



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Environmental Justice and Geopolitics of The Sea

2223-1-F7502Q039

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#### Aims

An understanding of the major challenges (acidification, oil and gas drilling, overfishing, and, in the long term, deep-sea mining, bioprospecting, and geo-engineering) posed by the deep seabed.

Understanding of the main questions raised by studying oceanic and transnational spaces in a critical geopolitics perspective.

An advanced ability to critically analyze and interrogate scholarship and discourse framing the oceans, and the geopolitical dynamics underway to conquer sea-power.

An engagement with the challenges of inter-disciplinary study and research.

#### Contents

The first part relates to the geopolitics of the deep sea and in particular it focuses on the definition, value, ownership, access, health and future state of the resource-rich and highly contested sub-surface ocean.

Then, after a short introduction to the most recent theoretical approaches to political geography and critical geopolitics, the course focuses first on the historical representation of the ocean as a "political and social space" and on how the sea can be framed by international geopolitical discourse, in relation to the processes of territorialisation, geo-power and extra-territoriality of marine spaces.

#### Detailed program

**Marco Grasso**

Part I – Geopolitics of deep oceans and environmental justice

The tragedy of the commons

Harvesting the Commons: the Oceanic frontier and the devolution of the seas

Deep oceans: potential and problems

Deep seabed governance: the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA)

The deep seabed governance: the mining regime

Claiming the commons: Sovereignty and the deep seabed

Claiming the commons: the Arctic deep seabed

Protecting the commons

Climate change and the future of the deep oceans

**Elena dell'Agnese**

Part II - Political geography of the sea\*\*

The political geography of the sea: a classical approach (maritime boundaries and Law of the Sea, transport and trade, strategy and warfare)

A (critical) political geo-graphy of the sea? thinking about the sea / representing the sea / exploiting the "geopolitical features" of the sea

Geo-graphy and the power of representation /Dividing (and naming) the ocean sea: the East Sea/ Sea of Japan issue

The territorialisation of the sea /Territorial claims and islands disputes: the Dokdo-Takeshima issue

Geographical definitions and island disputes: the Sankeku-Diaoyu issue/ climate change and vanishing islands/reefs: Okininotori: a shima, or a reef'?

A classical approach to the geopolitics of the sea/ the myth of sea power: A.T. Mahan theoretical positions / China as a maritime power and the South China Sea competition (Spratly, Paracel and more)

Sea power, sea nodes and islands as U.S. bases: The Hawai'i and Pearl Harbor, Midway and Wake, Guam

Sea power, sea nodes and islands as overseas U.S. bases/ bases of empire and lily pads: Guantanamo, Micronesia and Marshall Islands, Okinawa, Diego Garcia

LSMPAs (Large Scale Maritime Protected Areas): conservation or geopolitics?

Extra-territoriality and Cruise tourism as an example of globalization

**Prerequisites**

An adequate grasp of the perspectives of the relevant social sciences (geography, politics, economics, law, and sociology).

Capacity of working according to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.

## Teaching form

Lectures

## Textbook and teaching resource

### Marco Grasso

Part I – Geopolitics of deep oceans and environmental justice

Study material

Hannigan, J. (2016). *The Geopolitics of Deep Oceans*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

Scientific articles and policy briefs pointed indicated below. They are all accessible from within the campus; for accessing them from outside the campus see here:

<https://www.biblio.unimib.it/it/risorse/accesso-alle-risorse-remoto>

The tragedy of the commons

Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243-1248.

Breitbart, D., Levin, L. A., Oschlies, A., Grégoire, M., Chavez, F. P., Conley, D. J., ... & Jacinto, G. S. (2018). Declining oxygen in the global ocean and coastal waters. *Science*, 359(6371).

See also, The Atlantic, 'A Foreboding Similarity in Today's Oceans and a 94-Million-Year-Old Catastrophe', [<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/01/suffocating-oceans/550415/>]

Harvesting the Commons: the Oceanic frontier and the devolution of the seas

Hanningan (2016): Introduction and Chapter 1

Van Dover, C. L. (2011). Tighten regulations on deep-sea mining. *Nature*, 470(7332), 31-33.

Sielen, A. B. (2013). The devolution of the seas: the consequences of oceanic destruction. *Foreign Affairs*, 92(6), 124-132.

Diaz, R. J., and Rosenberg, R. (2008). Spreading dead zones and consequences for marine ecosystems. *Science*, 321(5891), 926-929.

Deep oceans: potential and problems

Thurber, A. R., Sweetman, A. K., Narayanaswamy, B. E., Jones, D. O. B., Ingels, J., & Hansman, R. L. (2014). Ecosystem function and services provided by the deep sea. *Biogeosciences*, 11(14), 3941-3963.

Armstrong, C. W., Foley, N. S., Tinch, R., & van den Hove, S. (2012). Services from the deep: Steps towards valuation of deep sea goods and services. *Ecosystem Services*, 2, 2-13.

Mengerink, K. J., Van Dover, C. L., Ardron, J., Baker, M., Escobar-Briones, E., Gjerde, K., ... & Sutton, T. (2014). A call for deep-ocean stewardship. *Science*, 344(6185), 696-698.

Deep seabed governance: the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Seabed Authority (ISA)

Hanningan (2016): Chapter 2

Wolfrum, R. (2008). Legitimacy of international law and the exercise of administrative functions: the Example of the International Seabed Authority, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Fisheries Organizations. *German Law Journal*, 8, 2039-2060. ONLY SECTION C, pp. 20145-2054.

Kim, B. M. (2014). Governance of the global commons: the deep seabed, the Antarctic, outer space. *KIEP World*

Economy, 4(29).

Guntrip, E. (2003). The Common Heritage of Mankind: an adequate regime for managing the deep seabed. Melb. J. Int'l L., 4, 376.

Deep seabed governance: the mining regime

Jaecel, A., Gjerde, K. M., and Ardron, J. A. (2017). Conserving the common heritage of humankind—Options for the deep-seabed mining regime. *Marine Policy*, 78, 150-157.

Boetius, A., & Haeckel, M. (2018). Mind the seafloor. *Science*, 359(6371), 34-36.

Claiming the commons: Sovereignty and the deep seabed

Hanningan (2016): Chapter 3

Werner, W., & Aalberts, T. (2016). Mastering the globe: Law, sovereignty and the commons of mankind. In *The Politics of Globality since 1945* (pp. 89-105). Routledge [A not formatted version is available here:

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/38711813/Globality\\_-\\_Mastering\\_the\\_Globe](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/38711813/Globality_-_Mastering_the_Globe_-_Aalberts_Werner_final.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1554202086&Signature=x2rNIgeJ23yfX3veUh4mCYP8xc0%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DMastering_the_Globe_Law_Sovereignty_and.pdf)

[-\\_Aalberts\\_Werner\\_final.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1554202086&Signature=x2rNIgeJ23yfX3veUh4mCYP8xc0%3D&response-content-](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/38711813/Globality_-_Mastering_the_Globe_-_Aalberts_Werner_final.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1554202086&Signature=x2rNIgeJ23yfX3veUh4mCYP8xc0%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DMastering_the_Globe_Law_Sovereignty_and.pdf)

[disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DMastering\\_the\\_Globe\\_Law\\_Sovereignty\\_and.pdf\]](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/38711813/Globality_-_Mastering_the_Globe_-_Aalberts_Werner_final.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1554202086&Signature=x2rNIgeJ23yfX3veUh4mCYP8xc0%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DMastering_the_Globe_Law_Sovereignty_and.pdf)

Claiming the commons: the Arctic deep seabed

Borgerson, S. (2013). The coming Arctic boom: as the ice melts, the region heats up. *Foreign Affairs*, 92, 76.

Berkman, P. A., & Young, O. R. (2009). Governance and environmental change in the Arctic Ocean. *Science*, 324(5925), 339-340.

Rothwell, D. R. (2013, April). The Law of the Sea and Arctic Governance. In *ASIL Annual Meeting Proceedings*, 107, pp. 272-275. American Society for International Law.

Protecting the commons

Hanningan (2016): Chapter 4

The Economists, 'The tragedy of the high seas',

[<https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21596942-new-management-needed-planets-most-important-common-resource-tragedy-high>]

Climate change and the future of the deep oceans

Hanningan (2016): Conclusions

McGee, J., Brent, K., & Burns, W. (2018). Geoengineering the oceans: an emerging frontier in international climate change governance. *Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs*, 10(1), 67-80.

**Elena dell'Agnese**

**Part II - Political geography of the sea\*\***

1. Political geography, geopolitics, critical geopolitics.

The political geography of the sea: a classical approach (maritime boundaries and Law of the Sea, transport and trade, strategy and warfare)

Glassner M.I., The new political geography of the sea, *Political Geography Quarterly*, 1986, pp. 6-8

A (critical) political geo-graphy of the sea? (thinking about the sea / representing the sea / exploiting the "geopolitical features" of the sea)

Steinberg, P.E. (1999) Navigating to Multiple Horizons: Toward a Geography of Ocean-Space, *The Professional Geographer*, 51, 3, pp. 366-375

2. Geo-graphy and the power of representation: The geo-graphy of the ocean sea

Dividing (and naming) the ocean sea

Steinberg, P.E. (1999), Lines of division, lines of connection: Stewardship in the world ocean, *Geographical Review* 89, 2, pp. 254-264

The East sea/ Sea of Japan case study

Chi Sang-Hyun, *One feature, two names and many issues: The political geographies of naming the sea between Korea and Japan*, [eastsea1994.org/data/bbsData/14912842071.pdf](http://eastsea1994.org/data/bbsData/14912842071.pdf)

3. The “political geography of the sea”: the territorialisation of the sea

Territorial claims and islands disputes (Dokdo-Takeshima)

Suk Kyoon Kim (2008), Understanding Maritime Disputes in Northeast Asia: Issues and Nature, *Int'l J. Marine & Coastal L.*, pp. 213-247

4. Geographical definitions and island disputes (Sankeku-Diaoyu)

McCormack G. (2013), Much Ado over Small Islands: The Sino-Japanese Confrontation over Senkaku/Diaoyu, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 11, 21, pp. 1-20

climate change and vanishing islands/reefs (Okininotori: a shima, or a reef?)

Yamamoto L., Esteban M. (2010), Vanishing Island States and sovereignty, *Ocean & Coastal Management* 53, pp. 1–9

5. A classical approach to the geopolitics of the sea: the myth of sea power (A.T. Mahan)

Sumida J. (1999): Alfred Thayer Mahan, geopolitician, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 22, 2-3, 39-62

China as a maritime power and the South China Sea competition

Nohara J.J. (2017) Sea power as a dominant paradigm: the rise of China's new strategic identity, *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 6, 2, pp. 210-232

6. Sea power, sea nodes and islands as U.S. bases

The Hawai'i and Pearl Harbor, Midway and Wake, Guam

Vine D., (2015) *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*, Metropolitan Books, New York, Introduction, Capp. 1 and 2

7. Sea power, sea nodes and islands as overseas U.S. bases: bases of empire and lily pads

Guantanamo, Micronesia and Marshall Islands, Okinawa, Diego Garcia

Vine D., (2015) *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*, Metropolitan Books, New York, Cap 3.

8. LSMPAs (Large Scale Maritime Protected Areas): conservation or geopolitics?

Sand P.H. (2012), 'Marine protected areas' off UK overseas territories: comparing the South Orkneys Shelf and the Chagos Archipelago, *The Geographical Journal*, 178, 3, pp. 201–207

Leenhardt P., Cazalet B., Salvat B., Claudet J., Feral F. (2013). The rise of large-scale marine protected areas: Conservation or geopolitics? *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 85, pp. 112-118

9. Extra-territoriality 2: Cruising ships: Cruise tourism as an example of globalization? (History and Development, Crews, Employment, exploitation)

## **Semester**

Second Semester

## **Assessment method**

**Marco Grasso**

## **\*\*Parte I - Geopolitics of deep oceans and environmental justice**

Paper 2000-2500 and oral discussions

**Elena dell'Agnese**

## **Parte II - Political geography of the sea**

2,000-2,500 word paper on an issue analyzed during the course and selected by the instructor.

## **Office hours**

**Marco Grasso**

by appointment, in person or online  
Room U7/3117 third floor

**Elena dell'Agnese**

by appointment, in person or online; contact the lecturer on the e-mail address

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

GENDER EQUALITY | CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION | CLIMATE ACTION | LIFE BELOW WATER | PEACE,  
JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

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