



POLI 415-L01: Politics through Film

Fall 2018

Wednesdays 3:00-5:45 | SS 541

Prerequisite: at least one half course in political science

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Film is a uniquely powerful medium through which to experience, study, and even shape politics. This course will examine how film can shed light on fundamental political problems. It is not a survey course: we will make no attempt to study all aspects of politics through film, nor will we study all possible “political” films. Instead, we will study six films in depth, guided by a simple and straightforward question: what can we learn about politics through film that we don’t already know through standard texts that we otherwise use? We will compare and contrast each film against exemplary texts or notions about politics. In this sense, the course is experimental and exploratory. We will present what we take to be some possible ways to answer this question, but the best student work in the course will *critically engage and build on this material*.

By the end of this course, if you do your part through careful study, you will not only strengthen your analytical and critical thinking abilities, but also develop a foundation for making sense of political questions through the non-traditional medium of film.

The course will run on a bi-weekly schedule: we will present a film one week, discuss it briefly in class, online via D2L, and then in class the following week. *You must come to class prepared to discuss both film and texts.*

Evaluation

1. Bi-weekly blog discussion on D2L: Every two weeks you will be required to post at least one blog entry of about 500 words on that week's film and readings. Each entry should aim to critically assess the film in light of the assigned reading, from the perspective of the core aim of the course: What *general* aspect of politics does the film shed light on, above and beyond the particular story it tells? How successfully does it do so? How do the readings that week (or other weeks) help us understand the film, and/or vice-versa?

This post will be due by noon on the Tuesday of the film discussion weeks: i.e. September 25, October 9, October 23, November 6, November 20, and December 4. We will then take up the themes in class the following day. In your blog entry, you are encouraged to comment on issues raised in class discussion, and on others' blog entries from that or prior weeks.

(6 x 8% each = 48%)

2. Term paper: you are required to write a term paper of 2,500 – 3,500 words, due via D2L dropbox one week after the last day of class (December 12). Although the paper may consider material from outside the syllabus, it should build on and explore the themes in the course in more depth: i.e. what can we learn about politics through film that we don't already know otherwise? You are encouraged to build on the discussions in class and in the blog entries. You are also strongly encouraged to discuss the topic of your paper with the instructors prior to submission. **(35%)**

It should be obvious and go without saying in a university setting, but *the quality of the writing matters*. It certainly does in this course, for both the blog entries and the term paper. In fact, it matters for anything you do, in this class and elsewhere, including blogs, email, letters, and papers. The better you can express yourself in writing, the more seriously people will take you.

3. Participation: This includes attendance as well as the *quantity and quality* of your contributions to class discussions. Someone who makes a small number of pertinent or relevant comments in class will receive a higher grade than someone else who makes more frequent but less pertinent or relevant remarks. At the same time, making more frequent valuable contributions will earn you a higher mark than less frequent participation. Participation in the blog discussions, above and beyond the minimum 500 word bi-weekly requirement, will also count. **(17%)**

Late papers will be penalized at 10% of the final grade per day, late blog entries at 10% per hour.

Grading criteria

A- (80-84%) → A (85-89%) → A+ (90%-100%)

Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; strong capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base. Work at this level will also be clearly written, with no spelling or grammar faults.

B- (70-73%) → B (74-76%) → B+ (77-79%)

Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature. Work at this level will generally be clearly written, containing at most a few, if any, spelling or grammar faults.

D (50-54%) → D+ (55-59%) → C- (60-62%) → C (63-66%) → C+ (67-69%)

Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour. Work at this level is sometimes or often unclear, and contains from some to many spelling and/or grammar problems.

F (0-49%)

Inadequate performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature. Work at this level is usually poorly written, with numerous spelling and grammar problems.

Laptops in class

As in a movie theatre, the accepted norm is that cellphones should be turned off. That applies throughout: for the screenings, lectures, and discussions. What to do about laptops in class has been the subject of some debate. Like cellphones, they should also be closed during film screenings. In recent years professors in many universities have also decided to ban them altogether from class.¹ There are excellent reasons for doing so, but we are opting for something just short of that: *a warning and a code of conduct*.

The warning is that you should keep in mind that a growing body of evidence suggests that it's far more effective to take notes by hand: that "even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing".² Even more seriously, evidence also suggests that laptops in class have an effect similar to second-hand smoke: they not only hurt you, the user, but also those around you, even if they're not using one.³ Our very strong suggestion is that you close the laptop,

¹ E.g. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/30/this-year-im-resolving-to-ban-laptops-from-my-classroom/>; <https://medium.com/@cshirky/why-i-just-asked-my-students-to-put-their-laptops-away-7f5f7c50f368>.

² <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/25/6/1159>

³ <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254?np=y>

pick up a pen and paper, and engage in and pay full attention to the class. You and those around you will do much better if you listen actively and write sparingly, than if you try to transcribe everything, or worse, get distracted by email, social media, the web, etc.

The code of conduct is that if you do choose to use a laptop, you hereby agree to do so with courtesy to others and consideration for the aims of the course. That means using the laptop strictly for the purpose of taking notes or consulting course-related material, and not for checking email or social media, surfing the web, or any other purpose that distracts from the class. It's not a small class, but we will notice—and get annoyed by—any distractions.

Reading and writing skills⁴

Learning an academic discipline such as political science requires immersing yourself in and critically engaging a substantial body of work. That requires reading and writing.

As you manage the reading for this course, you are likely to find that there is little correlation between effort and outcome. It's possible to spend hours reading something without "getting it," and equally possible to spend very little time reading something else and getting quickly to the heart of it. Reading is not an ability that either comes naturally or does not – it's a skill that has to be learned. *Figure out the heart of the argument before you read deeply.* When you know the article's centre of gravity, you read more efficiently. *Read actively.* Be sceptical, approach the text with questions, and try to answer these for yourself as you make your way through it. The more actively you read, the more you will retain, and the easier it will be to write about it.

When you do so, keep in mind that, as noted above, it's not only *what* you write that matters, but also *how* you write it. Even in an otherwise informal medium such as a blog discussion, crisp, clear, effective writing counts. The suggestions in these articles should help:

<http://chronicle.com/article/Why-Academics-Writing-Stinks/148989/>
<https://theamericanscholar.org/writing-english-as-a-second-language/>

Course content

We will be watching films that explore sensitive material, which some people may find offensive or difficult to watch. Because the course places so much emphasis on film as a powerful medium through which to engage aesthetically and even emotionally, sensitive material is unavoidable. If you find it difficult to watch or discuss such content, this is probably not the right class for you.

⁴ Adapted from K. Chandra and D. Woodruff, MIT.

Schedule⁵September 12 **Introduction**

- David Bordwell, “Studying Cinema”:
<http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/studying.php>
- Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”; <http://shifter-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Sontag-Against-Interpretation.pdf>

September 19 ***The Lives of Others***

September 26

- Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Johns Hopkins, 1999), “Modern Nondemocratic Regimes,” pp. 38-54. (D2L)
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Chapter 3 “Panopticism,”:
<http://solomon.soth.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/cgi-bin/asp/phil/soth/documentidx.pl?sourceid=S10021788>
- Albert Hirschman, “Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History,” *World Politics* 45:2 (January 1993), pp. 173-202.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/stable/2950657>
- Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and the New Technologies of Power* (Verso, 2017), Ch. 5 “Foucault’s Dilemma”. (D2L)

October 3 ***The Hawks and the Sparrows***

October 10

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, “The Cinema of Poetry” (1965), in Bill Nichols, ed. *Movies and Methods*. Vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 542-558. (D2L)
- P. Adams Sitney, *Vital Crisis in Italian Cinema: Iconography, Stylistics, Politics* (University of Texas Press, 1995); Introduction, and Chapter VIII (“New Wave Neorealism: Pasolini, Olmi, Rosi”) (eBook in Library)
- P. Adams Sitney, *The Cinema of Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2014), Chapter I (Pier Paolo Pasolini and “The Cinema of ‘Poetry’”) (D2L)

October 17 ***House in the Fields***

⁵ Schedule may be subject to change.

- October 24
- “Arab Cinema through a Narrow Frame: a Conversation with Tala Hadid”, *Senses of Cinema*, March 2017, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2017/movements-filmmaker-interviews/a-conversation-with-tala-hadid/>
 - <http://berlinfilmjournal.com/2017/02/berlinale-2017-review-house-fields-by-tala-hadid/>
 - http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/entertainment/2017/03/30/hadids-film-on-berber-comunity-wins-milan-festival_e8e5ec2d-d88f-4eea-b3a9-6496632a6933.html
 - http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/entertainment/2017/03/30/hadids-film-on-berber-comunity-wins-milan-festival_e8e5ec2d-d88f-4eea-b3a9-6496632a6933.html
 - Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), Chapters I “Beyond the Movement-Image”, II “Recapitulation of Images and Signs”, and VII “Thought and Cinema”. (eBook in Library)

October 31 ***Ixcanul***

- November 7
- Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21:2-3, March-May 2007, pp. 168-178; <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1080/09502380601164353>
 - Prudence M. Rice, “Time, Memory, and Resilience among the Maya,” in *Millenary Maya Societies: Past Crises and Resilience*, edited by M.-Charlotte Arnauld and Alain Breton (2013), pp. 10-21; http://www.mesoweb.com/publications/MMS/1_Rice.pdf
 - Irma Otzoy, “Indigenous Law and Gender Dialogues,” in Pedro Pitarch et al., eds. *Human Rights in the Maya Region: Global Politics, Cultural Contentions, and Moral Engagements* (Duke, 2008), Ch. 7, pp. 171-186. (D2L)
 - Freya Schiwy, “Film, Indigenous Video, and the Lettered City’s Visual Economy,” in Sara Castro-Klaren, ed. *A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture* (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), Chapter 38, pp. 647-664. (D2L)

November 14 **Reading week – no class**

The Godfather, Part II

You may watch this on your own, but we will also hold a special screening in class—date and place TBC.

- November 21
- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* Chapters I, II, VI-IX, XV-XIX, XXI-XXV, e.g.: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm>; <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince.pdf>; also <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3314652>; <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary-ebooks/reader.action?ppg=5&docID=422405&tm=1533325539637>
 - Luigi Graziano, "Patron-Client Relationships in Southern Italy," *European Journal of Political Research* 1 (1973), 3-34; <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1973.tb01281.x>
 - Robert D. Putnam, "Social Capital and Public Affairs," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 47:8 (May, 1994), pp. 5-19; <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/stable/3824796>
 - Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime": <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/51028/256.pdf>
- November 28 **Golden Door**
- December 5
- Peter Carravetta, *After Identity. Migration, Critique, Italian American Culture* (New York: Bordighera Press, 2017), Introduction (pp. 3-37) and Part One: Chapters I (pp. 41-78), II (pp. 79-106), and III (pp.107-139). (eBook via Library)
 - Simonetta Milli Konewko, "Emanuele Crialesese's *Nuovomondo* and the Triumph of Mediterranean Heritage", *Athens Journal of Humanities and Arts* (2015) 2:4, pp. 211-219: <http://www.athensjournals.gr/humanities/2015-2-4-1-Konewko.pdf>
- December 12 Term paper due

Important policies and information

Absence From a Mid-term Examination:

Students who are absent from a scheduled term test or quiz for legitimate reasons (e.g. illness with the appropriate documentation) are responsible for contacting the instructor via email within 48 hours of the missed test to discuss alternative arrangements. A copy of this email may be requested as proof of the attempt to contact the instructor. Any student who fails to do so forfeits the right to a makeup test.

Deferral of a Final Examination:

Deferral of a final examination can be granted for reasons of illness, domestic affliction, and unforeseen circumstances, as well as to those with three (3) final exams scheduled within a 24-hour period. Deferred final exams will not be granted to those who sit the exam, who have made travel arrangements that conflict with their exam, or who have misread the examination timetable. The decision to allow a deferred final exam rests not with the instructor but with Enrolment Services. Instructors should, however, be notified if you will be absent during the examination. The Application for Deferred Final Exam, deadlines, requirements and submission instructions can be found on the Enrolment Services website at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>.

Appeals:

If a student has a concern about the course or a grade they have been assigned, they must first discuss their concerns with the instructor. If this does not resolve the matter, the student then proceed with an academic appeal. The first step in an academic appeal is to set up a meeting with the Department Head. Appeals must be requested within 15 days of receipt of the graded assignment.

University Regulations:

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the University policies found in the Academic Regulations sections of the Calendar at www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>

Plagiarism And Other Forms Of Academic Misconduct:

Academic misconduct in any form (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) is a serious academic offence that can lead to disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the University. Students are expected to be familiar with the standards surrounding academic honesty; these can be found in the University of Calgary calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>. Such offences will be taken seriously and reported immediately, as required by Faculty of Arts policy.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP):

FOIP legislation requires that instructors maintain the confidentiality of student information. In practice, this means that student assignment and tests cannot be left for collection in any public place without the consent of the student. It also means that grades cannot be distributed via email. Final exams are kept by instructors but can be viewed by contacting them or the main office in the Department of Political Science. Any uncollected assignments and tests meant to be returned will be destroyed after six months from the end of term; final examinations are destroyed after one year.

Evacuation Assembly Points:

In the event of an emergency evacuation from class, students are required to gather in designated assembly points. Please check the list found at www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints and note the assembly point nearest to your classroom.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

For program planning and advice, visit the Arts Students' Centre in Social Sciences 102, call 403-220-3580 or email artsads@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit arts.ucalgary.ca/advising for program assistance.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit their office in the MacKimmie Library Block.

Important Contact Information:

Campus Security and Safewalk (24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year)
Phone: 403-220-5333

Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Students' Union Representatives
Phone: 403-220-6551
Email: arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca
Students' Union URL: www.su.ucalgary.ca

Graduate Students' Association
Phone: 403-220-5997
Email: ask@gsa.ucalgary.ca
URL: www.ucalgary.ca/gsa

Student Ombudsman
Phone: 403-220-6420
Email: ombuds@ucalgary.ca

Campus Mental Health Resources:

SU Wellness Centre: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>
Campus Mental Health Strategy: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>