



**Code: GEOG-01/B (ex M-GGR/02)**

**Credits: 9**

**Subject: Economic and Political Geography**

**Main language of instruction: Italian**

**Other language of instruction: English**

## **Teaching Staff**

### **Head instructor**

**Prof. Alfonso Giordano - [alfonso.giordano@unicusano.it](mailto:alfonso.giordano@unicusano.it)**

### **Prerequisites**

None. The course is designed as an introduction to Human Geography and is intended for students of the bachelor's degree in political sciences (L-36). A general high-school knowledge of geography, history and current affairs is recommended.

### **Objectives**

#### ***Objective of the course:***

The course aims to provide students with the basic theoretical and methodological knowledge required to engage with the discipline of Economic and Political Geography. Building on Mark Boyle's organising framework, it offers an analytical perspective on contemporary phenomena rooted in the concepts of space, place and region, and on the long-term story of the rise, reign and faltering of Western civilisation since the fifteenth century. Drawing on the discipline's tradition of multi-sectoral and multi-level analysis, the course connects geo-political-economic factors with environmental, demographic, cultural and social ones, and explores the dynamics of spatial diffusion across territorial scales, from the global to the local and back.

#### ***Course structure:***

The course is structured in 10 thematic Topics that follow the first ten chapters of Mark Boyle Human Geography: A Concise Introduction. Topic 1 introduces the discipline; Topic 2 reconstructs its history and main schools of thought; Topic 3 examines the watersheds in human history from human origins to the rise of civilisations; Topic 4 analyses the geographies of the world capitalist economy; Topic 5 addresses nation-states, empires and geopolitics; Topic 6 deals with cultural geography and the West in the cultural landscape; Topic 7 tackles the modern rise of world population; Topic 8 considers the environmental crisis and climate change; Topic 9 investigates urbanisation and urban form; Topic 10 closes with global migration and diasporas.

### **Competencies:**

By the end of the course, the expected learning outcomes - in particular concerning the ability to analyse economic-political phenomena in geographical terms - can be described as follows:

#### ***Knowledge and understanding***

The course will allow students to acquire the ability to understand the different territorial realities in geographical, economic and political terms, from the local to the global level. It will also provide appropriate



methodologies and geographical terminology to analyse the relationships between physical space and human activities - especially economic and political ones - in a complex and globalised world.

### ***Applying knowledge and understanding***

The ability to apply geographical knowledge and understanding to contemporary issues will be progressively built through the practical exercises offered in the online forums, the e-tivities and the self-assessment tests delivered on the e-learning platform, and will be consolidated during the final examination.

### ***Making judgements***

Students must be able to formulate independent judgements in order to analyse and understand the main economic and political processes ongoing in different territorial realities and across different geographical scales, with both a global and a synthetic approach.

### ***Communication skills***

Students will acquire the appropriate disciplinary language of geography, a discipline that - facing new cognitive and epistemological challenges - is characterised by interdisciplinarity and theoretical-practical pluralism.

### ***Learning skills***

Students who have successfully passed the exam will have acquired an adequate geographical, economic and political knowledge that will provide the indispensable basis for subsequent university and professional training.

## **Syllabus**

### ***Programme:***

#### **Topic 1 - A concise introduction to Human Geography**

Becoming conscious of the geographical imagination; what is Human Geography?; the three recurring themes of the book (the rise, reign and faltering of Western civilisation; the human-environment relationship; the systematic branches of the discipline); the making of the modern world from the fifteenth century; how to read the discipline today.

#### **Topic 2 - Human Geography: a brief history**

A framework for studying the history of geography; Human Geography in the premodern era; early modern, modern and late modern Human Geography; postmodern Human Geography; Human Geography and Big Data.

#### **Topic 3 - Watersheds in human history: humanity's triumph over nature?**

The origins of the human species; first migrations and the peopling of the planet; the development of human culture and the invention of settled agriculture; the rise and fall of civilisations; environmental history and the rise of the West from the tenth century BCE.

#### **Topic 4 - An unequal but changing world: geographies of the world capitalist economy**

An unequal but changing world; the Old International Division of Labor and Wallerstein's world-systems analysis; the crises in the core of the 1970s as a turning point in world history; the New International Division of Labor and the post-Fordist economy; world cities, high-technology clusters and the Tiger economies of Southeast Asia; the future of the ultra-periphery and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Topic 5 - The rise and fall of great powers: nation-states, empires and geopolitics**



The political geography of rule: the ideas of sovereign state, nations and nation-states; the demise of the nation-state and the rise of multilevel governance; geopolitics and international relations; the rise and fall of European empires; the European colonial (mis)adventure in Africa; the Cold War; the clash of civilisations?

### **Topic 6 - The West in the cultural landscape: civilised spaces and unruly places**

Culture in the rise of the West; Ferguson's cultural explanation for the rise of the West; New Cultural Geography and the myth that 'West is best'; the West in the cultural landscape; civilising missions and culture wars; spaces of utopia and dystopia in the Western imagination; the Western frontier and places beyond the pale.

### **Topic 7 - The modern rise in world population from 1750**

Origins and stages of the Demographic Transition Model; the geography of demographic transitions in history and those still to unfold; mortality decline and policies for global health; fertility decline and policies for lowering and increasing fertility levels; demographic transition: the case of China from 1949.

### **Topic 8 - A planet in distress? Humanity's war on the Earth**

Population pessimists: the Earth's carrying capacity, overshoot and collapse; population optimists: population as the ultimate resource; population neutralists: political ecology, society and nature; climate change as the battleground for the twenty-first century.

### **Topic 9 - Homo Urbanus: urbanisation and urban form from 1800**

Capitalism and the urbanisation of the surface of the Earth; the nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrial city and its models; voices of decline and the death of the industrial city; towards a new era of planetary urbanisation (1950-2050); Los Angeles as our postmetropolis future; megalopolis and the rise of urban galaxies; the planet of slums and megacities in the Global South; the Chinese experience of urbanisation.

### **Topic 10 - Global migration: moving, settling, staying connected**

Great diasporas in human history; international migration today (Global South-South, South-North, North-North, North-South corridors); assimilation and integration into host societies; the impacts of migration on sending states and host countries; the migration-development nexus.

## **Evaluation system and criteria**

The assessment of learning takes place through an oral test aimed at ascertaining the analytical skills acquired through the course.

Erasmus students are encouraged to contact the instructor to agree on a customised syllabus. Study materials are available in both Italian and English. The oral exam may be taken in either Italian or English.

## **Bibliography and resources**

### *1. Materials to consult:*

The primary teaching materials prepared by the Head Instructor and provided on the Unicusano e-learning platform consist of downloadable texts and summary slides. These teaching materials are fully suitable, if used in their entirety, for the optimal completion of the final examination. The reference textbook for the course is:

Boyle, M. (2015) Human Geography: A Concise Introduction. Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester. ISBN 978-1-118-45150-2 (chapters 1-10).

## 2. Recommended bibliography:

At the end of each downloadable text a selected bibliography is provided. Although the materials supplied on the e-learning platform are sufficient to pass the final examination, the following bibliography is recommended for those who wish to deepen the topics discussed:

- Barnes, T.J., Christophers, B. (2018) *Economic Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken (NJ).
- Clark, G.L., Feldman, M.P., Gertler, M.S., Wójcik, D. (eds.) (2018) *The New Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Coe, N.M., Kelly, P.F., Yeung, H.W.C. (2020) *Economic Geography: A Contemporary Introduction*, 3rd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken (NJ).
- Cohen, S.B. (2014) *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations*, 3rd ed. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham (MD).
- de Haas, H. (2023) *How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics*, Viking-Penguin / Basic Books.
- de Haas, H., Castles, S., Miller, M.J. (2020) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 6th ed., Guilford Press / Red Globe Press, New York-London.
- Flint, C. (2021) *Introduction to Geopolitics*, 4th ed. Routledge, London-New York.
- Flint, C., Taylor, P.J. (2025) *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State, and Locality*, 8th ed., Routledge, London-New York.
- Jones, M., Jones, R., Woods, M., Whitehead, M., Dixon, D., Hannah, M. (2015) *An Introduction to Political Geography: Space, Place and Politics*, 2nd ed. Routledge, London-New York.
- Knox, P., Agnew, J., McCarthy, L. (2014) *The Geography of the World Economy*, 6th ed. Routledge, London-New York.
- MacKinnon, D., Cumbers, A. (2018) *An Introduction to Economic Geography: Globalisation, Uneven Development and Place*, 3rd ed. Routledge, London-New York.