

Politics & 20th Century Literature
(or Seeing Politics Through the Magic of Film)
PSC 409G
Summer 2007 (Term 1) Syllabus

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Introduction

For over 100 years, film has helped to shape and change American culture while opening debates about who we are as Americans and how we see the world. Movies like *JFK* and *All The President's Men* made us question our government, *Dr. Strangelove* made us question the sanity of nuclear war, and *The Exorcist* made us question our deepest, most fundamental beliefs while just scaring the hell out of us. Movies like *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Harry Potter* shape our imaginations while movies like *Gigli* made us question what would possess us to spend \$8.50 to see this trash. In short, movies and film open our minds, our imaginations, and our emotions.

So, what is the link between film and politics? As students of political science, we are fundamentally interested in how power shapes our social relations. No other medium conveys messages of power to us in such an obvious way, but yet in such a subtle way. We do not often think of the imagery and messages conveyed to us by movies (unless you go to the theater with one of those annoying people who analyze every bit of dialogue and comments about how good or bad the cinematography was in the film; then you are usually just moved to a strong form of power – violence), but much of what we see at the movies can be viewed through the lens of power. Our objective this semester is to see how our culture reflects the power relationships we have come to see in our society and in the world.

Evaluation Components

First a few notes:

Late Papers & Incompletes

A very simple, straightforward policy: I don't accept late papers without prior approval from me or some type of medical documentation. Late papers will be downgraded one full grade per day

(an “A” goes to a “B”). I also will not issue incompletes except under the most extraordinary of circumstances.

Special Circumstances

Students who need to have special arrangements for exams, class lectures or anything associated with the class should see me at the beginning of the semester as soon as possible so that we can make those arrangements as needed. Students with concerns in general should see me at the beginning of class.

Note: I realize that everybody has special circumstances at home, at work, etc. You should make the decision at the beginning of this class whether you can commit the time and energy needed for this class. I am not in the position and should not be placed in the position of making “special exceptions” for people. It is unfair to the rest of the class and it puts you and me in an awkward situation.

Books

None – articles that suit our needs are assigned and available via WebCT.

Warning

Some of the movies we will see this semester contain graphic violence, adult situations, and adult language. If this type of imagery and language offends you, please withdraw from this class.

Class Participation – 40%

A major part of this class will be the input of students both individually and in groups. Students are allowed to miss 2 classes. For each additional class you miss, you will lose a full grade off your base participation grade. For instance, if you start with a base participation grade of “B” and you have three absences, you will go to a “C”. We only meet for three times a week, which means that if you miss 3 classes, you have effectively missed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the classes for the semester.

Mid-Semester & Final Exam (30% each)

The Agenda

Important Dates:

June 13 – grade change to S/U deadline

June 22 – Last day to drop First Term class for a “W”

July 4 – Independence Day – No Class

July 13 – End of Class

Theme One: Power, Politics, and Personal Ambition: From Hollywood to Washington

Readings: Due June 14

Mark Van Vugt, "Evolutionary Origins of Leadership and Followership," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2006), 354-371.

Edwin P. Hollander and Lynn R. Offerman, "Power and Leadership in Organizations," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1990), 179-189.

June 12: Course Introduction, Lecture, and Movie: *Swimming with Sharks*

June 13: Movie: *Primary Colors*

June 14: Movie: *Barbarians at the Gate*, discussion session

Theme Two: Patrimonialism, Cronyism, and Corruption

Readings: Due June 19

Victor T. Le Vine, "African Patrimonial Regimes in Comparative Perspective," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4. (Dec., 1980), pp. 657-673.

Rene Lemarchand and Keith Legg. "Political Clientelism and Development: A Preliminary Analysis," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2. (Jan., 1972), pp. 149-178.

June 19: Discussion, Lecture

June 20: Movie: *The Godfather*

June 21: Movie: *All the President's Men*, discussion

Theme Three: Non-Violent Protest: Power without the Gun

Readings: Due: June 26

Stephen Zunes, "The Role of Non-Violent Action in the Downfall of Apartheid," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1. (Mar., 1999), pp. 137-169.

Bo Wirmark, "Nonviolent Methods and the American Civil Rights Movement 1955-1965," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 11, No. 2. (1974), pp. 115-132.

June 26: Lecture, Movie: *Mississippi Burning*

June 27: Movie: *Gandhi* (pt. 1), discussion

June 28: Movie: *Gandhi* (pt. 2), discussion

Theme Four: War and Asymmetrical Conflict: War of the Mighty, War of the Weak

Readings: Due July 3

David C. Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3. (Sep., 1984), pp. 658-677.

David C. Rapoport, "Messianic Sanctions for Terror," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (Jan., 1988), pp. 195-213.

Readings: Due July 10

Laurence E. Grinter, "How They Lost: Doctrines, Strategies and Outcomes of the Vietnam War," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 12. (Dec., 1975), pp. 1114-1132.

Dominick Johnson and Dominick Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), Chapter 6.

Brian Martin, "Critique of Nuclear Extinction," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 19, No. 4. (1982), pp. 287-300.

July 3: Lecture, Discussion

July 4: No Class

July 5: Movie: *The Battle of Algiers*, discussion

July 10: Movie: *The Ten Commandments*

July 11: Movie: *Dr. Strangelove*

July 12: Movie: *M*A*S*H*