

RDEV 40110: Geopolitics Course Outline (5 ECTS)

21st November- 9th December 2016

General Information

Module Coordinator

Dr Sulagna Maitra

Email

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Office Location & Hours

Room G03B, Agriculture & Food
Science Centre; 10am-4:30pm

Guest Lecturers

Dr Vincent Durac

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School of Politics & International
Relations, Newman Building
School of Politics & International
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Dr Graham Finlay

Graham.Finlay@ucd.ie

Module Overview

Humanitarian professionals operating within complex emergencies are continuously confronted with decisions that warrant a nuanced understanding of contemporary politics, disasters, agendas of humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors and their power dynamics. Effective humanitarian intervention involves the ability to accurately anticipate the level of need, to be able to assess and react to volatile operational environments (especially in a conflict) and the ability to design and implement interventions that are feasible in any given political context. At a systemic level, humanitarian professionals need to be able to follow global trends (such as on conflict, climate change, development) as well as engage in policy debates on humanitarian space, reform of global governance, responsibility to protect, human rights and development. This module introduces students to the salient characteristics of contemporary world politics and situates humanitarian action within its political context.

The module has **four components**. The **first component** looks at the evolution of humanitarian assistance within contemporary world politics. Humanitarian action has evolved from essentially a philanthropic exercise (voluntary, sporadic citizen's response to absence of State authority in a crisis) to a multi-billion dollar humanitarian *system* involving more than 400,000 professionals, the UN agencies, the Red Cross Movement, State actors, regional organizations, non-governmental & community based organizations, private sector and many more. This component will use key theoretical perspectives in International Relations to analyse the evolution of humanitarian action and interrogate contemporary humanitarian interventions and their efficacy. The **second component** of the module uses tools from critical geopolitics and human security approach to analyse frameworks for mapping the operational environment in vulnerability and capacity. This section also deals with frameworks for conflict analysis. In doing so, students will come face-to-face with power dynamics between actors, the impact of competing agendas on humanitarian outcomes and determinants of humanitarian space. The **third component** of module is theme based. Guest Lecturers from the School of Politics and International Relations will provide an in-depth analysis of key issues, namely poverty and human rights, the Responsibility to Protect and Conflict in the Middle East. The **fourth and final component** of the module relates to area studies and as such is achieved through a group project and seminar style presentations on analysing the geopolitical context of a humanitarian crisis.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course students should be able to

1. Have a clear understanding of the international humanitarian system in its geopolitical context with an emphasis on the power relations between actors
2. Be familiar with the main approaches and concepts of international relations and geopolitics
3. Have a demonstrated capacity to identify the root causes of conflicts and complex emergencies in a particular case
4. Have the ability to apply certain key concepts of International Relations and Geopolitics to concrete disaster situations.
5. Have the ability to transfer acquired knowledge to other humanitarian situations
6. Have adequate capacity for (self-) reflection on academic argumentation
7. Have the basic skills for acting in and reacting in intercultural contexts

Module Delivery & Course Materials

The module is lecture based and involves group work, case studies, student presentations and short classroom based activities. Short class debates will be organized on some contested topics. All readings for this module will be made available via NOHA Blackboard. Students will be expected to have read the relevant material uploaded for each session beforehand. The following two books provide an overview of material to be covered in class and may be regarded as texts. Students are not required to buy them as copies are available in the main UCD Library and the NOHA library:

1. Baylis, Smith, Owen ed. (2011), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
2. Barnett, Weiss (2011), *Humanitarianism Contested: Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Global Institution Series, Routledge, Manchester

Assessment & Remediation

The Geopolitics module will be assessed through a major group assignment (50%) and an end of module exam (50%).

The broad theme for the group assignment is the *Geopolitical Context of Humanitarian Response: Understanding Linkages between Geography, State, Society and Disasters*. Details of the assignment will be provided in class on 21st November 2015. This assignment involves a group presentation of 30 minutes (20 minutes presentation + 10 minutes Q& A) followed by a joint report of 3000 words (excluding annexes and references).

The end of module written exam is 2 hours. Both the assignment and the exam is based on class lectures and recommended readings to ensure that the key learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are encouraged to go beyond these materials provided and add new dimensions to the discussion.

Lecture Schedule:

Topic	Dates and times	Documents/Readings
Introduction to Geopolitics in Humanitarian Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module Outline Assignment and Groups CIMIC exercise, 26th Nov. (discussion) 	21 st November 11am-1pm, 1.01 Ag. Sc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module Outline Assignment Hibernia- Background
Theoretical Perspectives in Humanitarian Action	21 st November 2pm-4pm G01 Ag. Sc.	Case Study: Rwanda
Student Workshop: Evolution of Humanitarian Action	23 rd November 11am-1pm, 1.18 Ag. Sc. 2pm-4pm, G01 Ag. Sc.	Shaping of Humanitarian World
Student Workshop: Evolution of Humanitarian Action		
Poverty and Human Rights (Graham Finlay)	24 th November 9am-12pm A003 Health Sciences	Pogge, Cosmopolitanism & Sovereignty; Sen, Rights and Agency; Shue, Human Rights
Responsibility to Protect (Graham Finlay)	25 st November 9am-12pm H2.32 Science Hub	ICISS, R2P, Chandler, Ideological Misuse of Human Rights, Elshtain International Justice
Introduction to GIS (Jane Nolan)	28 th November 11am-1pm, Info Skills Room, Health Sc.	n.a.
Social Determinants of Vulnerability	29 th November 11am-1pm, A006 Health Sc.	Wisner et.al., Framing a Disaster; Wisner, Ruse, Disaster Vulnerability- Scale Power and Daily Life, Kelman et. al. Climate Change in DRR, Chandler, Resilience and Human Security: Post Interventionist Paradigm
Social Determinants of Vulnerability	29 th November 2pm-4pm, G01 Ag. Sc.	
Conflict and its Analysis	1 st December 10am-1pm, tbc	Please see Blackboard for reference list
The Middle East	2 nd December, 10am-1pm, tbc	
Geopolitics Exam	6 th December, 10am-12noon, G-09 Ag. Sc.	
Student Seminar	9 th December, 10am onwards, G09 Ag. Sc.	Presentation slides and report, submission via Blackboard

