Political Geography

This course has three objectives for students:
1. to have a working understanding of the theoretical concepts and challenges underpinning the study of geography and politics.
2. to have a working familiarity with the most current research topics in political geography.
3. to be familiar with and have a basic understanding of tools and resources used to research these concepts and to be able to apply geographic concepts to their own areas of research interest.

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class meeting: Tu 2-4PM, CGIS S153

1 Topics by Date
1. Introduction to class
   • **January 29**: Introduction to class and space in politics
2. Theoretical Geography
   • **February 5**: Problems of space and politics
   • **February 12**: Concepts and measurement of space
3. Tools of Analysis
   • **February 19**: Concepts of Geographic Analysis
   • **February 20**: Lab session on ArcGIS (optional), 5-7PM, K018
   • **February 26**: Basics of Geographic Analysis in R: accounting for the spatial structure of data in quantitative analysis
     – Note that class will meet in K018 from 2-5PM. If you don’t have a CGIS lab account, please obtain one.
   • **February 27**: Lab Session on ArcGIS (optional), 5-7PM, K018
4. Topics
   • **March 5**: movement: why people live where they do and how this affects politics and a mini-lab session on PostGIS
   • **March 12**: context: how does where you are affecting behavior?
   • **March 26**: lines: the effect of geographic boundaries on behavior and research
• April 2: variation: how much spatial variation is there in behavior?
• April 9: the psychology of space
• April 16: history’s reach
• April 30: make-up/presentations/unfinished business

2 Assignments

You are required to do four assignments in this class: regularly participate by spoken and electronic means; make a primary contribution to the course wiki; observe and map a political geography phenomenon in the Boston area; and journal your reflections on the relevance of the weekly topic to your research.

During other weeks, I may assign exercises to help with skills acquisition. These will not be graded

2.1 participation

All students are expected to attend every class and participate by talking during every class. You are also, occasionally, expected to make contributions to the wiki. The latter requirement will be easy if you simply remain an active reader of the wiki, which will enrich your experience with the course.

2.2 research journal

Each week, in writing reflect on how the weekly topic is applicable to your substantive interests. Propose a related research design. Do this before class. Update it after class with any additional insight.

2.3 primary course wiki contribution

Because this is a research course and your instructor does not have a monopoly on knowledge, we will maintain a course wiki that is intended to supplement our weekly meetings. This wiki will be a repository for resources related to the course. Resources include, but are not limited to, insights, relevant research not included in the syllabus, research by other scholars, and data sources. Each student will be tasked with being the primary contributor to this wiki during an assigned week. Contributions should be substantial, useful, and should teach us things we might not have known otherwise.

You will be expected to briefly and unceremoniously present your wiki contributions to the class the following week. We will assign weeks as enrollment is set.

2.4 observe and map

Go find something politically interesting in the Boston area that has a spatial component and is either 1) directly interesting to you and your research, 2) analogous to something interesting to you and your research. Go to that location and do two tings:
1. Write a description of the phenomenon and the related research questions.
2. Create a map by either:
   (a) using existing data or
   (b) collect data using GPS - the data collection can easily be done using your Smart-Phone [http://gis.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k235&pageid=icb.page189835](http://gis.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k235&pageid=icb.page189835)

   This assignment should be done with a partner. Each pair should turn in one project.

No two groups should map the same phenomenon. It is due on April 30.

3 Grades

Grades for this class will be based on the following:
- participation (25%)
- wiki contribution (25%)
- research journal (25%)
- observe and map (25%)

4 Grades

Collaboration is allowed in this class. You should do your own research journal, because otherwise that’d be pretty pointless.

5 Books

Obtain:


I recommend that you obtain:

6 Readings by Date

Readings should be completed by the dates below. Readings are available on the course website. Those under “related readings” are optional.

- **January 29:**
- **February 5:**


related readings:


Michael F. Goodchild. The validity and usefulness of laws in geographic in-
formation science and geography. *Annals of the Association of American

Waldo Tobler. On the first law of geography: A reply. *Annals of the Asso-

- **February 12:**

  Anthony C Gatrell. *Distance and space: a geographical perspective*. Con-
temporary problems in geography. Oxford University Press, New York,
1983.

  (Especially chapters 2, 3, and 5 (suggest you take notes))

  Henry E. Brady and John E. McNulty. Turning out to vote: The costs
of finding and getting to the polling place. *American Political Science

**related readings:**

  J.A. Agnew and J.S. Duncan. The transfer of ideas into anglo-american

  Allan Pred. Structuration and place: On the becoming of sense of place
and structure of feeling. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*,

  Alan Pred. Place as historically contingent process: Structuration and the
time-geography of becoming places. *Annals of the Association of Amer-

  John A. Agnew. *Place and politics: The geographical mediation of state and

- **February 19:**

  Wendy K. Tam Cho and James G. Gimpel. Geographic information sys-
tems and the spatial dimensions of american politics. *Annual Review of

  Mark Monmonier. *How to Lie with Maps*. University of Chicago Press,
Chicago, 1996.

  (chapters 2, 3, 10, and 11)

  John Agnew, Thomas W Gillespie, Jorge Gonzalez, and Brian Min. Bagh-
dad nights: evaluating the us military “surge” using nighttime light sig-

**related readings:**

  Brian Min. Distributing power: Electrifying the poor in india. Working
Paper.

- **February 26:**


**As needed:**


**related readings:**


**March 5:**


(chapters 1 and 2)


**related readings:**


• March 12:


Ryan D. Enos. What the demolition of public housing teaches us about the impact of racial threat on political behavior. working paper, 2012.

related readings:


• March 26:


David Broockman. Do congressional candidates have reverse coattails? evidence from a regression discontinuity design. *Political Analysis*, 17(4), 2009.


**related readings:**


• **April 2:**


  (chapters 1–8)


  **related readings:**


• **April 9:**


related readings:


• April 16:


related readings:
