FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY Fall 2018
DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL & SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

Professor Ulrich Oslender

GEO 3471-U01: POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

SYLLABUS

[Please note, this syllabus is a draft schedule. Dates and content are always subject to change by University officials.]

Instructor: Professor Ulrich Oslender
Class meets: Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00AM - 11:15AM
Classroom: Green Library 166
Office hours: Wednesday, 3:00PM - 5:00PM (or by appointment); SIPA 324
E-mail: uoslende@fiu.edu (always put GEO 3471 in “Subject” line when e-mailing me)
Course website: On Canvas at: https://canvas.fiu.edu/
Teaching Assistant: tbc

Course Description

The world of politics is an exciting and often seemingly unpredictable one. Who would have thought back in the summer of 1989 that a few months later the Berlin Wall would fall, and shortly after the Soviet Empire? I didn’t at the time. And I lived right in the midst of it, in what was then West Berlin. I hope that the excitement of real life politics can be taken into this course and will rub off on students to make for an equally exciting semester.

Political geography is concerned with the spatiality of power, or with the uneven spatial distribution of power in the world. Political power is manifest geographically in the establishment of borders between states, for example, or in the control that powerful states exercise over less powerful ones. Traditionally, political geography has taken the state as primary unit of analysis; its internal organization and its interactions with other states. More recently, other political actors have become of interest to political geographers. These include social movements and non-governmental organizations, but also supranational organizations such as the World Bank. In sum, political geography intends to document and analyze the shifting power relations between all these different political actors in an ever more complex world. In this, it pays particular attention to the territorially-based exercise of power.
This course provides an overview of the field of political geography by introducing students to its key concepts and how these have shaped the development of this sub-discipline. Each week we will examine a different concept, such as the nation-state, territory, sovereignty, or hegemony. This will be discussed in relation to concrete case studies to illustrate these concepts at play. Students are expected to have read the assigned readings before coming to class.

**IMPORTANT:** This is an upper level class intended for College Juniors and Seniors. If you are a Freshman or Sophomore you may find this class too difficult. There will be a high reading load, for which you should be prepared. We will read a total of three books! Apart from the main text book (see below), you will read a second book (you can choose between Eduardo Galeano’s *Open Veins of Latin America*, and Nelson Mandela’s autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*), which will be the basis for the group project and presentation (more on this below). In addition we will read a third book by Gustavo Esteva on Zapatismo in Mexico (discussed in week 15). There will also be plenty of additional readings distributed through Canvas.

Please check the reading content of this syllabus very carefully. If you think this might be too ambitious for you, you may want to drop this class.

**Learning Objectives**

After successfully completing this course, you should:

1. **Have a broad overview of the field of political geography.** You will be able to identify key scholars, themes, and terms utilized by political geographers. Moreover, you will be able to appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of much work in political geography, as it is related to disciplines such as political science, international relations, sociology, and anthropology.

2. **Be able to apply key concepts in political geography to understanding the political world around you.** The course will be full of case studies that illustrate political geographical processes at play in the real world. As a Latin Americanist, I will draw on much material from Latin America. Moreover, the student groups that choose to work on Eduardo Galeano’s book will get an even deeper understanding of the political geography of this world region.

3. **Have improved your teamwork, critical thinking, discussion and presentation skills.** The group work and presentation will provide you with the opportunity to develop a short research project in teamwork. This will help you deepen your understanding of political geographical issues and to present these ideas in a friendly class-room setting.

4. **Have improved your writing skills.** Each one of you will write up the research findings of your group project in an essay of around 2,000 words. Moreover, emphasis in both exams is placed on essay writing, so your essay writing skills are expected to improve considerably during the course.
**Required Books**

The following required books are available at FIU’s bookstore. They are also available as new or used copies through on-line booksellers:


This will be the main source of information and analysis that this course draws on. Each week, readings from this book will be assigned and you will be expected to have read and studied those before you come to class. Exams will draw directly on the material covered in the textbook. I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to thoroughly read assigned chapters.

2) EITHER:


   This book is a classic in Latin American literature. It charts the systematic exploitation of Latin America’s resources and its people, first at the hands of the colonizing European powers and later by European and U.S. business interests and multinational companies. For many students in the past this has been an eye-opening read.

   OR:


   This book is Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, in which he narrates in a personal and captivating style his time as a freedom fighter in South Africa against the apartheid regime. Anyone interested in the history of colonial oppression in South Africa and the long struggle for racial equality by the African National Congress (ANC) will find this to be a fascinating read by arguably one of the most revered political figures in Africa and indeed the world. Here is a link to an [audio version](http://www.mp3audio.com) of parts of the book.

   You are expected to read either Galeano or Mandela during the course. The respective book will serve as the base for your group work and presentation, in which you relate the conceptual issues discussed in class to the rich empirical case study material in *Open Veins*, or *Long Walk to Freedom*. We will discuss the details of this project in class.

   **IMPORTANT:** If you are repeating this class, you must choose a different book from the one you presented on the last time you took this class.


   We will discuss this book in week 15 (social movements). You are strongly encouraged to read it well before then (book is currently out of print; a pdf-file is available on our Canvas site).
Using Canvas

Our course will be on Canvas at: https://canvas.fiu.edu/. Make sure you know how to log in to the site. Additional readings will be posted here together with announcements. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to the site and know how to use it. If you experience problems with Canvas, phone 305.348-3630, or visit the Resource Center at MANGO 5th Floor for walk-in support.

Grading

There will be a total of 500 points available in this class, broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work and presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>500</td>
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I use the following grading scale (fractional grades are rounded to the nearest whole number):

A = 93%-100% / A- = 90%-92% / B+ = 87%-89% / B = 83%-86% / B- = 80%-82%
C+ = 77%-79% / C = 73%-76% / D = 60%-72% / F = below 60%

Exams

There will be two exams during the semester; each one hour long. They will be a mixture of short answer and essay questions drawing from lectures, readings, and videos. I will explain details in class. Each exam accounts for 30% of the Final Grade.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance in class is necessary to achieve a passing grade. Students are responsible for all information, materials, and instructions disseminated during the class period. The lectures and readings will be complimentary but often quite different in content, and the exams will reflect this. The lecture schedule is organized around key concepts in political geography, and each week we will highlight a different concept and examine its empirical implications. A passing grade will be extremely difficult to obtain, if one chooses not to attend lectures.

To monitor attendance and participation, we award points in a number of ways: 1) through announced tasks – for example, I might ask you to prepare relevant questions about the reading for discussion; 2) through unannounced tasks – such as a short quiz in class about the readings; 3) sometimes we will just take attendance. Attendance and Participation accounts for 10% of the Final Grade.
Extra credit: Additional points may be acquired through attending and writing a short report on geography-relevant lectures (guest speakers on campus, for example). I don’t know when or how many of those opportunities will arise during this particular semester, but shall announce them in good time if they do. Up to a maximum of 10 points may be gained in this way for each extra credit.

**Group Work and Presentation**

At the beginning of the course you will form into small groups of 4 to 5 students. You will choose to either read Eduardo Galeano’s book *Open Veins of Latin America*, or Nelson Mandela’s autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. The respective book will be the empirical material that you will reinterpret through a conceptual lens of political geography. In other words, as a group you will decide which of the key concepts in political geography you want to apply to Galeano’s or Mandela’s book. You will coordinate this choice with your TA, who will report back to me. Here are some useful tips on how to conduct group work successfully: [Link 1](#).

In Week 4, groups meet in class to advance this work. Students’ presentations will take place in Weeks 11 to 13. You are encouraged to be creative in your in-class presentations. You could use power-point, include video clips, or record interviews. Make sure you are in frequent contact with your TA to discuss the progress of the project, or any problems you encounter. The collective nature of the project should encourage you all to put in as much effort as you can. If it becomes apparent that a particular group member does not contribute to the project in an acceptable manner, I will deduct points in this particular student’s record. To assist in this purpose, you will all be asked to assess each other’s performance during group work at the end of the project. I will explain the precise procedures of the group project in more detail on the first day of class. **Group work and presentation account for 15% of the Final Grade.**

**Essay**

Each one of you will submit a final report on the group work’s research findings of around 2,000 words. This is an individual task, where you have the opportunity to shine and bring your own analysis to the fore; in a group’s presentation that is not always possible. Remember to include a properly referenced Bibliography at the end of the essay. References should be ordered alphabetically by author and you should adhere to the following standard of referencing:

**Book**
Gregory, Derek & Allan Pred (eds), *Violent geographies: fear, terror, and political violence*, New York: Routledge

**Article in Journal**
**Book chapter**


**IMPORTANT:** *Essay writing* forms an important part in this class and will be tested in the exams. I expect you to be able to write in an articulate manner and present a coherent argument. You also need good command of the English language. If you feel you have problems with your writing skills, please address these concerns asap with your TA and with me. You may also want to use the resources in the Center for Excellence in Writing (located in the Green Library), where you can get help from writing tutors and participate in workshops to help sharpen your skills as a writer: [http://writingcenter.fiu.edu](http://writingcenter.fiu.edu)

The essay is due in Week 15 on November 26. It must be submitted electronically via Turnitin on the course’s Canvas page. Similarity percentage on Turnitin needs to be below 10%. You will lose 5 points for every day the essay is late. *The essay accounts for 15% of the Final Grade.*

**Make-Up Policy**

Flat tires, conflicts with work or travel, or the neighbor’s dog barking all night are not valid reasons for missing an exam. Make-up exams are allowed for incapacitating illness, a death in the immediate family, official university travel, or jury duty. NO make up exams without: 1) a doctor’s note that a student was incapable of attending for medical reasons; 2) documentation of a death in the immediate family; 3) documentation from a university official; or 4) court documentation regarding jury duty.

**Electronic Device Policy**

**IMPORTANT:** Think of the class as take-off time with an airline. All electronic devices *must be turned off* and stowed for the duration. That includes laptops, cell phones, iPads, etc.

The reasons for this policy are quite simple: First, while electronic devices can be useful tools, they are almost always also being used by students to check Facebook, Twitter, or similar social media sites during class. This is a huge distraction, not just for the student concerned but also for everyone else around, including me. Second, I always recommend taking notes in handwritten form, a much more efficient way of learning and memorizing lecture notes. Many scientists agree that handwriting is beneficial to the overall learning process. Read this [NYT article](http://nytimes.com), e.g.

As you will agree, I have adopted this strict electronic device policy for your and the class’s benefit.

**Please note:** If you are found to ignore this electronic device policy, you will get reprimanded and are subject to being removed from class. The TA or myself may take away your electronic device for the remainder of the class, and we will deduct attendance points. Repeat offenders are subject to University disciplinary actions. By taking this class you express your consent to these rules.
Academic Misconduct, Cheating and Plagiarism

Academic misconduct is defined as the following intentional acts or omissions:

**Cheating:** The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or unauthorized use of on-line exams, library materials or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers (or on-line examination) or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. Any student helping another cheat may be found guilty of academic misconduct.

**Plagiarism:** The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism. Any student helping another to plagiarize may be found guilty of academic misconduct.

**Penalties:** Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated and dealt with according to the proceedings outlined in the Student Handbook. Please familiarize yourselves with this policy. The minimum penalty for such offense in this class is zero points for that particular assignment plus one full grade deduction in your final grade (i.e., if you were otherwise to receive a B in class, you will get a C instead, etc.). In addition I report all students guilty of plagiarism to Academic Affairs for further disciplinary actions, which, in case of repeat offenders, may include expulsion from the university.

A Reminder of FIU’s Student Code of Conduct

“Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.”

**Important Dates**

- Exam #1 Oct 1
- Essay due Nov 26
- Exam #2 Nov 28
Lecture Topics and Readings

Please note: This is a draft and is subject to change. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the lectures for that week.

Week 1: Aug 20, 22
- Introduction to course. Approaching Political Geography
  Reading: Key Concepts, Introduction, pp.1-14; plus:

Week 2: Aug 27, 29
- “Nation-State” and “Nationalism”
  Reading: Key Concepts, Chapters 1 and 23; plus:
  ⇒ article: “Logavina Street: Life And Death In A Sarajevo Neighborhood”: click here

Week 3: Sept, 5
- “Territory” and “Sovereignty”
  Reading: Key Concepts, Chapters 6 and 2
  Sept 3 is LABOR DAY: NO CLASS

Week 4: Sept 10, 12
- “Territory” and “Sovereignty” (continued)
  ⇒ Sept 12: Groups meet to discuss group project in class

Week 5: Sept 17, 19
- “Colonialism / Imperialism”
  Reading: Key Concepts, Chapter 9; plus:
  ⇒ Excerpts from Said, Edward (1978), Orientalism, pp.1-28 (available on Canvas)
  ⇒ Watch: “Battle of Algiers” (movie about national liberation struggle in Algeria)
    o Movie available at FIU library on reserve for our class, or search the web (specific sites keep changing)

Week 6: Sept 24, 26
- “Postcolonialism”
  Reading: Key Concepts, Chapter 25; plus:
  ⇒ Excerpts from Said, Edward (1978), Orientalism pp. 49-73 (available on Canvas)
  ⇒ Watch: “Said on Orientalism”: click here
Week 7: Oct 1, 3
- EXAM #1: Monday, Oct 1
- “Postcolonialism” (continued)
  Reading: *Key Concepts*, Chapter 25; plus
  ⇒ finish Excerpts from Said, Edward (1978), *Orientalism* (available on Canvas)

Week 8: Oct 8, 10
- “Geopolitics” and “Critical Geopolitics”
  Reading: *Key Concepts*, Chapter 7; plus:
  ⇒ Watch Edward Said’s lecture on the “clash of ignorance”: [click here]

Week 9: Oct 15, 17
- “Hegemony”
  Reading: *Key Concepts*, Chapter 5; plus:
  ⇒ Article in The Nation on the new Spanish political party “Podemos”: click here

Week 10: Oct 22, 24
- “Conflict”, “War” and “Terrorism”
  Reading: *Key Concepts*, Chapters 19 and 21; plus:

Week 11: Oct 29, 31
- Group Presentations
  Reading: none assigned

Week 12: Nov 5, 7
- Group Presentations
  Reading: none assigned
Week 13: Nov 14
- Group Presentations
  Reading: none assigned
  Nov 12 is VETERANS DAY: NO CLASS

Week 14: Nov 19, 21
- “Social Movements” and “Resistance”
  Readings:
  ⇒ Esteva, Gustavo (2008), Celebration of Zapatismo, Ediciones Basta!

Week 15: Nov 26, 28
- “Social Movements” and “Resistance” (continued)
- Nov 26: Essays due!
- EXAM #2, Wednesday, Nov 28

Week 16: Dec 3       FINALS WEEK