



What's Happening in... Geography

Politics and geography:

What are the links and how do we study them?

How are James Bond, the Islamic State, King Arthur, the Occupy movement and North Sea gas related? Taken individually, these are just some of the topics with which political geographers concern themselves. As a collective, they demonstrate the multiple ways in which the core concepts of space and power influence politics. When we watch the latest Hollywood blockbuster, for example, we often think of a hero such as Captain America or James Bond saving the day. But, *whose* day is being saved precisely? What kind of America is being defended, how are 007's enemies depicted, how is 'good' and 'evil' understood? The answer to these questions often reveal particular political understandings of places in the world from the 'corruption' and 'dangers' of Africa and the Middle East to the imagined sense of what a 'nation', like Iraq, the UK or the USA, actually is. In all cases, the characteristics of these places are represented as a geographical fact that is implicitly understood. At Lancaster, we challenge these implicit understandings, instead highlighting critical perspectives on reading political events. So, when George Bush spoke of an 'axis of evil' or Winston Churchill highlighted the 'Iron Curtain', we should think of these as constructions and as examples of *imagined* geographies.

From this perspective, geography should always be thought of as having political dimensions and vice versa. At the Lancaster Environment Centre we are always mindful of these relationships and, through modules such as *Political Geography*, work together with our students to develop more critical ways of understanding everyday news stories and the hidden political geography of popular culture.

Being able to identify the ways in which nations, superpowers and empires are imagined is important both historically and in a contemporary sense. It not only might help us to better locate the 'war on terror', but also understand *why* that language is used in the first place. Russia's geopolitical manoeuvrings in Ukraine can be explained in any number of ways depending on one's geographical imagination: should Russia be seen as part of Europe, a distinctive Euro-Asian territory or a 'bridge' between Europe and Asia? These questions and many more - ranging from Scottish nationalism and resource sovereignty to war and postcolonial identity - form the content of *Political Geography*, a new module that aims to make sense of the contemporary connections between politics and geography. So, for students interested in how political power operates spatially, how nation states are made and 'unmade' and how borders are contested and resisted, then come and join us in our lecture and seminar rooms to critically unpack the political world around us!



For more details about the reports above or about Geography courses on offer at Lancaster University please contact the Geography Admissions Staff,

Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University, LA1 4YQ, UK
Email: lec.ug@lancaster.ac.uk or see our website:
www.lancaster.ac.uk/lec