



Geopolitical Issues in the Contemporary World

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: MONT 3028

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: French

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: Professor Mercadier

Course Description

The aim of this course is to tackle the major geopolitical issues of today's world to enrich students' general knowledge of current conflicts and sociocultural dynamics across the globe. Students will analyze the world from the perspective of the Franco-European political and cultural framework. The course will explore relations with the major powers (China, Russia, etc.) as well as specific themes (migration, space, sport, etc.), and will be adapted to current events (the Ukrainian crisis, the Libyan conflict, etc.) and to the students' profile (a study of Franco-American relations, analysis of the French-speaking world).

Pedagogy and didactics: The beginning of the session will be in the form of a lecture to transmit the main knowledge to the students. Thereafter, students will be required to systematically carry out a situational task, which may be individual (writing a speech, making a map, etc.) or a group task (preparing a debate, simulating a crisis management at the G7 or the UN, etc.) based on a documentary corpus. An outing to Montpellier and a guest speaker from the Ministry of Defense are also planned.

Course Objectives

- Deepen cross-cultural understanding by examining international geopolitical issues.
- Gain French, European, and international perspectives on geopolitical issues.
- Increase ability to debate in French on varied world issues.

- Acquire general knowledge and have a better understanding of the international scene through a Franco-European point of view.

Methodology

Students will participate in discussions and debates during each class session, and they will have to prepare some group presentations both in class and outside of the classroom. They will be encouraged to improve their oral and written French and to practice cartographic tasks. International crisis simulations will give them a practical approach to international relations.

Required Reading / Materials

- *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Zbigniew Brzeziński, New York, Basic Books, 1997.
- *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power*, Zbigniew Brzeziński, Basic Books, 2012.
- *On War*, Karl Von Clausewitz.
- *Les 100 mots de la géopolitique*, Pascal Gauchon et Jean-Marc Huissoud, PUF, Que sais-je ?, 2010.
- *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger, 1994.
- *World Order*, Henry Kissinger, New York: Penguin Press
- *Les grands théoriciens de la géopolitique*, Florian Louis, éditions Major, 2020.
- *The geographical pivot of history*, Mackinder, H.J., The Geographical Journal, 1904.
- *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, A. T. Mahan. Little, Brown, 1890.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation in class and activities	20%
Final exam	80%
Overall grade	100%

Course Content

Unit 1

Introductory class

- Presentation of major authors and trends in geopolitics

Unit 2

Geopolitics of France

- Study of the characteristics of French power: its strengths, weaknesses, allies and challenges
- Activity: analysis of documents and crisis management simulation

Unit 3

Franco-American relations

- Study of transatlantic relations since the 18th Century, with a prospective on the 21st Century
- Activity: study of documents (Phnom Penh speech, Iraq crisis, etc.)

Unit 4

The French-speaking world

- Discovery of the French-speaking world from a cultural and geopolitical perspective

Unit 5

DROM-COM

- Study of the French overseas territories

Unit 6

Ukraine

- Study of the roots of the conflict/war in Ukraine
- Activity: simulation of a trial at the International Criminal Court

Unit 7

China

- We will provide some answers to the following question: Is China the world's future leading power?
- Activity: cartographic task—China and the sea

Unit 8

The Great Game

- Study of this concept coined by Rudyard Kipling and its topicality

Unit 9

Borders

- A geopolitical approach to borders in the world

Unit 10

The French political system

- A look back at the 2022 elections and the French electoral system

Unit 11

The Middle East

- A study of the Middle East as a pivotal zone in international relations

Unit 12

The European Union

- Study of the history, the institutions, and the geopolitics of the European Union

Unit 13

End of the semester

- Final exam

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).