

Identification	Subject (Code, title, credits)	PSIR 215 Geopolitics 6 ECTS
	Department	Department of Political Science and Philosophy
	Level	Undergraduate
	Term	Fall 2026
	Instructor	Ayaz Rzayev
	E-mail:	ayaz.rzayev@khazar.org
	Classroom/hours	41 Mehseti Ganjavi St.,
	Office hours (online)	By appointment
Prerequisites	None	
Language	English	
Compulsory/Elective	Compulsory	
Required textbooks and course materials	Main textbooks Black, J. (2024). <i>Rethinking Geopolitics</i>. Indiana University Press. Black, J. (2021). <i>A Short History of War</i>. Yale University Press. Black, J. (2016). <i>Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance</i>. Indiana University Press. Gray, C. S., & Sloan, G. (Eds.). (1999). <i>Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy</i>. Frank Cass. Supporting and specialized readings Bolt, P. J., & Cross, S. N. (2018). <i>China, Russia, and Twenty-First Century Global Geopolitics</i>. Oxford University Press. Flint, C. (2024). <i>Near and Far Waters: The Geopolitics of Seapower</i>. Stanford University Press. Schelling, T. C. (2020 [1966]). <i>Arms and Influence</i>. Yale University Press. Schelling, T. C. (1980 [1960]). <i>The Strategy of Conflict</i>. Harvard University Press. Fishman, E. (2025). <i>Chokepoints: American Power in the Age of Economic Warfare</i>. Penguin Publishing Group. Wang, D. (2025). <i>Breakneck: China's Quest to Engineer the Future</i>. W. W. Norton & Company. Miller, C. (2022). <i>Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology</i>. Scribner. Prasad, E. S. (2026). <i>The Doom Loop: Why the World Economic Order Is Spiraling into Disorder</i>. PublicAffairs. Reading notation All page ranges are inclusive. For every PDF, the book's printed pages appear first and the supplied file's 1-based PDF viewer pages appear in brackets. For EPUB titles, assignments identify the chapter or section and the embedded print-page markers because viewer pagination changes with screen size. 'Compulsory' readings are required; 'Supplementary' readings are optional unless the instructor announces otherwise.	
Course description	The course examines geopolitics as the interaction of geography, power, technology, and strategic objectives. It moves from classical theories of land and sea power to contemporary contests over air and space, industrial capacity, critical infrastructure, supply chains, finance, and technological development.	

Course objectives	• Introduce the concepts, history, and principal traditions of geopolitical analysis. • Explain the arguments and historical contexts of Mahan, Mackinder, Spykman, Kennan, Schelling and other strategists and thinkers. • Examine how military and technological revolutions alter mobility, power projection, logistics, command, vulnerability, and strategic thought. • Compare land-power, sea-power, air-power, industrial-power, information-power approaches without treating geography or technology as destiny. • Connect military strategy to geoeconomic power and economic statecraft. • Develop students' ability to interpret maps, compare cases, evaluate causal arguments, and communicate evidence-based strategic analysis.		
Course outcomes	By the end of the course, students will be able to: • define geopolitics, geostrategy, strategic depth, power projection, chokepoint, deterrence, compellence, and geoeconomics; • reconstruct the central claims and assumptions of Mahan, Mackinder, Spykman, Kennan, Schelling and others. • trace a causal chain from technological change to military capability, altered spatial value, strategic concept, and policy choices • compare land-power, sea-power, rimland, air-space, industrial, and network-enabled strategies across historical cases; • explain how nuclear weapons transformed coercion, crisis bargaining, and the relationship between force and political objectives; • analyze contemporary great-power strategy, including Chinese and U.S. cases, through both military and geoeconomic instruments; and • formulate and defend a concise geopolitical argument using course readings, maps, and case evidence while identifying uncertainty and rival explanations.		
Teaching methods	• Lecture • Guided seminar discussion • Comparative case analysis • Crisis simulation and student presentations		
Evaluation	Methods	Date/deadlines	Percentage (%)
	Midterm evaluation	To be determined by the Dean's Office	30
	Active participation	Throughout the semester	5
	Quiz and/or book review	Choice declared by Week 3	10
	PPT (presentation)	Topic by midterm; delivery Weeks 12-15	15
	Final exam	To be determined by the Dean's Office	40
	Total		100
Policy	Students are expected to: • attend classes regularly and participate in the combined lecture and seminar format; • complete the assigned readings before class; • engage actively and respectfully in classroom discussion;		

- prepare thoughtful and informed presentations and written work;
- submit assignments on time and follow assignment instructions carefully.

Attendance

Students are required to comply with the attendance policy of Khazar University. Full-time students are expected to attend all classes unless they are ill or have received permission for an approved absence. A student should submit an absence request in anticipation of an absence whenever possible. To remain eligible to take examinations, students must not miss more than 25% of class hours through unapproved absence. Otherwise, examination eligibility requires the approval of the School Dean. Repeated unapproved absences or sustained non-participation may lead to withdrawal from the course.

Grading scheme

During the semester, grades are allocated as follows:

- 30/100 - midterm examination;
- 40/100 - final examination; and
- 30/100 - in-class activities, including active participation, quizzes or book review, and presentation.

Active participation (5/100)

Active participation requires consistent preparation and meaningful engagement. Students should listen carefully, contribute to group discussions, ask relevant questions, and respond constructively to the arguments of others. Participation is evaluated by the quality and consistency of engagement, not simply by frequency of speaking.

Quiz and/or book review (10/100)

Students may either complete five short quizzes, administered in oral or written form as determined by the instructor, or submit one analytical review of an instructor-approved book. The chosen option must be declared by Week 3. A book review must identify the author's central geopolitical argument; explain how geography, military capability, or technology enters its causal mechanism; connect the argument to at least two course concepts; and assess one strength and one limitation.

PowerPoint presentation (15/100)

Presentations must explain an approved geopolitics or strategic studies topic rather than merely summarize information. Where appropriate, the presentation should show how a specific technology changed a strategic problem. Students will be evaluated according to:

- the focus of the presentation;
- conceptual accuracy and strength of the argument;
- clarity and coherence of the content;
- appropriate use of evidence, examples, facts, maps, and statistics;
- quality of analysis and response to questions; and
- completion within the allotted 15-20 minute period.

Presentation topics must be selected by the midterm examination and delivered in class during Weeks 12-15. Topics should be drawn from the course materials; any topic outside the syllabus requires prior approval from the instructor.

Academic misconduct

Academic honesty is essential to the integrity of Khazar University. Plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, and multiple submission are prohibited and will be penalized according to University regulations.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, data, or work without proper

	acknowledgement. Direct quotations must use quotation marks and identify the source. Paraphrased ideas must also be cited, and written assignments must include a reference list when sources are used. Students who submit plagiarized work, or knowingly provide material for plagiarism, may receive a zero for the relevant assignment and may be subject to further disciplinary action. AI Policy This policy governs the responsible use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) in coursework and research. It applies to undergraduate students and academic researchers, ensuring transparency, integrity, and accountability. GAI may support learning and research by helping organize ideas, checking grammar, or assisting with planning. However, it must never replace original analysis, creativity, or independent thinking. All uses of GAI must be disclosed clearly in assignments, projects, theses, and publications. Example: “ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) was used for language editing. All ideas and conclusions are my own.” Students may use GAI only as a supportive tool, with a maximum of twenty-five percent of text-based assignments. Its use is strictly prohibited in exams, quizzes, and graded in-class assessments. Researchers may use GAI for structuring, editing, and idea generation, but not for writing entire papers, fabricating references, or producing false data. Accuracy must always be verified. Violations include hidden or unauthorized use, failure to disclose, plagiarism, or data falsification. Penalties may involve warnings, resubmission, grade reduction, or disciplinary action. Instructors and supervisors must specify permitted levels of GAI use in syllabi or research guidelines. GAI is allowed only as a supportive tool. Students remain fully responsible for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of their work. Rules of professional conduct Students must help create a favorable academic and professional environment during class. Unauthorized discussions, disruptive conduct, and unauthorized use of electronic devices are prohibited. Behavior that seriously interferes with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or with other students' ability to benefit from the course will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the class in accordance with University procedures.	
	Topics	Readings
21.09.26	Geopolitics as Strategic Reasoning: Geography, Power, Technology, and the Problem of Determinism	Compulsory Black (2016), Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance, Ch. 1, book pp. 3-19 [PDF pp. 18-34]. Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 1, 'Why Geopolitics?', book pp. 1-14 [PDF pp. 10-23]. Supplementary Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Preface, book pp. ix-xix [PDF pp. 10-20].
28.09.26	The Gunpowder Revolution: Artillery, Fortification, Oceanic Reach, and State Power	Compulsory Black (2021), A Short History of War, Chs. 18-20, book pp. 106-125 [PDF pp. 117-136]. Black (2016), Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance, Ch. 3 (steam gunboats and the Suez and Panama canals), book pp. 85-88 [PDF pp. 100-103].

05.10.26	Sea Power: Mahan, Steam, Industrial Fleets, and Maritime Chokepoints	Compulsory Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 3, 'Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician,' book pp. 39-62 [PDF pp. 48-71]. Black (2016), Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance, Ch. 6 (navalism and Mahan), book pp. 138-140 [PDF pp. 153-155]. Black (2021), A Short History of War, Ch. 24, book pp. 143-147 [PDF pp. 154-158]. Supplementary Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 10, 'Weather, Geography and Naval Power in the Age of Sail,' book pp. 178-200 [PDF pp. 187-209].
12.10.26	Land Power: Railways, Mackinder, the Pivot Area, and Heartland Theory	Compulsory Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 2, 'Sir Halford Mackinder: The Heartland Theory Then and Now,' book pp. 15-38 [PDF pp. 24-47]. Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 1 (railways, the Trans-Siberian line, and land power), book pp. 21-26 [PDF pp. 44-49].
19.10.26	Industrialized War: Rail, Telegraph, Mass Mobilization, and World War I	Compulsory Black (2021), A Short History of War, Chs. 28-29, book pp. 164-177 [PDF pp. 175-188]; Ch. 31, book pp. 183-189 [PDF pp. 194-200]. Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 2, book pp. 33-42 [PDF pp. 56-65].
26.10.26	Air Power and Mechanization: Geopolitik and the Globalization of World War II	Compulsory Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 4, 'Air Power, Space Power, and Geography,' book pp. 63-82 [PDF pp. 72-91]. Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 4, book pp. 58-70 [PDF pp. 81-93]. Supplementary Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 12, 'Geopolitik: Haushofer, Hitler and Lebensraum,' book pp. 218-241 [PDF pp. 227-250].
02.11.26	Rimland Power: Spykman, Eurasian Balance, and U.S. Grand Strategy	Compulsory Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 5 (Spykman and the rimland), book pp. 71-75 [PDF pp. 94-98]. Black (2016), Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance, Ch. 7 (Spykman and U.S. interventionism), book pp. 166-168 [PDF pp. 181-183]. Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 9, 'Inescapable Geography,' book pp. 161-177 [PDF pp. 170-186].
09.11.26	Midterm Examination	No reading

16.11.26	The Nuclear Revolution: Deterrence, Compellence, Brinkmanship	Compulsory Schelling (2020), Arms and Influence, Ch. 1 (selected), book pp. 1-18 [PDF pp. 25-42]. Schelling (1980), The Strategy of Conflict, Ch. 8, 'The Threat That Leaves Something to Chance,' book pp. 187-206 [PDF pp. 197-216]. Supplementary Schelling (2020), Arms and Influence, remainder of Ch. 1, book pp. 19-34 [PDF pp. 43-58].
23.11.26	Containment in Practice: Alliances, Bases, Air Power, Proxies, and Limited War	Compulsory Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 5 (Kennan, containment, and its application), book pp. 76-91 [PDF pp. 99-114]. Black (2021), A Short History of War, Ch. 34, book pp. 202-208 [PDF pp. 213-219]. Supplementary Black (2016), Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance, Ch. 8 (selected), book pp. 177-190 [PDF pp. 192-205].
30.11.26	Technology, Innovation, and Strategic Power: Industry, Infrastructure, and Force Projection	Compulsory Flint (2024), Near and Far Waters, Ch. 6, 'The Geopolitics of Innovation,' book pp. 106-123 [PDF pp. 121-138]. Supplementary Gray & Sloan (1999), Ch. 8, 'Information Power: Strategy, Geopolitics and the Fifth Dimension,' book pp. 137-160 [PDF pp. 146-169]. Miller (2022), Chip War, Ch. 11, 'Precision Strike,' pp. 56-61; Ch. 14, 'The Pentagon's Offset Strategy,' pp. 72-78.
07.12.26	After the Cold War: Precision Warfare, Intervention, and the Return of Great-Power Competition	Compulsory Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 6, book pp. 107-131 [PDF pp. 130-154]. Black (2021), A Short History of War, Chs. 36-38, book pp. 215-232 [PDF pp. 226-243]. Supplementary Black (2016), Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance, Ch. 9 (selected), book pp. 211-225 [PDF pp. 226-240]. Miller (2022), Chip War, Ch. 26, 'Weapons of Mass Destruction': The Impact of the Offset, pp. 145-150.

14.12.26	Russia, China, and the Eurasian Strategic System	Compulsory Bolt & Cross (2018), Ch. 3, book pp. 108-125 [PDF pp. 129-146]. Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 7, book pp. 132-148 [PDF pp. 155-171]. Supplementary Wang (2025), Breakneck, Ch. 3, 'Tech Power,' pp. 57-93 Miller (2022), Chip War, Ch. 42, 'Made in China,' and Ch. 43, 'Call Forth the Assault,' pp. 242-254. Bolt & Cross (2018), Conclusion, book pp. 290-302 [PDF pp. 311-323].
21.12.26	Goeconomics as Strategy: Finance, Sanctions, Supply Chains, and Chokepoints	Compulsory Fishman (2025), Chokepoints, Chs. 2-7, embedded print pp. 20-46. Fishman (2025), Chokepoints, Chs. 40-42 (ZTE, Fujian Jinhua, and Huawei), embedded print pp. 254-272. Supplementary Prasad (2026), The Doom Loop, Ch. 1, 'Dimensions of Power,' pp. 21-59. Miller (2022), Chip War, Ch. 53, 'Shortages and Supply Chains,' and Ch. 54, pp. 326-343.
28.12.26	The Next Military-Industrial Revolution and the Future World Order	Compulsory Black (2024), Rethinking Geopolitics, Ch. 8, book pp. 149-164 [PDF pp. 172-187]. Prasad (2026), The Doom Loop, Ch. 7, sections 'Political Models' through 'Promoting a Vision,' pp. 262-278. Supplementary Wang (2025), Breakneck, Ch. 6, 'Fortress China,' selected sections, pp. 195-205. Miller (2022), Chip War, Ch. 48, 'The Next Offset,' pp. 282-291. Wang (2025), Breakneck, Ch. 7, 'Learning to Love Engineers,' pp. 226-234. Flint (2024), Near and Far Waters, Conclusion, 'The Gathering Storm Clouds of War,' pp. 160-172 [PDF pp. 175-187].
	Final Examination	No reading