, and local governance, international cooperation, NGOs, research and business environment. More specifically, the competences covered by this course are:

- SC11. Ability to analyze spatial conflicts including religious, ethnic, and social ones, predict their development, evaluate their impact at local, regional and global levels.
- SC 12.2 Ability to perform a comprehensive analysis of the global geopolitical environment, evaluate key actors' impacts and risks.

Language of instruction: English.

Admission requirements (if any):

- 1). A bachelor's degree in a geography or social sciences programme;
- 2). Basic knowledge of research methods;
- 3). Understanding basic principles of critical analysis in geography.

Evaluation

The course is evaluated on a pass/fail basis. The overall score is a sum of throughout the evaluation scores. Throughout- the-term evaluation includes weekly seminar performance and two mid-term control papers.

Evaluation uses 100 point scheme. In order to pass the course successfully, students are required to score at list 60 points. In case of less than 60 points was scored, a possibility for an additional written paper is possible with a maximum score of 20 points.

COURSE STRUCTURE

#	Topic	hours		
		lectures	seminars	Unsupervised work
Part 1. Basic concepts				
1.	Geopolitics and political geography: evolution of the disciplines	2	2	2
2.	Power in political geography and geopolitics	2	2	5
3.	Geographical concepts of space	2	2	5
Part 2. Territorial states and non-state actors				
4.	The world of territorial states	2	2	10
5.	Economic power of corporations: spatial dimension	2	2	10
6.	World cities network as the nodes of power	2	2	10
7.	International organizations and normative power	2	2	10
8.	NGOs and their political impact	2	2	10
Part 3. Sources of political power				
9.	Economic potential as a source of power	2	2	10
10.	The power of religion in the global world	2	2	10
11.	Ethnic affinity in the modern society	2	2	10
12.	Political ideology as a mobilizing force	2	2	10
13.	Science and knowledge as a form of political power	2	2	10
14.	Culture and social norms and politics	2	2	10
	TOTAL	28	28	122

Total time 180 hours

In-class – 58 hours

Lectures – 28 hours

Seminars - 28 hours

Consultations – 2 hours

Out-of-class individual work – 122 hours

DETAILED TOPIC DESCRIPTION

PART 1. BASIC CONCEPTS

Topic 1. **Geopolitics and political geography: evolution of the discipline**

Lecture. Origins of political thought in geography – from Antiquity to Modernity. Theories of international politics: political realism, rationalism, functionalism, institutionalism etc. Environmental determinism as a trend in the 19th century. Origins of political geography and geopolitics. F.Ratzel, A.Mahan, H.Mackinder, R.Hartshorn, R. Kjellén, K.Haushoffer. Political geography in the late 20th century. From chorological Post-modernist geopolitics.

Seminar 1.

1. Environmental determinism and political geography
2. Evolution of political geography throughout the 20th century
3. Post-modern geopolitics

Out-of-class work

1. Political theories of the Antiquity
2. Political theories of the Modernity

Topic 2. **Power in political geography and geopolitics**

Lecture. Power as the major concept in politics. Sociological interpretations of power. Types of power. Power and formal social hierarchies (inscribed power). Power as a resource to achieve specific goals (functional power). Power as everyday practices, norms and beliefs (normative power). Sources of power – force, wealth, and persuasion. Ideologies, religions, traditions etc. as forms of power. Science and knowledge as a way to maintain political hierarchies.

Seminar 2.

1. Types of power
2. Sources of power
3. Comparing various forms of power in the contemporary world

Out-of-class work

1. Comparative cases of inscribed and functional power in contemporary international relations
2. Cases of normative power

Topic 3. **Geographical concepts of space**

Lecture. Space as the major concept in geography. Mathematical, physical, geographical, and sociological concepts of space. Distinguishing space, place, and territory. Place as a specific portion of geographical space. Territory as a form of spatialized power. Global, regional, and local level of analysis – the concept of scale. Scale as an analytical concept and tool. Spatializing political power – contemporary ideas about space and power, from territorial (Westphalian) state to decentralized networks and spatially fluid forms of power.

Seminar 3.

1. Concepts of space, place and territory
2. Spatially bounded and centred forms of power
3. Aterritorial forms of power

Out-of-class work

1. Actor-network theory
2. Cases of terrorist movements as spatially decentralized power

PART 2. TERRITORIAL STATES AND NON-STATE ACTORS

Topic 4. **The world of territorial states**

Lecture. Territory – etymology of the term. R.Sack's *Human Territoriality* – the concept, historical and modern cases. Territoriality in modern European history. From the feudal fragmentation to the Westphalian international relations. Socio-political context for the 17th century political and territorial developments. From Westphalian to the post-Westphalian state system. The Weberian concept of state. Modern territorial state vs empires – differences in spatiality of power and territory control. Contemporary state system and post-modern developments. The state is dead, long live the state!

Seminar 4.

1. Westphalian peace and the origins of modern territorial states
2. Post-Westphalian nation-state system
3. Post-modern pressures on the traditional state system

Out-of-class work

1. Potential and limitations of traditional territorial nation-states in the contemporary international relations
2. European integration as a strategy of small state survival (T.Snyder)

Topic 5. **Economic power of corporations: spatial dimension**

Lecture. Economic vs. political elites in European political history. Timocracy vs oligarchy in the Antiquity, landed aristocracy vs. bourgeoisie in the early Modernity. First corporations in the age of colonialism. Development of global corporatism and internationalization of business throughout the 20s century. Spatiality of the corporate power. Head offices, regional offices, distribution offices network,

production facilities. Centre-periphery concept and international corporate spatialization. International business involvement in politics. Lobbying and informal influences.

Seminar 5.

1. History of corporate business culture in Europe and America
2. Corporate traditions in Asia
3. Cases of corporations' involvement in international politics

Out-of-class work

1. Corporations, political power and conspiracy theories
2. Corporations vs. bureaucratic state, analysis of the recent trends

Topic 6. **World cities network as the nodes of power**

Lecture. Urban culture as an attribute of European Modernity. Cities as socio-political communities. Traditions of self-governance. Cities and states in the hierarchy of territorial power. World cities hypothesis (P.Taylor). GaWC project. World cities ranking. World cities as hubs of international production services. World cities vs. financial centres. Roles of the world cities in international economy decision-making. World cities as spatial hubs of corporate power.

Seminar 6.

1. GaWC methodology for world city ranking,
2. Economic vs. political capitals and world geopolitics
3. Recent trends in world cities distribution and impact across the Globe

Out-of-class work

1. Case analysis of major world cities (New York, London, Tokyo, Shanghai, Los-Angeles etc)

2. Large cities in the poor countries: cases of Lagos, Cairo, Kinshasa, etc.

Topic 7. **International organizations and normative power**

Lecture. Theories of international integration: functionalism, institutionalism, intergovernmentalism. Stages of economic integration – from free trade area to economic union. Intergovernmental organizations as a phenomenon in international politics. Specialized international agencies and start of technical standardization of postal service, transportation, energy communications etc. International organizations as a manifestation of normative power – production of international norms and standards. European Integration as a special case. Regional economic integration. International military and political alliances - NATO. Geopolitics of international integration.

Seminar 7.

1. Specialized international agencies
2. Deconstruction of the European integration
3. Military and political alliances and contemporary geopolitics.

Out-of-class work

1. Economic integration in Latin America
2. Economic integration in Asia
3. Economic integration in Africa

Topic 8. **NGOs and their political impact**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in contemporary democracies - political role and social impact. NGOs as a means of channelling dispersed social demands onto the political agenda. Volunteering movements and their institutionalization. International NGOs. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Reporters Without Borders, Greenpeace International etc. Impact of international

NGOs on global and domestic politics. Potential and shortcomings of NGOs as political institutions. International NGOs in the global hierarchy of power.

Seminar 8.

1. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent: geopolitical analysis
2. Greenpeace International as a driver of global political agenda
3. NGOs in domestic politics

Out-of-class work

1. NGOs and international promotion of democracy
2. International NGOs in Ukraine

PART 3. SOURCES OF POLITICAL POWER

Topic 9. **Economic potential as a source of power**

Lecture. Global economy as a capitalist world-system (I.Wallerstein). The driving force of capitalism as a development agenda setter. Capital as an international investment resource and a punishment instrument. National wealth and its international political impact. Access to the welfare space – loans, investments, trade, and migration. Economic potential as a basis for military power. Political weight of the most developed nations. Geopolitics and geoeconomics as a Double Janus. Cases of geoeconomic powers - US, Japan, China, Germany, India, Brazil, etc. Economic power of the European Union.

Seminar 9.

1. International investment as a geopolitical tool – the case of China
2. Access to the goods and labor market as in instrument of international politics – the case of the EU.
3. The US customs policies as a tool of D.Trump administration's international politics

Out-of-class work

1. Economic vs. military power: comparing European and Russian geopolitics.
2. World economy centre and periphery geographical shifts

Topic 10. **The power of religion in the global world**

Lecture. Religion as a social institution and a form of political power. Christianity in the Ancient Rome, Byzantine, Medieval Europe and Kyivan Rus as a hub for power concentration. Reformation and political reforms in the 17th century Europe.

World religions (by the number of followers and by doctrinal claim). Abrahamic religions and their universal claim for explaining world history. Judo-Christian-Islamic confrontations (in the Near and Middle East and elsewhere). Geography of major world religions. Religions and radical political movements. Domestic and international dimensions.

Seminar 10.

1. Political impacts of Christianity
2. Political impacts of Islam
3. Political impacts of Judaism

Out-of-class work

Religious radicalism and international terrorism – cases of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State

Religious institutions and the US domestic and international politics

Topic 11. **Ethnic affinity in the modern society**

Lecture. Ethnicity as a cultural and genetic feature of human populations. Ethnicity in the socio-political paradigm of Modernity. Pre-modern cultures and the ‘universal civilization’. Concepts of ethnicities. Ethnic dimension to nationalism. The ‘Spring of Nations’ in European history. The role of ethnic affiliation in the modern-day world (the West and the Rest). Emotional power of ethnic affinity. Cases of ethnic affinity as a mobilizing force in territorial conflicts. Race and ethnicity - variations of the discourse in Europe and America. Ethnicities and imperialism. Ethnic conflicts and genocides.

Seminar 11.

1. Ethnicity vs political nation: historical and contemporary perspectives
2. Ethnic diversity and political unity

3. Ethnic genocides

Out-of-class work

1. The genocide in Ruanda: ethnopolitical deconstruction of the tragedy
2. Uyghur policy in China
3. Kurdish nationalism

Topic 12. **Political ideology as a mobilizing force**

Lecture. Ideology as a form of mass socio-political beliefs. History of ideologies in Europe. General doctrine overview and comparison: conservatism, progressivism, liberalism, libertarianism, socialism, communism, anarchism, internationalism, isolationism etc. Political impacts of ideologies throughout the 20th century. Ideologies and totalitarianism: cases of the USSR, Nazi Germany, North Korea, etc. Fukuyama's 'The End of History' as a manifestation of global liberalism. China's "Third Way" as an ideological "alternative" to global democratization. Ideological portrait of Europe. Ideological portrait of Americas. Ideological portrait of Asia. Ideologies in Africa.

Seminar 12.

1. Liberal vs socialist ideologies in Europe (late 20th and early 21st centuries)
2. Authoritarianism as a new coherent ideology in international politics
3. Back to totalitarianism? Cases of China and Russia

Out-of-class work

1. Global left-wing radicalism revival
2. Global right-wing radicalism revival

Topic 13. **Science and knowledge as a form of political power**

Lecture. Science as a ‘religion’ of the Modernity: the shift from religious doctrines to the atheist worldview. The major principles of the scientific worldview – experiential proofing as a prerequisite of scientific knowledge. Limitations of science. Science as a social institution (from the late 19th century onwards). M.Foucault’s concept of knowledge as a form of political power. Connection of intellectual and political elites in the modern European history. Authority of science, social, economic and political controversies and conspiracy theories (the case of COVID-19). Political impact of the social sciences. Postmodern sociology of knowledge. Knowledge and science in the post-modern geopolitics.

Seminar 13.

1. Social impacts of science as a complex institution in the modern world
2. Postmodernist perspective on the social sciences
3. Social sciences and ideologies cases of liberalism and neo-Marxism

Out-of-class work

1. Science and corporate interests in the public health domain
2. Dominant schools of economic education and economic policy: a geographical perspective

Topic 14. **Culture and social norms and politics**

Culture studies as a human geography sub-discipline. Material and non-material culture. Culture in the age of Modernity. Dominant culture as a set of shared mindsets and outlooks. C.Woodard’s ‘American Nations’ as a model of cultural impact in a contemporary society. ‘Behavioural stereotype’ as a concept of cultural spatiality. Cultural aspect of major religions. Cases of distinct cultures with recognizable social norms: Confucianism, Islamic cultures, Jainism, etc. M.Weber’s “Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism”. Cultural norms and economic development. Cultural norms and geography of democratization.

Seminar 14.

1. Confucianist culture and economic miracles in Asia
2. Civic culture (G.Almond & S.Verba)
3. Political culture in electoral geography

Out-of-class work

1. Cultures vs universal civilization perspectives on global economic and political progress
2. American nations (C.Woodard) – extrapolating the concept beyond the North America.

WORK GUIDELINES

Each topic of the course consists of a lecture, a seminar and an out-of-class assignment.

Lectures

Students are expected to attend lectures in person (or join online – if required by the faculty). Lectures provide a general framework for a given topic, navigate students through the existing literature and sets major problematic topics for deeper studies and further discussions.

Seminars

Seminars provide a setting for a collective discussion of more specific problems within a given topic. In order to succeed in a seminar, students are expected to work through the lecture material and do extended reading. Prior to the seminar, students propose specific problems and cases to discuss within the listed seminar questions. Each question then is presented in class by a single speaker, followed by group discussion. Points are given both for presentation and for active discussion participation

Out-of-class work

Out-of-class work is designed to extend case centred and problem focused analysis within a given topic. Questions for out-of-class work are supposed to help students better master lecture points and seminar topics. Out-of-class work questions should be viewed as complimentary to seminar questions and not as stand-alone tasks.

Reading

The course requires an extensive reading load from students with 122 hours envisaged for reading activities. The core literature involves the basic text-books and theoretical works, aiming at providing the overall conceptual framework for the course topics. Core literature is only the beginning point. Additional literature

specifies several key texts for course topics and forms an understanding of the academic discourse within the course topics. As this is a master-grade course, students are required to perform individual search for literature, therefore, it is their individual responsibility to form a specific literature list for a given seminar topic. The workflow looks as follows: students work through the appropriate chapters of the core textbooks, get acquainted with the relevant additional literature for a given topic and then perform additional search for literature using Google Scholar service. Special attention is to be paid to distinguishing between fact sources, theoretical and research analysis and other, non-academic sources. A brief overview of sources is marked during seminar presentations and discussions.

LITERATURE

Core:

1. A Companion to Economic Geography (T.J.Barnes, J.Peck, E.Sheppard – eds.): Blackwell-Wiley, 2012.
2. A Companion to Political Geography (J.Agnew, K. Mitchel, G. Toal – eds.). Blackwell, 2003.
3. Cosgrove, D., & Jackson, P. New directions in cultural geography. *Area*, (1987), p. 95-101.
4. Dear, M. The postmodern challenge: reconstructing human geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1988), p. 262-274.
5. Massey, D., Allen J., and Anderson J., eds. *Geography matters!: a reader*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.
6. Flint, C. and Taylor, P.J. Political Geography: World-economy, Nation-state, and Locality. Pearson Education, 2007, 355 p.
7. Huntington, S.P.1993. The clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs* 72(3). 22-49.

Additional:

8. Agnew, J., Duncan, J. (eds). The power of Place: Bringing together Geographical and Sociological Imagination. Boston: Unwin Hayman 1989.
9. Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (2015). The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations.
10. Ashworth, G. J.. *War and the City*. Routledge, 2002.
11. Barnes, T. J., & Duncan, J. S. *Writing worlds: discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape*. Routledge, 2013.
12. Fukuyama, F. (1989). The end of history?. *The national interest*, (16), 3-18.
13. Hobsbawm, E.J. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
14. Mackinder, H. J. The geographical pivot of history. In: *Geopolitics*. Routledge, 2014. p. 44-48.
15. Raaflaub K. A. & Talbert, R.J. A.. *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies*. John Wiley & Sons, 2009.
16. The Cambridge History of the British Empire. CUP Archive, 1963.

17. Newman, D. and Paasi, A. Fences and Neighbours in the post-modern world: boundary narratives in the political geography. 1998. *Progress in Human Geography*. 22(2) – 186-207.
18. Poltorakov, O. Y. Poltorakov, O. Yu., Braychevskyy, Yu. S., Zapototska, VA Europe's Geopolitical Regions As an Intellectual Construct: the Challenges of Positioning Ukraine. In *Ukrainian Geographical Journal* 2024 (4), 64-74. (in Ukrainian)
19. Smith, A.D. 1986 *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
20. Weber, M., & Kalberg, S. (2013). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. Routledge.
21. Woodard, C. (2012). *American nations: A history of the eleven rival regional cultures of North America*. Penguin.

NOTES

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This course guidelines is designed to assist students in planning their continuous work throughout the term.

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