RDEV 40110: Geopolitics Course Outline (5 ECTS)
21st November- 9th December 2016

General Information

Module Coordinator
Dr Sulagna Maitra
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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

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

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:


**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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Dates and times</th>
<th>Documents/Readings</th>
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| Introduction to Geopolitics in Humanitarian Action  
  - Module Outline  
  - Assignment and Groups  
  - CIMIC exercise, 26th Nov. (discussion) | 21st November 11am-1pm, 1.01 Ag. Sc. | • Module Outline  
• Assignment  
• Hibernia- Background |
| Theoretical Perspectives in Humanitarian Action | 21st November 2pm-4pm  
G01 Ag. Sc. | Case Study: Rwanda |
| Student Workshop: Evolution of Humanitarian Action | 23rd November 11am-1pm, 1.18 Ag. Sc.  
2pm-4pm, G01 Ag. Sc. | Shaping of Humanitarian World |
| Poverty and Human Rights (Graham Finlay) | 24th November 9am-12pm  
A003 Health Sciences | Pogge, Cosmopolitanism & Sovereignty; Sen, Rights and Agency; Shue, Human Rights |
| Responsibility to Protect (Graham Finlay) | 25th November 9am-12pm  
| Introduction to GIS (Jane Nolan) | 28th November 11am-1pm, Info Skills Room, Health Sc. | n.a. |
| Social Determinants of Vulnerability | 29th 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 | 29th November 2pm-4pm, G01 Ag. Sc. | |
| Conflict and its Analysis | 1st December 10am-1pm, tbc | Please see Blackboard for reference list |
| The Middle East | 2nd December, 10am-1pm, tbc | |
| Geopolitics Exam | 6th December, 10am-12noon, G-09 Ag. Sc. | |
| Student Seminar | 9th December, 10am onwards, G09 Ag. Sc. | Presentation slides and report, submission via Blackboard |