# Geopolitics

## Prof. Andrea Plebani; Prof. Giorgia Perletta

***Text under revision. Not yet approved by academic staff.***

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Course aims: The course aims to analyse “geopolitics” as a term and as a concept; its many definitions and its application as a means of interpreting history and politics, from the development of geopolitical thought in Europe and in the USA (from the late-19th to the early-20th century) to the Cold War and the post-bipolar era. The course will then explore classic geopolitical theories, as well as more recent formulations, in a syllabus designed to take into account the diversity and complexity of the contemporary geopolitical outlook. There will be a particular focus, during the second part of the course, on the geopolitical arena of the Middle East and its internal dynamics.

Intended learning outcomes

1. Knowledge and understanding: by the end of the course, students will have learned about the major geopolitical theories at play in the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium, and be able to contextualise them and interpret events in light of theoretical frameworks developed over time. In particular:
2. Ability to apply knowledge acquired

Students will be able to formulate critical observations on the development of the current geopolitical context and on the historical phases analysed based on the theories considered on the course. They will be able to adopt a critical approach to the literature, both academic and otherwise, and to documentary, journalistic and multimedia sources.

1. Capacity for critical analysis and communication skills

By studying the discipline, students will be able to improve their understanding of the geopolitical dynamics of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. They will also be better able to understand the current context, appreciating breaks with the past as well as the main elements of continuity.

Students’ learning will be supported through PowerPoint presentations, seminars and class debates. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically appraise the international geopolitical context and use sector-specific terminology and appropriate analytical tools.

***COURSE CONTENT***

**Module 1**

1. Introduction to the concept of geopolitics

2. Geopolitics, geostrategy, and geoeconomics

3. The development in Europe and in the USA of geopolitics between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

4. Classical geopolitical theory: continental power, maritime power, peninsular power

5. The German school of geopolitics

6. The “end of geopolitics” during the Cold War

7. Lacoste and the French School

8. Post-bipolarity and the return of geopolitics

**Module 2 (single-subject section)**

1. Contemporary geopolitical dynamics: an overview
2. The complexity of the Middle Eastern crisis arc: an introduction
3. Iraq post-2003: old and new challenges
4. Jihadism and its various movements
5. The Syrian crisis

***READING LIST***

**Module 1**

* Material on Blackboard (including PowerPoint presentations)
* Federico Bordonaro, *La Geopolitica anglosassone,* Guerini Scientifica, 2009 (or subsequent editions)
* R. Redaelli (ed.), *Materiali per il corso di Geopolitica*, EDUCATT, Milan, 2010
* Students may find it useful to consult a geopolitical atlas. Some recommended options: Frank Tétart*, Il mondo nel 2022 in 100 mappe. Atlante di Geopolitica*, LEG edizioni, 2021 (or a more recent edition).

**Module 2**

* Material on Blackboard (including PowerPoint presentations)
* Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East,* 2018, only Introduction (pp. 1-18) (avaible on Blackboard)
* William Cleveland, Martin Bunton*, Storia del Medio Oriente Moderno,* 2020, pp. 12-16; 26-34 (avaible on Blackboard)
* Mauro Primavera, *La crisi siriana: strategie e interessi di Damasco*, in: A. Plebani e R. Redaelli (edited by) *Dinamiche geopolitiche contemporanee. Ce.St.In.Geo. geopolitical outlook 2020*, Milano, EduCatt, 2020 (avaible on Blackboard)
* Andrea Plebani, *Il nuovo Iraq a venti anni di distanza*, in R. REDAELLI (edited by), *L’Iraq contemporaneo*, Francesco Brioschi Editori, 2022 (to be made available on Blackboard)
* Andrea Plebani, *Periphery no more: the Jazira between local, regional and international dynamics*, in F. Corrao, R. Redaelli (edited by), States, Actors and Geopolitical Drivers in the Mediterranean, Palgrave, 2021 (avaible on Blackboard)
* Andrea Plebani, *Jihadismo globale. Strategie del terrore tra Oriente e Occidente*, Giunti, Firenze, 2016

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures, seminars on specific topics and testimonials.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Except in special cases approved by the lecturers, students will be examined by means of a written exam. If the number of students taking the exam is particularly low, the exam format may change to oral. Students will have the option of writing a paper as a group, which will replace some of the questions in the exam. The paper will be marked out of 30.

The exam is designed to assess students’ ability to critically analyse course content and respond to theories and case studies by reiterating the knowledge they have acquired and making sound arguments. The exam will assess students based on a discussion of the main theories and methods examined. It will assess their ability to make multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary connections on a historical, geopolitical and economic and social level. The final mark will be out of 30.

The written examination consists of four questions: two on module one and two on the single-subject part. The five questions will be of equal weight, each marked out of 30, from 0 (no answer) to 30 (excellent answer). Students who choose to write the paper (and receive a pass mark for it) can choose to omit one question from the first module and one question from the second module. These questions will be replaced by the mark achieved for the paper.

The oral examination will consist of four questions: two for the first module and two for the second module. The questions will be of equal weight, each marked out of 30, from 0 (no answer) to 30 (excellent answer). Students who choose to write the paper (and receive a pass mark for it) will only have two questions. The marks awarded for the paper will be added to the marks awarded for the oral exam.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course has no formal prerequisites in terms of content. Students are however expected to demonstrate an interest in and intellectual curiosity about the subject, and knowledge of contemporary international history is highly recommended.

Attendance is strongly encouraged.

Updated syllabus, reading list, instructions and other documents will be published on the Blackboard platform course. The Blackboard platform will also be used to communicate timetable changes, exam information and more. All students (attending and non-attending alike; studying within the standard course timeframe or otherwise, i.e. *in corso* and *fuori corso* respectively) should register on the course on Blackboard (a.a. 2022-2023) and keep themselves updated.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.