

Film and Politics
POLS 345
Winterim, 2006

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Disclaimer--PLEASE READ! Some of the movies we will watch in this class contain images and language that some people may find offensive. If you believe that this will present a serious problem for you, please withdraw from the class. There is no way to provide you with a complete set of alternative movies to avoid these problems, and I do not want anyone in the class to feel they are being pressured to view or hear things that violate their personal or religious principles. Neither the instructor nor the university is any way responsible for your reactions to the films in the course, nor do the films in any way reflect the views of the instructor or the university.

Course Description: This course will examine films that present both overt and/or implicit political messages. The course will focus on the symbolism, iconography, and cultural references within popular films. Each film will be examined both within a historical context and as an element in a broader framework of political communication. In addition, we will discuss the cinematic techniques used to evoke political responses from the audience.

Students will be encouraged to participate in a thoughtful discourse focusing on popular entertainment's influence as a source of political information. Although I will lecture on occasion to provide historical background and other necessary information, the focus of the class will be on open discussion among the students.

Course Requirements: There are two basic requirements for the course. The first requirement is a set of reaction papers. Each student will complete four (4) 2-3 page reaction papers about the films viewed in class. Before each film, I will hand out a list of questions, symbolic images, and other needed information. The student can choose to do any films within the course, although I strongly recommend that students do NOT wait until the end and try to do all of them at once. The reaction papers are due **NO MORE** than two class days after we finish discussing the film in class.

The second requirement has two options. You **MUST** decide which option you will use by the end of the first week of the course.

Option 1 is to write a research paper (9-12 pages) conducting a more in-depth analysis of the political content of 2 or more films of your choice. I will provide a list of possible films to use, although you may use films not on the list with my approval. The paper is due on January 20th at the beginning of class.

Option 2 is to write a shorter paper (4-6 pages) on a single film **AND** complete a take-home final examination. This exam will be handed out on January 19th and will be due back on the 20th at the beginning of class. The exam will focus on the broad theoretical and thematic issues on the course. If you choose this option, your exam will count for 20% of your grade and your paper will be 20% of your grade.

Reaction Papers	40%
In-Class Discussion	20%
Final Exam/Research Paper	40%

Texts: We will use two books in the course, [A Short Guide To Writing About Film](#), by Timothy Corrigan; and [Film: An Introduction](#), by William Phillips. The Corrigan book is primarily a resource for you to use in writing your papers--we will only have assignments from the first few chapters. The Phillips book is a primer on how films are made and a discussion of the various genres in film to help you put the films we watch in context. The Phillips book also has a helpful chronology and glossary in the back.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class, but no formal attendance will be taken. Be warned, a large portion of your grade is based on in-class participation. Consistent failure to attend will lower your grade dramatically. You are responsible for ALL information covered in lecture, including changes in the reading assignments, changes in test dates, and in-class homework assignments.

Students With Disabilities: Any student who has a disability that will in any way impede his or her completion of the course needs to speak to me as soon as possible about alternative arrangements. All possible arrangements will be made to accommodate students in need of assistance.

Cheating and Plagiarism: Do it and you fail the course. This should seem obvious, but I want it clear--if I catch you, you are done. Cheating is defined as attempting to improve your grade through any method considered unethical by the university, including copying another student's test, bringing crib sheets for exams, writing notes on your hands or on the brim of your baseball cap, etc.

Plagiarism is defined as claiming any other author's intellectual work as your own. This can include copying parts of another written work and not giving the original author credit for it; using summaries of work written by others and claiming it as your own, etc. Plagiarism is NOT limited to copying another author's work word-for-word. If you use the author's IDEAS without giving the author credit for them, you are just as guilty as if you had Xeroxed the statements and put yourself down as author.

Late Work: All late work will be docked one letter grade for every hour or fraction thereof it is late. You have a ten (10) minute grace period at the beginning of each class, and anything handed in after that time will be counted as late and docked appropriately.

Course Schedule
Readings; Cor--Corrigan, PP—Projecting Politics

Date	Topic	Film	Readings
1/3	Introductions	None	Cor. Ch. 1-3
1/4	The Bully Pulpit	<i>Birth of a Nation</i> *	PP. Ch. 1
1/5		Discussion of <i>Birth</i>	PP. Ch. 2-4
1/6	Defining Culture	<i>Mr. Smith Goes To Washington</i>	PP. Ch 5
1/7		Disc. Of <i>Mr. Smith</i>	
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1/9		<i>Primary Colors</i>	PP. Ch. 6
1/10		Discussion of <i>Primary Colors</i>	
1/11	World Affairs	<i>Syriana</i> @ Oakwood Mall	
1/12		<i>Failsafe</i> & Disc.	PP. Ch. 7-8
1/13		<i>Dr. Strangelove</i> & Disc.	
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1/16		NO CLASS—MLK JR. DAY	
1/17	Deconstruction	<i>JFK</i> *	Cor Ch. 4
1/18		Discussion of <i>JFK</i>	PP. Ch. 9-11
1/19		<i>Wag The Dog</i> & Disc.	
1/20	***PAPERS DUE***	***FINAL EXAMS DUE***	

PLEASE NOTE: Those dates marked with an asterisk (*) are those most likely to run over the allocated class time--please plan accordingly.

The readings listed are for your scheduling purposes. We will not discuss the content of the readings directly in class, although you will be expected to understand the material and the concepts from the chapters will be incorporated throughout the in-class discussion.

STANDARDS FOR GRADING

Geoff Peterson

A: designates work of extra-ordinarily high quality; reflects thorough and comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; arguments are clearly organized with supporting ideas.

B: designates work of high quality; reflects a clearly organized but less than comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; presents organized arguments that are supported by ideas.

C: Designates work which meets the minimal requirements of the assignment; written work reflects adequate organization and development of ideas, but arguments are communicated in a superficial or simplistic manner.

D: Designates work of poor quality which meets the minimum requirements of the assignment, but demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, and spelling; treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic; may indicate that the student has not read assignments thoroughly.

F: Designates work of poor quality that does not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment or task; fails to reflect an understanding of the issues at hand; fails to present organized arguments or fails to adequately support arguments with ideas; or which is not handed in on time.

Possible Films For The Research Paper

1984
2001: A Space Odyssey
A Clockwork Orange
Air Force One
All The President's Men
American President, The
Amistad
Apocalypse Now
Batman
Being There
Blade Runner
Bob Roberts
Born on the 4th of July
Bowling for Columbine
Boys From Brazil
Brazil
Bulworth
Candidate, The
Casablanca
Citizen Kane
China Syndrome, The
Dances With Wolves
Day the Earth Stood Still, The
Deer Hunter, The
Dick!
Distinguished Gentleman, The
Dog Day Afternoon
Duck Soup
Dune
Empire Strikes Back, The
Erin Brockovich
Enemy of the State
From Russia With Love
Full Metal Jacket
Galipolli
Goldeneye
Good Morning, Vietnam
Great Dictator, The
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?
Hunt for Red October, The
Independence Day
Insider, The
Invasion of the Body Snatchers
Ipcress File, The
Judgement at Nuremberg
Killing Fields, The
Lawrence of Arabia
Lord of The Rings, The (Series)
Love Divided, A
Malcolm X
Man Who Would Be King, The
Manchurian Candidate, The
Matrix, The
Metropolis
Milagro Beanfield War, The
Mississippi Burning
Modern Times
Mouse that Roared, The
Network
Nixon
Ostermann Weekend, The
Pelican Brief, The
Platoon
Pleasantville
Reefer Madness
Remains of the Day, The
Return of the Jedi
Roger & Me
Russia House, The
Schindler's List
Skins
Smoke Signals
Sleeper
Spy Who Came In From The Cold, The
Spy Who Loved Me, The
Star Trek IV
Star Trek VI
Star Trek: Insurrection
Star Wars
Sum Of All Fears
Three Days of the Condor
Third Man, The
Thirteen Days
Triumph of the Will
Truman
Truman Show, The
Two Towers, The
War Games
War Room, The
X-Men
Zeli