

STV4227B, Examination guidelines, Autumn 2019

The table below gives the generic guidelines for grading master-level courses in political science at the University of Oslo.

	General qualitative description	Description of grades for Master's degree courses
A	Excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a high degree of independent thinking.	The candidate shows exceptionally wide and solid knowledge of the course subject matter, and demonstrates an excellent ability to apply this knowledge in an independent manner.
B	Very good performance. The candidate demonstrates very good judgement and degree of independent thinking.	The candidate shows very wide and solid knowledge of the course subject matter, and demonstrates very good ability to apply this knowledge in an independent manner.
C	Good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates good judgement and independent thinking with respect to the most important considerations.	The candidate shows wide and solid knowledge of the course subject matter, and demonstrates good ability to apply this knowledge in an independent manner.
D	Satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates limited judgement and independent thinking.	The candidate shows variable knowledge of the course subject matter, and demonstrates some ability to apply this knowledge in an independent manner.
E	Performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates very limited judgement and independent thinking.	The candidate shows poor knowledge of the course subject matter, and demonstrates a limited ability to apply this knowledge in an independent manner.
F	Performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates a lack of both judgement and independent thinking.	The candidate shows very poor knowledge of the course subject matter, and demonstrates an inability to meet the minimum requirements set for the learning objectives of the course.

Generic guidelines specified for STV4227B – home exam/term paper – 49% of grade

The points below refer to components of the home exam, the structure may be different

- *Research question*: Clearly stated? Relevant to societal or scholarly debate? Doable within timeframe of a 5-week course?
- *Conceptual framework*: Important concepts clearly identified? Relevant theories - the most appropriate for answering the question?
- *Research design*: Identifies relevant empirical material (or competing theoretical arguments if a conceptual essay)? Indicates a plan for weighing among competing explanations or propositions?
- *Analysis*: Systematic discussion, with good connections among question, conceptual framework and empirical material? Central findings well substantiated? Discussion is balanced, including also points that might contradict the conclusion?
- *Conclusion*: Provides a clear answer to the question and an account of the main reasons for it? Points to any implications for the societal or scholarly debates that made the question relevant?

Generic guidelines specified for STV4227B – school exam 2019, 51% of grade

Responses that are good (C) or better cover the main ground outlined in the bullet points below each question. Among these, very good (B) to excellent (A) responses have wider coverage and higher precision conceptually and empirically and also demonstrate more convincingly independent thinking and understanding of the subject matter. Such demonstration typically involves well-chosen illustrations, links to different parts of the syllabus, awareness of differences of perspective or opinions among syllabus contributors, and clarity, whenever relevant, on the underlying mechanisms of phenomena examined, as well as balanced argumentation and solid substantiation of main findings.

Students are asked to respond to both sections. Section 1 counts 60% of school exam, Section 2 counts 40%

Section 1 (60%)

Respond to one (1) of the tasks below:

Either

Using cases of Arctic politics as illustrations, provide an account of the various governance tasks an international institution can perform in a particular area of international affairs. Describe the main contributions of the Arctic Council to these various tasks in the area of environmental toxics. The Arctic Council has focused its contributions on a certain subset of these governance tasks – explain why.

- The syllabus (Stokke 2011, 2013) and lectures define governance tasks in terms of certain contributions an institution can make to problem solving within an issue area. Four governance tasks are differentiated – and certain institutional features/capacities or circumstances can equip an institution well for each task:
 - Knowledge building – enhanced by features supporting credibility, legitimacy, saliency
 - Norm building – enhanced by membership fitting the social problem addressed, formal competence to make decisions binding on participants, decision rules
 - Capacity building – enhanced by technological asymmetry, willingness to pay
 - Enforcement – enhanced by institutional means for verification, review and response
- Issue area examined in syllabus and lectures with this conceptual tool include environmental monitoring, hazardous compounds, fisheries, and shipping.
- Some responses may link up to the notion of institutional niche, which here refers to the governance tasks an institution is particularly well equipped for, compared to other institutions relevant to the issue area.

- Several syllabus articles (eg. those above as well as Hoel 2014, Koivurova et al. 2015 and Young 2016) bring out that the Arctic Council has specialized in knowledge building and capacity building. Reasons include its membership (advanced states with strong scientific organizations) and a preparedness among Western participants to support research and other programme activities in Russia - in part due to a perception that institutionalized cooperation across the East-West divide also promotes broader security goals.
- In contrast, the Arctic Council is ill-equipped for regulation, the kind of norm-building that is believed to be most conducive to problem-solving, especially with malign (freerider-incentive) problems. Two important reasons: (1) The Council cannot adopt legally binding rules and (2) UNCLOS allocates regulatory competence in ways that makes for a poor fit between the Council membership and the state coverage needed in order to solve important Arctic problems. Some issues can be dealt with by fewer state – eg., petroleum issues under the jurisdiction of adjacent coastal states and fisheries resources under the jurisdiction of smaller sets of regional user states. Other issues, such as shipping and many environmental issues require the participation of many more states than the Arctic Eight.
- Since Council norms are soft (non-binding), enforcement is not relevant. Excellent responses may point out that also soft norms can be subject to institutional follow-up activities such as reporting and implementation review, as illustrated by the recommendations made in the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (examined in Soltvedt 2017).

Or

Give a geopolitical account of the effects of global warming on Arctic sea lanes of communication. Discuss geographic and institutional factors affecting the economic and military significance of these sea lanes.

- A geopolitical account, according to the syllabus (notably Tamnes/Offerdal eds. 2014, Dittmer/Sharp eds. 2014 and Østerud/Hønneland 2014) and lectures is one that (1) emphasizes the effects of geographic characteristics (e.g. location, distances, topography, climate) on international affairs; (2) places dominance and power politics centrally in such analysis, (3) and typically approaches issues holistically, eg. by seeing global rivalries as decisive for regional affairs or security relationships as decisive for other issue areas.
- Some responses may also start out from the critical variant of geopolitics (see bullet points under Section 2, question a). In itself, this can be a strength but a response that is good or better must also demonstrate rough knowledge of the bullet point above.
- The syllabus (especially Stokke 2016 but also Østerud/Hønneland 2014) and lectures have contrasted the geopolitical account with a governance (or institutionalist) account which

(1) emphasizes the effects of institutional characteristics on international affairs and (2) places problem-solving centrally in such affairs, (3) typically by examining the issue-specific problem structure. Such contrastation can be a plus but is no requirement for an excellent grade.

- **Economic significance:** Dealt with in Moe and Stokke (2019) and to some extent in Drewniak et al 2018 and in lectures: Only the Northeast Passage of some interest presently. Geographic factors include distances relative to the competing Suez route; The continued prevalence of ice in large parts of the year, implying less predictable transit time, especially problematic for time-slot sensitive container traffic; But also major concentrations of valuable natural resources (especially in Yamal), which makes destinational (as opposed to transit) Arctic shipping necessary and economically viable. Institutional factors include political risks associated with having to pass through waters over which Russia claims jurisdiction (claims that are contested in part), which under present legislation implies e.g. costly and compulsory icebreaker escort.
- **Military significance:** Discussed by Tamnes and Holtsmark (2014) and, with a focus on Norway, Heier (2019). If "sea lanes of communication" is interpreted broadly, which is fully legitimate, the central role of the Arctic for strategic deterrence, especially during the Cold War, should come into focus. Keywords are Soviet strategic submarines with intercontinental-missile borne nuclear warheads located under the ice, protected from aerial and sonar detectors (global warming will reduce that protection) and Soviet/Russian Bastion defence - including the aspirations of Russia's Northern Fleet to deny US access to Europe via the GIUK (Greenland Iceland UK) gap. See also bullet points under Section 2, question b.
- It would also be legitimate to interpret sea lanes narrowly and focus on whether the Northeast Passage can be a strategic corridor, allowing effective movement of military capabilities - either internally between Russia's Northern and Pacific fleets or involving Chinese vessels, should the Russia-China partnership develop further (discussed by Røseth 2014). In both cases, the key counterargument would be the geographical fact of the Bering Strait, which requires that Pacific-based vessels cannot enter the Passage without passing within reach of well-armed US allies, including Japan, and Alaska-based US military installations.

Section 2 (40%)

Respond to two (2) of the tasks below:

a. Give an account of the main similarities and differences between the classical and the critical strands of the scholarly tradition of geopolitics. Use aspects or cases of Arctic politics to illustrate your account.

- Main similarities highlighted in syllabus (especially *Geopolitics Reader* and Østerud/Hønneland 14) and lectures are emphasis on (1) geographic characteristics, (2) power differentials and (3) a practical orientation, aiming to influence military-strategic decisions and political discourses respectively.
- Main differences include (1) placement in IR field of overarching theories (realism vs constructivism), (2) object of analysis (state decisions in the security realm vs. mind-sets and discourses among decision makers, scholars, cultural workers, or the wider public).

b. Give a geopolitical account of the changing strategic and military significance of the Arctic during the past 80 years.

- On the characteristics of a geopolitical account, see the bullet points under Section 1, the second question.
- Tamnes and Holtmark 2014 is the main empirical source: the Arctic has historically been rather peripheral in geopolitical rivalry due to remoteness from major population centres and hostile climatic conditions. The exception is the Cold War period, see bullet points under Section 1, second question.
- Geopolitical terms used to describe the Arctic are strategic/geopolitical *corridor* (Murmansk convoys during WW2, strategic bomber routes during Cold War), strategic *flank* (i.e. important for protecting sea lanes of communication (GIUK gap) between the USA and the expected strategic front during the Cold War, Central Europe). In lectures I also pointed out the short period of time in the 1980s when the US Forward Maritime Strategy placed the Arctic so centrally that it was sometimes referred to as a geopolitical *front*.
- Some responses may also start out from the critical variant of geopolitics (see bullet points under Section 2, first question). In itself, this can be a strength but a response that is good or better must also demonstrate rough knowledge of the bullet point above.

c. Give an account of the Complex Interdependence approach to international relations and contrast it with a cold-war (or modern) geopolitical approach. According to Byers, what processes central to the concept of Complex Interdependence are softening the effects of the Ukraine crisis on Arctic cooperation?

- Based on the well-known 1977 book by Keohane and Nye, Byers (2017) delineates Complex Interdependence by contrasting it with political realism,
 - State policies not arranged in stable hierarchies with security always on top
 - Actor complexity: States but also IGOs, other international institutions, science networks, NGOs and business organizations
 - Low fungability of military capabilities to other areas of international relations
- On the characteristics of a geopolitical account, see the bullet points under Section 1, the second question.

- Byer's article structures the analysis of how the Ukraine crisis has affected Arctic cooperation by the following processes:
 - Institutions support creation and maintenance of transnational networks
 - They promote problem-solving through international agenda setting
 - They insulate of issue-specific cooperation
- Issue areas examined in Byer's article and also compatibly elsewhere in the syllabus include scientific research, indigenous peoples issues, environmental monitoring, hazardous compounds, fisheries, shipping.