

Geopolitics and Ethnic Conflicts - PERS 2605 (A)

Time and Place: Mondays
6:30 pm - 8:20 pm
JH 1111
CRN 21647

Instructor: Prof. Michael G. Noll
NH 2216
333-7143
mgnoll@valdosta.edu
<http://www.valdosta.edu/~mgnoll>

Office Hours: Tuesdays (9:30 – 11:00 am) & Wednesdays (1:00 – 2:00 pm) and ***by appointment***.

Warning: This course will present and discuss controversial materials to examine a number of geopolitical and ethnic conflicts throughout the world, with a particular focus on the responsibility of colonial powers and “super powers” in the creation of these conflicts, including the United States. If you suffer from a heart condition, from xenophobia, or get your information of political events only from such sources as Fox News, this will be an eye opening and challenging experience. However, it is ultimately not important for your success in this course if you are a “conservative”, a “libertarian”, or a “liberal”. In the end the only thing that matters is that you keep an open mind, that you engage with and study the materials presented in this class, and that you actively participate in our classroom discussions!

Course Description & Objectives:

Almost every day we can hear and read about geopolitical tensions and ethnic conflicts in different corners of the world. Most recently Iran has been catapulted into the center of our attention. Syria, too, has been regularly in the news these past couple of months, as have countries in the Middle East like Israel, Egypt and Libya. However, this course is not just about the Middle East. Geopolitical and ethnic conflicts are, unfortunately, part of the (in) human experience: they range from Latin America (e.g. Chile), Europe (e.g. Yugoslavia) and Africa (e.g. Rwanda and Burundi) to South Asia (e.g. Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (e.g. East Timor), and East Asia (e.g. Tibet). This perspectives course uses documentaries, reading materials, and in-class discussions to shed light on the histories, dynamics, and, if appropriate, possible future developments of global ethnic tension hearths (past and present) to ultimately ask the question: why do factors like nationalism, ethnicity, and access to resources have such terrible power to turn neighbor against neighbor, and what role do larger geopolitical scenarios play?

More specifically, we will follow the aspired education outcomes of VSU’s Core Curriculum and, when appropriate, the Environmental Geosciences major. Thus, among other things, students in this course will:

- develop a general understanding of the different concepts in geopolitics
- read and interpret a variety of case studies in geopolitics and ethnic conflicts
- gain cross-cultural perspectives and knowledge of the roots for ethnic conflicts on our planet
- use computer and information technology to further explore geopolitical and ethnic issues
- demonstrate a good knowledge of the different ethnic conflicts, both past and present, on our planet
- and build on the knowledge gained of geopolitical concepts and ethnic conflicts to reflect on our own society and history

For more information on VSU’s general education outcomes, please visit the following website:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/VSUGeneralEducationOutcomes.shtml>

Course Materials:

You do NOT need to purchase a textbook for this class. Any required materials will be handed out in class, or will be put on reserve at Odum Library.

Class Attendance and Participation:

As an instructor, I want you to attend my course. I will do everything possible to make our class a fun learning experience. Your success in this course will very much depend on your attendance and participation. The evidence is simply overwhelming that regular class attendance correlates with higher grades. To keep record of your attendance, I will take roll at each class. **It will be your responsibility to sign these class rolls! If you have a perfect attendance record, I will add five extra points to your final grade point average. At the same time, I will lower your final grade by 5 percentage points for EACH CLASS you miss!**

In addition, please note the following VSU policy:

“A student who misses 20% of the scheduled classes of a course will be subject to receiving a failing grade [F] in the course.” (Undergraduate Catalog 2011-2012, p. 89)

Cellular Phones, Pagers, I-Pads and Laptops in the Classroom:

Cellular phones and pagers need to be **turned off or silenced during ALL scheduled classes**. If your phone goes off during class, you may be asked to leave. Moreover, refrain from sending and responding to text messages during class. Honestly, if you want to chat or text with a friend instead of paying attention to what goes on in your classes, simply stay home!

Likewise, **inappropriate use of I-pads or laptops** (checking emails, social networking, surfing the internet, playing games, etc.) **can result in banning I-pads and laptops for the remainder of the semester.**

In other words, please be courteous of others and observe professional behavior in the classroom at all times.

Note: repeated disregard of this policy by a student can have one or more of the following consequences: lower or failing grade, disciplinary action, withdrawal from the course.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:

The VSU [Student Handbook](#) states among other things:

“Plagiarism is prohibited. Themes, essays, term papers, tests, and other similar requirements must be the work of the student submitting them. When direct quotations are used, they must be indicated, and when the ideas of another are incorporated in the paper they must be appropriately acknowledged.” (p. 59)

Anyone found guilty of academic dishonesty will receive an “**F**” in this course. In addition, note that current VSU policy dictates that all instances be reported to the administration for disciplinary action!

Disabilities:

Students requiring classroom accommodations because of a documented disability should contact the [Special Services Program](#) located in Farber Hall. The phone number of the Special Services Program is 245-2498. As soon as such students have registered with the Special Services Office, they should discuss their needs with me.

Exams and Grading:

The grades given in this course will be based on:

- [regular attendance](#) (each time you miss a class, I will lower your grade by 5 percentage points)
- [five quizzes](#) on the materials discussed (each quiz will be curved and the lowest quiz score dropped)

Final grades will be based on the following scale:

A = 90 - 100%
B = 80 - 89%
C = 70 - 79%
D = 60 - 69%
F = < 60%

General nature of questions you can expect on my quizzes are:

- 1) What is/was a geopolitical or ethnic conflict about?
- 2) What historical corner stones can be identified in this conflict?
- 3) What peoples or entities are/were key players in this conflict?
- 4) What factor(s) ultimately caused this conflict?
- 5) How many people have been directly influenced by this conflict, and in which way?
- 6) What are/were the economic consequences of this conflict?
- 7) What geopolitical factors play/played into this conflict?
- 8) What solutions could be/were found to address issues leading to the conflict?

Keep these questions in mind as we engage with various materials throughout the semester!

Recommended Sources/Readings:

- Chirot, Daniel and Martin E P Seligman. *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences and Possible Solutions* (Washington, DC : American Psychological Association, 2001).
- Council on Foreign Relations/Foreign Affairs, *The New Arab Revolt: What Happened, What It Means, and What Comes Next* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations/Foreign Affairs, 2011).
- Eller, Jack David. *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
- Griffiths, Ann Lynn. *Ethnicity and conflict in the former Yugoslavia* (Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1999).
- Pappe, Illan, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006).
- Roskin, Michael A. and Nicholas O. Berry. *The New World of International Relations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002).
- Rothenburg, Paula S.. *Beyond Borders: Thinking Critically about Global Issues* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2006).
- Rourke, John T.. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in World Politics* (Dubuque, IO: McGraw-Hill, 2007).
- Scherrer, Christian P.. *Ethnicity, nationalism, and violence : conflict management, human rights, and multilateral regimes* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).
- Tiryakian, Edward A.. *Ethnicity, ethnic conflicts, peace processes: comparative perspectives* (Whitby, ON: De Sitter Publications, 2004).
- Wolff, Stefan. *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Tentative Outline of Topics / Tentative Semester Schedule:

Date:

Topics:

January

9	Introduction / Culture, Ethnicity, and Identity / "Taxi" / "Cultural Difference" / "Vietnam Speech"
16	Martin Luther King Holiday
23	"Crash" / Reflections on our society
30	"Crash" / Any "crashes" in our community YOU know of?

February

6	The Role of the Media / "Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land"
13	Geopolitics, Nations, and Nation-States / "War Made Easy" or "The War You Don't See"
20	The Monroe Doctrine and Latin America / "The School of the Americas" (e.g. Colombia)
27	El Salvador ("Oscar Romero") or Chile and Argentina ("Missing")

March

5	The US and Israel / "Palestine is Still the Issue"
12-16	Spring Break
19	Iraq / "Uncovered: The Whole Truth about the Iraq War" or "Hijacking Catastrophe"
26	The Arab Spring / Iran / various materials from BBC and Al Jazeera

April

2	Afghanistan and the Taliban / "Breaking the Silence" or "Blood and Oil"
9	Africa's Colonial History / "Sometimes in April"
16	French Indochina / "Vietnam"
23	China / "Cry of the Snow Lion"
30	"Globalization: The New Rulers of the World" or "Why We Fight" / Concluding discussions

May

2	Note: There is no final exam in this course. The assessment of education outcomes will be relying on class attendance, class participation, and five (unannounced!) quizzes.
---	---