Political Geography

This course has three objectives:
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 research.

Professor Ryan D. Enos
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2–4PM and by appointment
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Class Meeting: Tu 2-4PM, Memorial Hall 302

1 Topics by Date

1. Introduction to class
   **September 5**: Introduction to class and space in politics
2. Theoretical Geography
   **September 12**: Challenges and opportunities in the study of space and politics
   **September 19**: Concepts and measurement of space
3. Tools of Analysis
   **September 26**: Concepts of geographic analysis
   **September 27**: Lab session on ArcGIS (optional), 5-7PM
   **October 3**: Basics of Geographic Analysis in R: accounting for the spatial structure of data in quantitative analysis
   - Note, this class session will be from 2-5PM.
   **October 4**: Lab session on ArcGIS (optional), 5-7PM
4. Topics and Applications
   **October 10**: Variation: how much spatial variation is there in behavior?
   **October 17**: The psychology of space
   **October 24**: Space and groups: how does space affect what we think of others?
   **October 31**: Context: how does where you are affect your behavior?
   **November 7**: Movement: why people live where they do and how does this affect politics?
   **November 14**: Boundaries: the effect of geographic boundaries on behavior and research
   **November 21**: History’s reach: the legacy of past geography in modern politics
5. **November 28**: presentations and feedback
2 Assignments

You are required to do four assignments in this class: 1) regularly participate by spoken and electronic means; 2) make a primary contribution to the course wiki; 3) observe and map a political geography phenomenon in the Boston area; and 4) journal your reflections on the relevance of the weekly topic to your research.

During other weeks, I may assign exercises to help with skill 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 otherwise have known.

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 things:

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 (details on how to collect this data will be offered later in the semester).

This assignment should be done with a partner. Each pair should turn in one written description of their findings on December 5. No two groups should map the same phenomenon. You will present your project and illicit feedback on November 28.
3 Grades
Each assignment described above is worth 25% of your grade.

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

5 Laptop and Phone Policy
In order to minimize distraction, unless otherwise noted, laptops and phones are not allowed to be used during class. If you need special accommodations for this policy, please speak to Ryan individually.

6 Books
Obtain:


7 Readings by Date
Readings should be completed by the dates below. Note that only a few articles are assigned each week. You are expected to read these carefully, critically, and be ready to actively reflect on the content during class. Those under “Related Readings” are optional.

- **September 5**:
  
  

- **September 12**, *Challenges and opportunities in the study of space and politics*: 

  

3


**Related Readings:**


• **September 19**, *Concepts and measurement of space*:


*(Especially chapters 2, 3, and 5)*


**Related Readings:**


• **September 26**, *Concepts of geographic analysis*:

See course website for GIS readings


*(chapters 2–6)*

**Related Readings:**


**October 3, Basics of Geographic Analysis in R:**
As needed:


Related Readings:


**October 10, variation:**


(chapters 1–8)


Related Readings:


- **October 17, the psychology of space:**


Related Readings:


**October 24, space and groups:**


**Related Readings:**


**October 31, context:**


(chapters 1, 15, 23–25)


**Related Readings:**


**November 7, movement:**


**Related Readings:**


- **November 14, boundaries:**


  (chapters 2–4)


**Related Readings:**


Ryan D. Enos and Anthony Fowler. Aggregate effects of large-scale campaigns on voter turnout, 2016.


- **November 21, history’s reach:**


  *Chapters TBD*


**Related Readings:**