Political Geography  
Geography 450:405  
Fall 2009

Instructor: Trevor Birkenholtz  
Office: B-218 Lucy Stone Hall (Livingston Campus)  
Office Phone: (732) 445-2445  
Email: trevbirk@rci.rutgers.edu  
Office Hours: By appointment only  

Class Time: M-W: 5:00 – 6:20 pm  
Location: M – LSH A143 (Lucy Stone Hall, A-wing)  
W – LCB 103 (Livingston Classroom Building)

Required Materials (available at Livingston Campus Bookstore and on reserve at Kilmer Library)


******Additional readings will be available on Sakai******

Course Description

This course examines how political struggles over material well-being and questions of identity manifest themselves in the landscape and over space. Drawing on the political concepts of power, politics and policy and the fundamental geographical concepts of space, place and territory, we will examine and try to understand the current map of the world and the conflicts that continue to challenge and question this map. We will place particular emphasis on uneven development, public space, biological entities and issues of race and identity (e.g. class, gender, and locality).

Course Organization

The course is divided into two main parts:

Part I. This part will draw on the textbook An Introduction to Political Geography. On Mondays we will read and discuss one of nine chapters from this book. On Thursdays we will read and discuss one or more case studies based on the previous reading from the book chapter. Read the papers in the order in which they are listed in this syllabus. Evaluation for this part of the course will consist of three in-class quizzes.
Part II. In this part, we will delve into some leading issues in Political Geography: 1) Hegemony and Global Power; and the 2) Political Geography of Biotechnology. This part of the course will proceed in a seminar fashion with increased reading, in-class discussion and out of class writing assignments. For both of these books you will write an analytical essay (4-5 pages) in response to questions that I will provide to you in advance of reading the book. The book analyses will be due in class on the following days:

Rajan: November 23
Mitchell: December 9

Parts I & II. Students will partly organize and be the Experts for most Thursday classes. Our class has roughly 40 students in it. On September 8, students will be placed into 9 groups of 4 to 5 people. Groups will be numbered 1 through 9 (see below). On these days, student groups will begin class with a 30-minute presentation of the reading. This presentation will highlight the key points of the reading, relate it to the book chapter that it complements (for Groups 1 to 7), and raise any questions that the work leaves unanswered. In order for this to go well, groups will need to meet before their designated day as Experts to prepare. This is a very important part of the course and will form a major component of your Attendance and Participation grade.

Student Evaluation

Attendance and Participation 15%
Quizzes (3 @ 15%) 45%
Book Analyses (2 @ 20%) 40%

Attendance and Participation evaluation will include: 1) Expert Presentations; 2) in-class/small group work; 3) handouts on videos; and 4) actual attendance.

Late papers will be penalized by one letter grade during the first week past the due date. For instance, an “A” paper would become a “B” paper. Thereafter, the paper will revert to a zero.

Throughout the course, there may be special events related to Political Geography. You may earn an additional 1-3% (total) by attending these extra-curricular activities and writing a short summary of your experience(s). We will announce these as they come up; they must be pre-approved.

There is no final exam for this course.

Special Needs
All efforts will be made to accommodate students with special needs. However, students are responsible for making their needs known to us and for seeking assistance in a timely manner. Please contact us privately to discuss your personal requirements.

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Plagiarism or other academically inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated
**Topic and Reading Schedule:**

**First Class & Introduction: September 2**

**Topic 1: What is Political Geography?, September 8 & 9**
(M) Chapter 1: *Power, Space and ‘Political Geography’*
(TH) Group 1: (Foucault 1995) & (Herbert 1996)

**Topic 2: The State I, September 14 & 16**
(M) Chapter 2: *States and Territory*
(TH) Group 2: (Foucault 1991) & (Murdoch and Ward 1997)

**Topic 3: The State II, September 21 & 23**
(M) Chapter 3: *The State in Global Perspective*
(TH) Group 3: (Dalby 2007) & (Dittmer 2005)

**Topic 4: The State III, September 28 & September 30**
(M) Chapter 4: *The State’s Changing Forms and Functions*
(TH) Group 4: (Smith 2002) & (Prudham 2004)

**Quiz: October 5 & 7 quiz and video**
(M) Quiz
(TH) Topic 4a: Black Markets & Smuggling (Nordstrom 2000) & Video: *Dying to Leave*

**Topic 5: Political Geography of the Nation, October 12 & 14**
(M) Chapter 5: *The Political Geographies of the Nation*
(TH) Group 5: (Sidorov 2000) & (Jones 2008)

**Topic 6: Politics, Power and Place October 19, 21**
(M) Chapter 6: *Politics, Power and Place*
(TH) Group 6: (Kohler and Wissen 2003) & (Harrison 2006)

**Topic 7: Contesting Place & Quiz, October 26, 28**
(M) Chapter 7: *Contesting Place*
(TH) Quiz

**Topic 8: Democracy and Representation I, November 2 & 4**
(M) Chapter 8: *Democracy, Participation, and Citizenship* & (Young 2000)
(TH) Group 7: (Martin 2003)

**Topic 9: Democracy and Representation II, November 9 & 11**
(M) Chapter 9 & Postscript: *Public Policy and Political Geography*
(TH) Quiz
Topic 10: The Political Geography of Biotech, November 16, 18 & 23


Group 8: November 18

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: NO CLASS NOVEMBER 25

Topic 11: Geography of Global Power, November 30 & December 2, 7


Group 9: December 2

Course Wrap-up: December 9

Bibliography


