

Cours 12h – Approfondissement thématique

“Critical Approaches to Borders and Space: between Theories and Practices”

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Description of the course

This interdisciplinary course delves into the critical analysis of space and borders, exploring their socio-political construction and implications. Through a combination of Political Geography, Critical Security Studies, and International Relations theories, students will examine the intricate connections between geopolitical discourses, conflicts, and the delineation of cross-border spaces. Theoretical insights will be complemented by practical case studies, methodological approaches, and reflections on ongoing research projects. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the social construction of space, cartographic representations, and the complexities of borderlands. Students will engage in discussions on traditional perspectives, postcolonial critiques, mobilities, infrastructures, and civil society’s role in shaping contested geographies. Practical sessions will focus on research design, fieldwork methodologies, and interviewing techniques, preparing students for empirical studies in this field. Active participation, including presentations, and the submission of a final research paper will constitute the course assessment.

Schedule and location: 10.30-12.30, Salle Roncayolo (r2-05), Campus Jourdan ENS-PSE

Structure of the course

Part I: Theories

- 22/01/2025: Introduction to International Relations theory (IR), Critical Security Studies, and Postcolonial Theoretical approaches to the study of space
- 29/01/2025: Cartography, regionalism, and contested geographies: an International Political Sociology (IPS) perspective
- 05/02/2025: Borders, mobilities, and infrastructures: a Science and Technology Studies (STS) perspective

Part II: Practices

- 12/02/2025: Borderlands in practice: a perspective from area studies on South-East Asia and West Africa
- 19/02/2025: Research design and the study of space: positionality, reflexivity, and fieldwork practices with a focus on interviewing techniques
- 12/03/2025: Project showcase: students' presentations and feedback on the final paper plan

Learning outcomes

- Understand and articulate key concepts related to the social construction of space and the intersection of borders with security dynamics.
- Develop critical thinking skills by evaluating and applying theories from international relations, critical security studies, and political geography to analyse space and border areas.
- Demonstrate an understanding of methodological approaches to studying space and borders, including fieldwork practices, interviewing techniques, and reflexivity.
- Synthesize and present research findings effectively, both orally and in writing, demonstrating a clear understanding of the complexities of space and border dynamics.

Format

The students will be expected to do a reasonable amount of preparatory reading of relevant papers and case studies, which will be available online.

The reading list will be shared during the first class.

Language of the course: English

Course validation

The student will be assessed based on (i) Active class participation (including presentations); (ii) Final research paper.