

SYLLABUS
Fall semester 2025-2026 academic year
Educational program "6B03104 - International Relations"
4 course

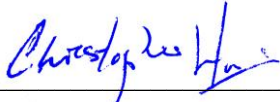
ID and name of course	Independent work of the student (IWS)	Number of credits			General number of credits	Independent work of the student under the guidance of a teacher (IWST)
		Lectures (L)	Practical classes (PC)	Lab. classes (LC)		
ID 100665 Fundamentals of Geopolitics	6	3	3	-	6	6
ACADEMIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE						
Learning Format	Cycle, component	Lecture types	Types of practical classes	Form and platform final control		
Offline	Basic	Problem oriented, analytical, debatable	Informative, problematic, analytical	Written exam		
Lecturer - (s)	Ka Wai Chrisopher Hor, PhD in International Relations					
e-mail :	catts10@ymail.com					
Phone :	+7-707-9928639					
ACADEMIC COURSE PRESENTATION						
Purpose of the course	Expected Learning Outcomes (LO) As a result of studying the discipline the student will be able to			Indicators of LO achievement (ID)		
This course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of geopolitics by exploring its theoretical foundations, regional dynamics, and contemporary challenges shaping global power relations	1. To critically analyze the theoretical frameworks and apply them to contemporary geopolitical issues such as great power competition and regional conflicts.			1.1. Differentiate between the core assumptions and causal mechanisms of realism, liberalism, and constructivism when analyzing a single contemporary geopolitical event 1.2. Critique the relative explanatory power and limitations of each theoretical framework when applied to a novel case of great power competition or regional conflict		
	2. To develop an understanding of how geoeconomic, environmental, and technological factors, including trade, climate change, and cyber warfare, shape global strategic interactions and state behavior.			2.1. Demonstrate how geoeconomic, environmental, and technological factors collectively shape state strategies and global interactions, moving beyond a purely military-political understanding of power 2.2. Evaluate the challenges that geoeconomic instruments, environmental security, and cyber warfare pose to traditional theories of international relations and existing global governance structures		
	3. To gain the ability to evaluate the roles and strategies of emerging middle powers, like Kazakhstan, and major powers, such as the US, China, and Russia, in the context of shifting global and regional geopolitical dynamics.			3.1. Differentiate the distinct strategic options, constraints, and foreign policy tools available to an emerging middle power (like Kazakhstan) from those of a major power (like the US, China, or Russia) within a specific regional context 3.2. Evaluate how the strategies of emerging middle powers and major powers interact, conflict, or align within a shifting global order, assessing the implications for regional stability and power transition theories		
Prerequisites	Theories of IR					
Post-requisites	Foreign policy analysis					

Learning Resources	Literature: 1. Brzezinski, Z. (1997) The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. Basic Books. https://www.cia.gov/library/abbottabad-compound/36/36669B7894E857AC4F3445EA646BFFE1_Zbigniew_Brzezinski_-_The_Grand_ChessBoard.doc.pdf 2. Kaplan, R. D. (2013) The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate. Random House Trade Paperbacks. 3. Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014) The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. W. W. Norton & Company. 4. Frankopan, P. (2017) The Silk Roads: A New History of the World. Vintage. 5. Baylis, J, Smith, S. and Owens, P. (Ed.) (2017) The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations. Oxford University Press. https://www.abs.edu.gh/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Main-textbook-The-Globalization-of-World-Politics.pdf 6. Kagan, R. (2006) Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World, from it's Earliest Days to the Dawn of the 20th Century. Alfred A Knopf. 7. Perkins, J. (2016) The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. 8. Kaplan, R. D. (2011) Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power. Random House Trade Paperbacks. 9. Coll, S. (2004) Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001. Penguin Press HC. 10. Marshall, T. (2016) Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics. Scribner. Internet resources: Kutcher, K. C. (2024, September 23) The Russo-Ukrainian War and Mackinder's Heartland Thesis. Geopoliticalmonitor.com. https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/the-ukraine-war-and-mackinders-heartland-thesis/ Manukyan, Zhak (2025). The Strategic Role of Central Asia in a Changing World Order: Resources, Logistics, and Competition. YSU Journal of International Affairs. 1. 66-99. DOI: 10.46991/jia.2025.1.1.066. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Zhak-Manukyan/publication/393464327_THE_STRATEGIC_ROLE_OF_CENTRAL_ASIA_IN_A_CHANGING_WORLD_ORDER_RESOURCES_LOGISTICS_AND_COMPETITION/links/686bd25039c3583512077f0c/The-Strategic-Role-of-Central-Asia-in-a-Changing-World-Order-Resources-Logistics-and-Competition.pdf?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6ImxvZ2luIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIn9 Кукеева, Ф.Т., Байзакова, К.И., Усен, М.А., Усерова, К. (2023) Влияние новых геополитических условий на многовекторную внешнюю политику Казахстана. Вестник Карагандинского университета Серия «История. Философия». № 1(109)/2023, pp.94-109. DOI 10.31489/2023HPh1/94-109. https://history-philosophy-vestnik.buketov.edu.kz/index.php/history-philosophy-vestnik/article/download/589/522/1011
Academic course policy	The academic policy of the course is determined by <u>the Academic Policy and the Policy of Academic Integrity of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University</u> . Documents are available on the main page of IS Univer . Integration of science and education. The research work of students, undergraduates and doctoral students is a deepening of the educational process. It is organized directly at the departments, laboratories, scientific and design departments of the university, in student scientific and technical associations. Independent work of students at all levels of education is aimed at developing research skills and competencies based on obtaining new knowledge using modern research and information technologies. A research university teacher integrates the results of scientific activities into the topics of lectures and seminars (practical) classes, laboratory classes and into the tasks of the IWST, IWS, which are reflected in the syllabus and are responsible for the relevance of the topics of training sessions and assignments. Attendance. The deadline for each task is indicated in the calendar (schedule) for the implementation of the content of the course. Failure to meet deadlines results in loss of points. Academic honesty. Practical/laboratory classes, IWS develop the student's independence, critical thinking, and creativity. Plagiarism, forgery, the use of cheat sheets, cheating at all stages of completing tasks are unacceptable. Compliance with academic honesty during the period of theoretical training and at exams, in addition to the main policies, is regulated by <u>the "Rules for the final control" , "Instructions for the final control of the autumn / spring semester of the current academic year" , "Regulations on checking students' text documents for borrowings"</u>. Documents are available on the main page of IS Univer . Basic principles of inclusive education. The educational environment of the university is conceived as a safe place where there is always support and equal attitude from the teacher to all students and students to each other, regardless of gender, race / ethnicity, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, physical health of the student, etc. All people need the support and friendship of peers and fellow students. For all students, progress is more about what they can do than what they can't. Diversity enhances all aspects of life. All students, especially those with disabilities, can receive counseling assistance by phone / e- mail: +7707 9928639 / catts10@gmail.com Integration MOOC (massive open online course). In the case of integrating MOOC into the course, all students need to register for MOOC. The deadlines for passing MOOC modules must be strictly observed in accordance with the course study schedule. ATTENTION! The deadline for each task is indicated in the calendar (schedule) for the implementation of the content of the course, as well as in the MOOC. Failure to meet deadlines results in loss of points.

INFORMATION ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT																			
Score-rating letter system of assessment of accounting for educational achievements				Assessment Methods															
Grad e	Digital equivalent points	points, % content	Assessment according to the traditional system	Criteria-based assessment is the process of correlating actual learning outcomes with expected learning outcomes based on clearly defined criteria. Based on formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is a type of assessment that is carried out in the course of daily learning activities. It is the current measure of progress. Provides an operational relationship between the student and the teacher. It allows you to determine the capabilities of the student, identify difficulties, help achieve the best results, timely correct the educational process for the teacher. The performance of tasks, the activity of work in the classroom during lectures, seminars, practical exercises (discussions, quizzes, debates, round tables, laboratory work, etc.) are evaluated. Acquired knowledge and competencies are assessed. Summative assessment - type of assessment, which is carried out upon completion of the study of the section in accordance with the program of the course. Conducted 3-4 times per semester when performing IWS. This is the assessment of mastering the expected learning outcomes in relation to the descriptors. Allows you to determine and fix the level of mastering the course for a certain period. Learning outcomes are evaluated. <table><tr><th>Formative and summative assessment</th><th>Points % content</th></tr><tr><td>Activity at lectures</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>Work in practical classes</td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>Independent work</td><td>30</td></tr><tr><td>Design and creative activity</td><td>10</td></tr><tr><td>Final control (exam)</td><td>40</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td>100</td></tr></table>		Formative and summative assessment	Points % content	Activity at lectures	0	Work in practical classes	20	Independent work	30	Design and creative activity	10	Final control (exam)	40	TOTAL	100
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Activity at lectures	0																		
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Design and creative activity	10																		
Final control (exam)	40																		
TOTAL	100																		
A	4.0	95-100	Great																
A-	3.67	90-94																	
B+	3.33	85-89	Fine																
B	3.0	80-84																	
B-	2.67	75-79																	
C+	2.33	70-74																	
C	2.0	65-69																	
C-	1.67	60-64	Satisfactorily																
D+	1.33	55-59																	
D	1.0	50-54																	
FX	0,5	25-49	Unsatisfactory																
F	0	0-24																	
CALENDAR (SCHEDULE) FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONTENT OF THE COURSE METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING																			
A week	Topic name			Number of hours	Max. ball														
1	Lecture 1. Origins, definitions, and evolution of geopolitics			2															
	Seminar 1: Discussion (1) on “defining the indefinable: is ‘geopolitics’ a theory, a method, or simply a perspective?”; (2) on “how has technology reshaped the fundamental rules of geopolitics?”			2	7														
2	Lecture 2. Realism and geopolitics: power, security, and the state			2															
	Seminar 2: Discussion (1) on whether “the security dilemma is an inevitable and permanent feature of international politics”; (2) on “how do domestic politics, bureaucratic interests, flawed leadership, and public opinion complicate this assumption and lead to ‘irrational’ or contradictory state behavior?”; (3) on whether “military strength is still the ultimate currency of power.”			2	7														
3	Lecture 3. Liberalism and the promise of cooperation			2															
	Seminar 3: Discussion (1) on “the democratic peace theory: is it an ironclad law or a statistical correlation?”; (2) whether “international organizations (e.g., UN, WTO, NATO) are truly effective at constraining great power behavior and fostering cooperation, or do they merely serve as instruments for the powerful?”; (3) on whether “the current challenges from Russia, China, and internal populism are a fatal blow to the project of liberal cooperation, or are these merely setbacks that the system can absorb and overcome.”			2	7														
	IWSC 1. Consultation on IWS 1.																		
	IWS 1. The unfulfilled promise? International organizations in an era of authoritarian challenge				15														
4	Lecture 4. Constructivism and the role of identity, norms, and discourse			2															
	Seminar 4: Discussion (1) on whether “the ‘security dilemma’ is a physical reality or what states make of it;” (2) on “how do narratives and discourse shape geopolitical realities?”; (3) on “how does a state’s constructed self-identity directly dictate its foreign policy?”			2	7														
5	Lecture 5. Critical perspectives and emerging paradigms			2															
	Seminar 5: Discussion (1) on “what do we see when we look at world politics from the bottom up, rather than the top down?”; (2) on “how do the historical experiences of colonialism and imperialism continue to shape the power dynamics, economic structures, and international institutions of the present-day global order?”; (3) on whether “critical insights can be productively combined with mainstream theories, or do they represent fundamentally incompatible ways of seeing the world?”			2	7														

	IWSC 2. Consultation on IWS 2.		
	IWS 2. A post-colonial lens on the Ukraine war: beyond the “new Cold War” narrative		15
6	Lecture 6. Geopolitical regions and strategic chokepoints	2	
	Seminar 6: Discussion (1) on “how does control of a single geographic feature (e.g., the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca) translate into disproportionate global power?”; (2) on whether “the African continent is merely a stage for great power competition (US, China, EU, Russia) over resources and influence, or are African nations and institutions (like the AU) successfully exercising agency to shape their own geopolitical destiny”; (3) on “how has infrastructure / technology (e.g., pipelines, canals, alternative energy, cyber cables, satellite surveillance) diminished or enhanced the strategic importance of traditional geographic chokepoints?”	2	7
7	Lecture 7. Great powers and the shifting global order	2	
	Seminar 7: Discussion (1) on whether “the analogy of a ‘New Cold War’ between the US and China is a useful framework for understanding current tensions, or is it a misleading historical analogy that obscures the unique features of 21st-century geopolitics (e.g., deep economic interdependence, cyber domain, climate change)”; (2) on “how are traditional military alliances (like NATO) being tested and transformed by both internal disagreements (e.g., differing threat perceptions among members) and external challenges (e.g., cyberattacks, hybrid warfare that fall below Article 5 thresholds)”; (3) on “what are the viable strategies for middle powers (e.g. India, Brazil, Turkey, Australia, and even Kazakhstan) in an era of great power rivalry?”	2	7
	IWSC 3. Consultation on IWS 3.		
	IWS 3. The agency of the “infrastructure state”: how middle powers and regional actors are leveraging new technologies to reshape geopolitical chokepoints and navigate great power rivalry		15
8	Lecture 8. Geoeconomics: trade, sanctions, and resource competition	2	
	Seminar 8: Discussion (1) on whether “economic sanctions are a precise and effective tool of coercion or a blunt instrument that often strengthens targeted regimes, harms civilian populations, and accelerates de-dollarization and the creation of alternative financial systems”; (2) on “how has Russia used its natural gas exports to Europe as a tool for coercion and division?”; (3) on whether “the world is decoupling, de-risking, or simply reorganizing into competing geopolitical and economic blocs. What does the rise of geoeconomics tell us about the future of the liberal economic order.”	2	6
	Midterm control 1		100
9	Lecture 9. Climate change and environmental geopolitics	2	
	Seminar 9: Discussion (1) on “how does the melting of sea ice create new competition for resources (oil, gas, minerals), new shipping routes (the Northern Sea Route), and potential military flashpoints between Arctic powers (US, Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark)”; (2) on “how does climate change challenge the Westphalian notion of state sovereignty?”; (3) on whether “future conflicts will be fought over access to freshwater (e.g., Nile River disputes) and critical minerals essential for the green transition (e.g., lithium, cobalt, rare earths)? How does this change the map of strategic resources;” (4) on “how can small island developing states (SIDS), which are the most threatened by sea-level rise, exercise geopolitical agency through diplomatic platforms (e.g., the Paris Agreement), international law, and moral arguments to pressure major emitters?”	2	7
10	Lecture 10. Cyber geopolitics and information warfare	2	
	Seminar 10: Discussion (1) on “how states use disinformation, propaganda, and influence operations to sow dissent within rival nations, weaken alliances, and undermine the very concept of objective truth without ever firing a shot?”; (2) on whether “cyberspace has democratized power by giving small states and even non-state actors (e.g. hacktivist groups, terrorists) the ability to project power and threaten large countries, or it has ultimately cemented the dominance of the few states with advanced cyber capabilities”; (3) on “how will artificial intelligence and machine learning revolutionize cyber conflict, from automating defense to enabling hyper-fast, personalized disinformation campaigns? What new ethical and strategic challenges does this pose?”	2	8
	IWSC 4. Consultation on IWS 4.		
	IWS 4 The new battlefields: power, coercion, and sovereignty in the age of geoeconomics, climate crisis, and cyber contestation		15
11	Lecture 11. The Ukraine war and the return of hard power	2	
	Seminar 11: Discussion (1) on whether “Putin’s actions are a direct attempt to secure control of the “Geographical Pivot of History” and its resources, proving the theory's enduring relevance, or modern technology and economic power render this classical concept obsolete”; (2) on “how does control of the Black Sea coast and the Sea of Azov, including the strategic city of Mariupol and Odessa, factor into the geopolitical goals of both Russia and Ukraine?”; (3) on “how control over energy infrastructure and pipelines (e.g., Nord Stream, pipelines through Ukraine) has been both a cause of the conflict and a weapon within it? How has Russia	2	8

	used energy as a geopolitical tool to divide Europe, and how has the war accelerated a re-mapping of European energy security?"		
12	Lecture 12. China's rise, Indo-Pacific geopolitics, and Eurasian geopolitics	2	
	Seminar 12: Discussion (1) on whether "conflict between the reigning power (US) and the rising power (China) is inevitable"; (2) on whether "the BRI is primarily a tool for expanding Chinese strategic influence, creating economic dependencies, and securing supply routes, or it is a genuinely beneficial project of economic connectivity"; (3) on "how middle powers, including South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and even Kazakhstan, are asserting their agency? Are they aligning firmly with one bloc, pursuing sophisticated hedging strategies, or attempting to create a third pole of influence?"	2	8
	IWSC5. Consultation on IWS 5.		
	IWS 5. The return of geopolitics: hard power, hedging, and the contest for Eurasian dominance in the 21st century		15
13	Lecture 13. US foreign policy and great power competition in the Middle East	2	
	Seminar 13: Discussion (1) on "how have middle powers like Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE exploited the perceived retrenchment of the US and the engagement of other great powers to assert their own regional ambitions?"; (2) on "how does the global shift towards renewable energy reshape the strategic importance of the Middle East? How are petrostates like Saudi Arabia adapting their economic and foreign policy to prepare for a post-oil future?"	2	8
14	Lecture 14. Geopolitics of migration and demographic shifts in Europe	2	
	Seminar 14: Discussion (1) on whether "managing migration has strengthened EU institutions through collective action, or it has exposed its fundamental weaknesses and divisions?"; (2) on whether "migration is reshaping Europe's political map with the electoral success of populist, nativist parties across Europe;" (3) on "how do gender norms shape the reasons for migration, the journey itself, and integration policies in host countries?"	2	8
15	Lecture 15. Kazakhstan as an emerging middle power amidst US-Russia-China rivalries	2	
	Seminar 15: Discussion (1) on whether "Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy is a sustainable model of pragmatic sovereignty in the 21st century, or is it becoming increasingly untenable under the pressure of renewed great power competition"; (2) on "how do domestic policies like political modernization ('Second Republic'), economic diversification, and human capital investment under President Tokayev serve a geopolitical purpose?"; (3) on whether "Kazakhstan's fate to exist in a sphere of influence is dictated by its powerful neighbors (a modern "Finlandization"), or it is successfully forging a path of genuine non-aligned agency and leadership in Central Asia. What factors will most determine this outcome?"	2	8
	IWSC 6. Consultation on IWS 5.		
	IWS 6. The agency of the middle power: Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy in an era of renewed great power competition		15
Midterm control 2			100
Final control (exam)			100
TOTAL for course			100

Dean	_____	Sairambaeva Zh.T.
Chair of the Academic Committee on the Quality of Teaching and Learning	_____	Yerimpasheva A.T.
Head of Department	_____	Baikushikova G.S.
Lecturer		Hor K.W.C.