

Syllabus: Introduction to Geoeconomics and Geopolitics (21.03.2026)

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1. Introduction

The current surge in great-power conflict and the growing prevalence of hybrid warfare highlight the pressing need for an integrated, holistic geopolitical framework. Traditional, compartmentalized approaches offered by specialized modern social sciences—such as political science, economics, sociology, and area studies—have proven increasingly inadequate in explaining and addressing today’s complex global challenges. A more effective paradigm must transcend disciplinary boundaries and synthesize insights across the full spectrum of the humanities and social sciences to enable informed strategic analysis and decision-making.

This course provides a systematic introduction to geopolitics, anchored in a unified theoretical framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of geopolitical competition. We analyze geopolitical rivalries through four fundamental dimensions: economic, technological, discursive, and military. By rigorously combining theoretical insights with empirical case studies, the curriculum cultivates a balanced and critical perspective on both historical and contemporary geopolitical affairs, equipping students with the contextual knowledge necessary for advanced graduate study or professional careers in global governance and strategic analysis.

Prerequisite knowledge: College-level familiarity with world history (e.g., Palmer, Colton, and Kramer’s *A History of the Modern World*), economic growth and international trade (e.g., Mankiw’s *Macroeconomics*), and the philosophy of science (e.g., David Hume and Karl Popper)

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is expected. Additional background in history, philosophy, religion, economics, sociology, political science, and contemporary affairs would be advantageous.

Evaluation: A 3,000-words (excluding footnotes and bibliography) essay on the geopolitical position and strategies of Germany/Europe, or your home country. An in-class presentation of the essay.

Language requirement: English.

2. Topics

Lecture 1: Basic Concepts and Theoretical Framework

- Power, domination, and sovereignty
- Four dimensions of geopolitical power, concept of geo-entity
- Power vs. productivity

Lecture 2: Understanding Economic Power I

- Conspicuous waste
- Exploitation, manipulation, and deceit
- Hedonistic gratification
- Productive activities

Lecture 3: Understanding Economic Power II

- Long-run supremacy of productive power for great powers
- Great power economic rivalry in the 20th and 21st centuries

Lecture 4: Geo-Economic Strategies

- The power law of economic competition
- Great power geo-economic strategies: leading vs. following powers
- Free market and its discontents

Lecture 5: Basics in Philosophy and Sociology of Science

- The Duhem-Quine thesis
- The Kuhn thesis

Lecture 6: Technological Power and Technological Strategies

- The law of scientific progress and technological diffusion
- The Scientific Revolution and East Asia's technological convergence
- Scientific and technological strategies

Lecture 7: Discursive Power

- The nature and power of discourse
- The priority of discursive paradigms
- The power law in discursive competition

Lecture 8: Discursive Apparatus

- Legacy media
- New media
- Government, corporates, religious organizations, and others
- The superiority of social sciences and humanities

Lecture 9: Discursive War for the Present and the Future

- Liberal democratism (US)
- Confucian socialism (China)
- European Federalism vs. ethno-nationalism (EU) and Eurasianism (Russia)

Lecture 10: Discursive War for the Past

- The question of historical legitimacy
- Origin and succession
- Villains, liberators, and victims of WWII

Lecture 11: Military Power and Military Strategies

- The principle of limited engagement and the limit of nuclear deterrence
- The ever-evolving nature of military power
- Shock and awe and asymmetric warfare
- The term structure of geopolitical powers

Lecture 12: Contemporary Geopolitical Landscape

- Industrial Revolution 3½: new energy, AI, and automation
- The rise of civilization states
- The 2½-pole world order: China, U.S., and Russia

Lecture 13-14: Applications (Student Presentations)

3. Literature

* obligatory reading.

Lecture 1-2: Theoretical Concepts and Analytical Framework

* Mearsheimer, John. 2003. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W. W. Norton: New York)

* Brzezinski, Zbigniew. 2016. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (Hachette: London).

Huntington, Samuel P. 2007. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster: New York).

Frank, Andre G. 1967. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (Monthly Review Press: New York).

Diesen, Glenn. 2021. *Great Power Politics in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: The Geoeconomics of Technological Sovereignty* (I.B. Tauris: London)

Lecture 3-4: Economic Power

*Hudson, Michael. 2022. *The Destiny of Civilization: Finance Capitalism, Industrial Capitalism Or Socialism* (Islet: Philadelphia).

*Veblen, Thorstein. 2012. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Dover Publications: Mineola).

*Zhang, Tong. 2024. 'The illusion of meritocracy', *Social Science Information*, 63: 114-28.

Gordon, Robert J. 2017. *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living since the Civil War* (Princeton University Press).

Graeber, David. 2018. *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory* (Penguin Books Limited: London).

Hedges, Chris. 2009. *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (Bold Type Books: New York).

Lazear, Edward P. 2000. 'Economic Imperialism', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115: 99-146.

Postman, Neil. 2005. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Penguin: New York).

Veblen, Thorstein. 2005. *The Higher Learning in America* (Cosimo Classics: New York).

Veblen, Thorstein. 2020. *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (B. W. Huebsch: New York).

Zhang, Tong. 2022. 'The logic of wasteful production', *Journal of Economics, Theology and Religion*, 2.

Lecture 5: Economic Strategies

*Chang, Ha-Joon. 2002. *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Anthem Press: New York).

Dou, Eva. 2025. *House of Huawei: The Secret History of China's Most Powerful Company* (Abacus Books: London).

- Hudson, Michael. 2010. *America's Protectionist Takeoff, 1815-1914: The Neglected American School of Political Economy* (Islet: Leiden).
- Klebnikov, Paul. 2000. *Godfather of the Kremlin: Boris Berezovsky and the Looting of Russia* (Harcourt: New York).
- McGee, Patrick. 2025. *Apple in China: The Capture of the World's Greatest Company* (Simon & Schuster: New York).
- Pierucci, Frédéric, and Matthieu Aron. 2019. *The American Trap: My Battle to Expose America's Secret Economic War Against the Rest of the World* (Hodder & Stoughton: London).
- Polanyi, Karl. 2001. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Beacon Press: Boston).
- Weber, Isabella M. 2021. *How China Escaped Shock Therapy: The Market Reform Debate* (Taylor & Francis: Milton Park).

Lecture 6: Basics in Philosophy and Sociology of Science

- * Chapters 1-3, Cover, J. A., Martin Curd, and Christopher Pincock. 2012. *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues* (Norton: New York).
- Duhem, Pierre M. M. 1954. *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (Princeton University Press: Princeton).
- Feyerabend, Paul. 1975. *Against Method* (Verso: New York).
- Hanson, Norwood R. 1965. *Patterns of Discovery: An Inquiry Into the Conceptual Foundations of Science* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge).
- Kuhn, Thomas. 2012. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago).
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1977. 'Objectivity, Value Judgment, and Theory Choice.' in, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in the Scientific Tradition and Change* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago).
- Quine, Willard V. O. 1951. 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', *The Philosophical Review*, 1: 20-42.

Lecture 7: Technological Power and Technological Strategies

- *Zhang, Tong. 2022. 'Reinterpreting science as a vocation', *Max Weber Studies*, 22: 55-73.
- Hallonsten, Olof. 2023. *Empty Innovation: Causes and Consequences of Society's Obsession with Entrepreneurship and Growth* (Springer: Cham, Switzerland).
- Kuklick, Bruce. 1977. *The Rise of American Philosophy, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930* (Yale University Press: New Haven).
- Paglia, Camille. 1991. 'Junk bonds and corporate raiders: Academe in the hour of the wolf', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 1: 139-212.
- Park, Michael, Erin Leahey, and Russell J. Funk. 2023. 'Papers and patents are becoming less disruptive over time', *Nature*, 613: 138-44.
- Schmidt, Jeff. 2000. *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-battering System that Shapes Their Lives* (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, MA).
- Smolin, Lee. 2006. *The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, the Fall of a Science, and what Comes Next* (Houghton Mifflin: Boston).
- Weber, Max. 2004. *The Vocation Lectures* (Hackett: Indianapolis).

Lecture 8-9: Discursive Power and Discursive Apparatus

*Zhang, Tong. 'A Realist Theory of Free Speech', Unpublished Manuscript

*Abrams, A.B. 2023. *Atrocity Fabrication and Its Consequences: How Fake News Shapes World Order* (Clarity Press: Atlanta).

Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. 2011. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group: New York).

Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. 2008. *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York).

Ponsonby, A. 2022. *Falsehood in Wartime: Propaganda Lies of the First World War* (The Scriptorium: Durham, NC).

Serunkuma, Yusuf. 2021. "Democracy as Imperialism." In *The Elephant*.

Zhao, Kejin. 2016. 'China's Rise and its Discursive Power Strategy', *Chinese Political Science Review*, 1: 539-64.

Lecture 10: Discursive War for the Present and Future

*Fukuyama, Francis. 2006. *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press: New York).

Friedman, Milton. 2009. *Capitalism and Freedom* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago).

Gerstle, Gary. 2022. *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (Oxford University Press: Oxford).

Hayek, Friedrich. 2017. *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism* (University of Chicago Press).

Mearsheimer, John. 2018. *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Yale University Press: New Haven).

朱熹. 2012. *四書章句集注* (中华书局: 北京).

Lecture 11: Discursive War for the Past

Courtois, Stéphane. 1999. 'Introduction: The Crimes of Communism.' in Stéphane Courtois and Mark Kramer (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA).

Finkelstein, Norman G. 2003. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (Verso: London).

Losurdo, Domenico. 2015. *War and Revolution: Rethinking the Twentieth Century* (Verso Books: London).

MacFarquhar, Roderick, and Michael Schoenhals. 2009. *Mao's Last Revolution* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA).

Margolin, Jean-Louis. 1999. 'China: A Long March into Night.' in Stéphane Courtois and Mark Kramer (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA).

Toland, John. 2014. *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945* (The Modern Library: New York).

Watson, Peter. 2010. *The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution and the Twentieth Century* (Simon & Schuster UK: London).

Various primary sources.

Lecture 12: Military Power and Military Strategies

*Clausewitz, Carl. 2003. *On War* (Oxford University Press: Oxford).

Atkinson, Rick. 1993. *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Houghton Mifflin: Boston).

CSIS. 2025. "War and the Modern Battlefield: Insights from Ukraine and the Middle East." In, edited by Seth G. Jones and Seamus P. Daniels. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Deighton, Len. 2000. *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk* (Castle Books: Edinburgh).

Martyanov, Andrei. 2019. *The (Real) Revolution in Military Affairs* (Clarity Press: Atlanta).

Sun Tzu. 1994. *The Art of War* (Basic Books: London).

Lecture 13-14: Applications (Student Presentations)