

Paper Guidelines

Deadlines

- 1) **Proposal** – due to the TA by 5pm, Friday March 13
- 2) **Final paper** – due Monday April 6th. The paper must be submitted to www.turnitin.com by 5pm. A hard copy of the same paper is due in the TA's mailbox in Guggenheim by 6pm.

Length

The paper should be between 10 and 12 double-spaced pages in length (between 3000 and 3500 words), not including tables, graphs, maps etc and bibliography.

Format of References:

Any standardized referencing system is acceptable so long as it is internally consistent. Remember – when in doubt, cite the source.

Proposal:

The proposal should be a couple of paragraphs in length and should include some preliminary references. An ideal proposal would a) briefly state the question to be answered, b) state the theory that will be used to try to understand or analyze the problem, and c) would list some key references. Proposals should be typed.

Students should meet/email with their TAs or the instructor if they have any questions about the proposal or the topic. The key is to pick an interesting contemporary problem and draw on political geographic theories to gain some insights into this problem. A focused topic is more likely to produce a successful paper.

Paper:

Topic:

The topic should be a contemporary one (i.e. after 1945) and should be political-geographic in nature. Examples of unacceptable topics are a) what caused World War I?; b) how the Israelis captured Eichmann in Argentina in the early 1960s, or c) the nature of Zimbabwean agriculture and the resulting famine. The 'political-geographic' rubric is broad and most topics can be accommodated in that framework. If in doubt, ask your TA or the instructor.

Examples of acceptable topics are: a) what caused the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991? b) the reasons for the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1991; c) the rise and fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan; d) why Chechnya has rebelled against Russia and not the other North Caucasian peoples; e) the role of Brazil in the world-economy; f) US geopolitical strategy in the post-September 11 world; g) The Silk Road Act (considered by Congress) as a geopolitical document – a critical geopolitical perspective, etc.

After you define the topic of interest, which of the following sets of political-geographic theories can help to understand the subject – a) geopolitical theories (classical and critical); b) world-system theories (Wallerstein and Modelski); c) globalization theories – economic, cultural, world-city, etc; d) state theory – including those that explain the stability of regimes; and e) nationalism theories (primordial, Marxist, mixed). Each of these theories will be covered in detail in lecture before spring break. Moreover, the third part of the course is aimed at applying the discussed theories to real-world problems. Read the sections of the text that explain/review the relevant theory and follow up on some key references – e.g. for Wallerstein's world-systems theory, read some of Wallerstein's original works.

After you become familiar with the theory and its elements (assumptions, background, expectations, relations, predictions, etc), read about the topic from that perspective. For example, looking at the Silk Road Act, you could examine its statements about democracy, US investment, relations with Islamic world, oil companies and exploitation of the region’s resources, etc from a critical geopolitical lens. What “story” is being sold? What discourse (words, phrases, images) is being promoted? Is it plausible? Who stands to gain and who is losing? Who supports and who opposes the initiative, in the region and beyond?

By the time the proposal is due, we will have covered geopolitical and world-system theories, so you need to look ahead to the text sections for the other theories. In particular, if you are dealing with a nationalist conflict, read the chapter in the Taylor/Flint text and the nationalism reading on the materials page on this topic.

Paper

In a 10 page paper, about 2-3 papers should be devoted to elaboration of the theory – why it is useful for the examination of this particular topic. There is no need to present all the details but focus on those elements that are more relevant to your topic. Then, devote the remainder of the paper to showing how this theory is helpful to understanding of the problem at hand. You will have to present some empirical details of the problem but emphasis should be on interpretation using the theory.

Submission:

Upload an electronic copy to www.turnitin.com by 5pm April 14th. Submit a hard copy to TA's mailbox by 6pm April 14th.

Grading:

The paper will be graded according to the following rubric:

Theory 20%	Empirical 20%	Analysis 40%	Writing 20%
One of the political geographic theories specified	Clear or poor choice of topic	Uses theory well	well written or poorly written
clear or unclear	accurate or inaccurate facts	Able to interpret specific events in wider theoretical context	grammar is correct
sophisticated or superficial	relevant or irrelevant		spelling is correct
considers alternative arguments – is there a better theoretical alternative	Political geographic in nature	Able to pick events to illustrate point	formatting is consistent
	organized or disorganized	Thorough connections or missing links	Use of ancillary materials (maps etc)

If you have any questions about the assignment, see your TA or the instructor well before the deadlines.