

**Geopolitics and Island Security**  
**PS 430**  
**Fanuchanán 2024**

**Instructor:** Alejandro Christian D. Soler, Ph.D.

**Course:** PS 430: Geopolitics and Island Security

**Time:** Tuesdays/Thursdays 1230-1350

**Location:** HSS 207

**Credit Hours:** 3.00

**Office:** HSS 219A

**Office Hours:** Mondays/Wednesdays 1000-1100 and Tuesdays/Thursdays 1100-1200/1400-1500

**Email:** [solera@triton.uog.edu](mailto:solera@triton.uog.edu)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course introduces students to the nexus between geopolitics and the security of small island-states and the broader Asia-Pacific region and how it is manifested in historical and contemporary global affairs. It is structured around the role geopolitics plays in shaping outcomes of policies that impact territory and statehood from the early years of *Geopolitik* to contemporary geopolitics. Topics include fundamentals of Geopolitics, geographical structure and theory, geopolitical thinkers, profiling the Asia-Pacific, small islands, island security, Southeast Asia and Pacific territorial claims, Philippine territorial claims, Chinese territorial claims, and U.S. hegemony and the South China Sea.

<b>SLO</b>	<b>Learning outcomes linked to the following:</b>		<b>Method of assessment</b>
<i>On completing the course, students will:</i>	<i>Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)</i>	<i>Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)</i>	
Analyze the intersection of geography and politics in global conflict	Mastery PLO2: Apply theories to the study of domestic and international conflict  Mastery PLO4: Design a political research project that incorporates	ILO1: Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving  ILO6: An appreciation of the arts and sciences  ILO7: An interest in personal development and life long learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weekly Moodle Analysis</li> <li>- Class participation</li> </ul>

	principles of social science inquiry		
Explain Guam, Micronesia, and the small Pacific islands' role in Indo-Pacific great-power politics and its effect on the islands' security	<p>Mastery PLO2: Apply theories to the study of domestic and international conflict.</p> <p>Mastery PLO4: Design a political research project that incorporates principles of social science inquiry</p>	<p>ILO1: Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving</p> <p>ILO2: Mastery of quantitative analysis</p> <p>ILO3: Effective oral and written communication</p> <p>ILO5: Responsible use of knowledge, natural resources, and technology</p> <p>ILO6: An appreciation of the arts and sciences</p> <p>ILO7: An interest in personal development and lifelong learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>When Titans Clash</i></li> <li>- Topical presentation</li> </ul>
Assess how non-human actors (geography, geographical formations, flora/fauna, and weather) affect the potentialities and outcomes of global conflict	<p>Mastery PLO2: Apply theories to the study of domestic and international conflict.</p>	<p>ILO1: Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving</p> <p>ILO6: An appreciation of the arts and sciences</p> <p>ILO7: An interest in personal development and life long learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final paper</li> </ul>

**MOODLE ENROLLMENT KEY:** 

### **REQUIRED READINGS**

See Weekly Readings section

## **TECHNOLOGY EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS**

There are certain tools you will need for this course. These include access to a computer, ready internet access, access to a word processing program such as Microsoft Word, access to a PDF reader such as Adobe Acrobat or Preview, and ready access to our class Moodle page.

As there are deadlines in the course that require you to upload documents to Moodle, it is my recommendation that you have a backup plan in the case of technology or internet glitches. One suggestion to avoid this is to submit your assignment two hours ahead of any deadline throughout the course. Also, you must use your Triton emails for this course, not your personal emails (see Communication Policy).

**Attendance**—We will be sharing many lessons in this class and attendance is necessary. Five (5) unexcused absences constitute grounds for failure of the course. Participation means participating in discussions as well as demonstrating a working knowledge of the readings assigned. Students are also required to remain in class for the *entire* period.

**Student Evaluation of Instructors**—The student course and faculty evaluations for courses will be administered at the completion of the semester within CollegeNet. Student participation is essential and appreciated. Student responses are anonymous and cannot be traced back to individual students. You will need your WebAdvisor login credentials to complete the evaluation. If you experience login issues, please refer inquiries to OIT staff to assist at 735-2630/40.

**Late/Missed Assignments**—Except in cases of medical or family emergency *documented by an appropriate authority*, no make-ups will be given for missed presentations. *Late essays will be penalized three (3) points out of 100 for each 24-hour period beyond the due date and time up to a maximum penalty of 15%. After two weeks they will no longer be accepted.*

**Plagiarism Statement**— The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited, to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials (UOG Student Handbook, p. 49). Cases of plagiarism are referred to the Student Discipline and Appeals Committee. In this course this penalty for plagiarism is [up to the instructor – the most common penalties are no credit for the assignment or failure in the course].

**Communication Policy**—University policy states that official communications will be sent using university assigned (@gotriton or @triton) email addresses. University electronic mail and messaging is to be used to enhance and facilitate teaching, learning, scholarly research, support academic experiences, and to facilitate the effective business and administrative processes of the University. (OIT policy manual, 3.10, p. 36)

In keeping with this policy *all communications from me will come to your @gotriton account*. Check it regularly. You may contact me by email at [solera@triton.uog.edu](mailto:solera@triton.uog.edu) or via Moodle. If you are asking a general question that affects other students and that does not require an immediate response, please do it through the appropriate Moodle Forum. If you need a timely response or the matter is personal sending me a direct email is more likely to receive a prompt response than using the Moodle messages feature.

**ADA Policy and Commitment to Student Learning**— The University of Guam (UOG) is committed to achieving equal opportunity and full participation of persons with disabilities by providing non-discriminatory access to its services and facilities through the ADA Office. The Mission of the ADA Office is to ensure non-discriminatory access to all benefits, privileges, opportunities and obligations to faculty, staff and community members with disabilities and to ensure a process for full compliance by UOG with the ADA of 1990, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, taking into account the economic climate and multi-cultural diversity of the institution.

The ADA Office can be contacted at telephone number (671) 735-2244 or Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) number (671) 735-2243. The Enrollment Management & Student Success office provides reasonable accommodations for students in accordance with the UOG Policy and Procedure for student applicants with a disability. The ADA policy can be found on this website.

For individuals covered under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), if you are a student with a disability requiring academic accommodation(s), please contact the Disability Support Services Office to discuss your confidential request. A Faculty Notification letter from the Disability Support Services counselor will be provided to me. To register for academic accommodations, please contact or visit Sallie S. Sablan, DSS counselor in the School of Education, office 110, [disabilitysupport@triton.uog.edu](mailto:disabilitysupport@triton.uog.edu) or telephone/TDD 671-735-2505/2460.

For applicants or employees with a disability requiring employment or workplace accommodation(s), please contact the Director of EEO/ADA and TITLE IX Office to discuss your specific needs. Please provide documentation concerning your disability and the need for employment or workplace accommodation. Their office is located at the Iya Hami Hall, Dorm2, right side entrance, first floor, Room 104 and their contact numbers are indicated above.

## **GRADING SCALE**

The final course grade will be based on total points the student has received and according to the following criteria.

A+ = 97-100 percent  
 A = 94-96 percent  
 A- = 90-93 percent  
 B+ = 87-89 percent  
 B = 84-86 percent  
 B- = 80-83 percent  
 C+ = 77-79 percent  
 C = 70-76 percent  
 D = 60-69 percent  
 F = <60 percent

### **GRADE BREAKDOWN**

Weekly Moodle Analysis:	15%
<i>When Titans Clash</i> :	20%
Topical presentation:	20%
Final paper:	30%
Class participation:	15%

**Weekly Moodle Analysis:** At the start of the week (Mondays), I will post a couple of questions on Moodle for you to answer. The questions are intended to jumpstart the week's discussions. You have until the Friday of each week (5 p.m.) to answer the questions.

***When Titans Clash*:** In June 2024, news network Channel News Asia released a documentary entitled *When Titans Clash* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi-wWtKDCfw>), which delved into the simmering tensions in the South China Sea between China and the Philippines over control of a group of islands in the area.

Students are tasked to write a four-page, double-spaced essay on the documentary, in consideration of the following questions:

1. What are some important geopolitical ideas and concepts does the documentary highlight?
2. Expound on the role major powers have played in this conflict. What are the implications of the Philippines' relations with major powers on the South China Sea row?
3. Propose concrete steps to de-escalate the situation. Are China and the Philippines' competing claims on the islands reconcilable, or is there another way to achieve de-escalation?

Topical presentation: Students will choose one topic from the list of weekly readings and present the reading in class. The presentation should not be a mere summary of the reading(s), but rather, a critical and inquisitive examination that involves an analysis of the reading(s) and use of examples not necessarily found in the text.

Class participation: Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read the assigned readings for that day/week, and actively engage the instructor and her/his classmates in a productive exchange of ideas.

Final paper: Students will be assigned a final paper between six and eight (6-8) pages long. The paper should:

1. Synthesize or tie together at least five concepts learned in class, then
2. Apply the synthesis to a current or historical geopolitical flashpoint, where war is taking place or the threat of war looms. Your example should be limited to the Asia- (or Indo-) Pacific region and should not be a repetition of the case studies discussed in class.
3. Project the future directions of geopolitics; in other words, answer the question, “how will geopolitics in the Asia and Pacific look like two to three decades from now?”

## **WEEKLY READINGS**

### **WEEK 1 (Aug. 15): Introduction**

Course introduction

### **WEEK 2 (Aug. 20 and Aug. 22): Definitions**

Flint, Colin. *Introduction to Geopolitics*. (Chapter 1)

### **WEEK 3 (Aug. 27 and Aug. 29): Fundamentals of Geopolitics**

Cohen, Saul Bernard (2015). *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chapters 1 and 2)

### **WEEK 4 (Sept. 3 and Sept. 5): Geopolitical Structure and Theory**

Cohen, Saul Bernard (2015). *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chapter 3)

### **WEEK 5 (Sept. 10): Geopolitical Thinkers I**

Mackinder, Halford J. (1904). “The Geographical Pivot of History”. In *The Geopolitics Reader*, edited by Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge, 27-31.

**WEEK 5 (Sept. 12): Geopolitical Thinkers I**

Haushofer, Karl (1942). "Why Geopolitik?" In *The Geopolitics Reader*, edited by Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge, 33-35.

**WEEK 6 (Sept. 17): Geopolitical Thinkers II**

Hitler, Adolf (1942). "Eastern Orientation or Eastern Policy?" In *The Geopolitics Reader*, edited by Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge, 36-39.

**WEEK 6 (Sept. 19): Geopolitical Thinkers II**

Haushofer, Karl (1948). "Defense of German Geopolitics." In *The Geopolitics Reader*, edited by Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge, 40-43.

**WEEK 7 (Sept. 24 and Sept. 26): Profiling the Asia-Pacific**

Cohen, Saul Bernard (2015). *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chapter 10)

**WEEK 8 (Oct. 1 and Oct. 3): Small Islands I**

Ratter, Beate M.W. (2018). *Geography of Small Islands: Outposts of Globalisation*. (Introduction)

**WEEK 9 (Oct. 8 and Oct. 10): Fanuchanán Break; no classes****WEEK 10 (Oct. 15 and Oct. 17): Small Islands II**

Ratter, Beate M.W. (2018). *Geography of Small Islands: Outposts of Globalisation*. (Chapter 4)

**WEEK 11 (Oct. 22 and Oct. 24): Island Security**

Brown, M. Anne (2007). "Security and Development: Conflict and Resilience in the Pacific Islands Region". In *Security and Development in the Pacific Islands: Social Resilience in Emerging States*. (Chapter 1)

**WEEK 12 (Oct. 29 and Oct. 31): Australia and the South Pacific**

Wallis, Joanne (2017). *Crowded and complex: The changing geopolitics of the South Pacific*.

**WEEK 13 (Nov. 5 and Nov. 7): Southeast Asia and Pacific Territorial Claims**

Storey, Ian (2016). "Rising Tensions in the South China Sea: Southeast Asian Responses". In *The South China Sea Dispute: Navigating Diplomatic and Strategic Tensions*, edited by Ian Storey and Cheng-yi Lin. (Chapter 6)

**WEEK 14 (Nov. 12 and Nov. 14): Chinese Territorial Claims**

Gao Zhiguo and Bing Bing Jia. "The Nine-Dash Line in the South China Sea: History, Status, and Implications". *The American Journal of International Law* 107 (1), 98-124.

**WEEK 15 (Nov. 19 and Nov. 21): Philippine Territorial Claims**

Baviera, Aileen S.P. (2016). "The Philippines and the South China Sea Dispute: Security Interests and Perspectives". In *The South China Sea Dispute: Navigating Diplomatic and Strategic Tensions*, edited by Ian Storey and Cheng-yi Lin. (Chapter 7)

**WEEK 16 AND WEEK 17 (Nov. 26 and Dec. 3): U.S. Hegemony and the South China Sea**

Roy, Denny (2016). "The United States and the South China Sea: Front Line of Hegemonic Tension?" In *The South China Sea Dispute: Navigating Diplomatic and Strategic Tensions*, edited by Ian Storey and Cheng-yi Lin. (Chapter 10)

**WEEK 16 (Nov. 28): Thanksgiving Break: No classes**

**WEEK 17 (Dec. 5): Review session**

**WEEK 18 (Dec. 10): SLO activities and final project deadline (3 p.m.)**