

POLITICAL SCIENCE 4920: POLITICS IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Wednesdays, 3:40 p.m. to 6:20 p.m.

Stillman Hall 0235

Fall 2014

Professor Vladimir Kogan

Office: Derby Hall 2004

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 9 to 11 a.m., and by appointment

E-mail: kogan.18@osu.edu

Course Description:

Political films and television shows often convey an understanding of the political world. In some cases, how films portray the political process also influences society's attitudes toward politicians and government institutions. While political films can provide an accurate depiction of the world, they can also stray substantially from political reality. In this course, students will compare the portrayal of politics in films and television to the reality as understood through political science. Our goal is not to appraise the artistic merit of the films but rather evaluate how faithfully they represent the political process. Where significant discrepancies exist, we will consider the implications of this cinematic representation for the workings of democracy. We will also use films as a tool for surveying and improving our understanding of a broad array of topics from the political science literature, including legislative behavior, elections, presidential politics, interest-group influence, and war.

This course requires the active participation of the students. There will be very little lecture. Instead, the class will consist of two parts each week. Starting the third week, during the first half of class, we will watch a political film (films are listed below by week). During the second half of class, we will discuss the film in the context of the assigned readings. A large part of your grade (see below) is based on your participation in these discussions. The success of the class absolutely depends on the contribution of the students. Be prepared to show up and say smart things. *Note: This class is not part of the Film Studies major and does not satisfy any course requirements for that program.*

Course Goals:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will have learned about:

1. Processes, theories, and empirical regularities of political institutions and political behavior.
2. How to apply theoretical concepts from political science to the discussion of political films, making connections between the literature and real-world political events.
3. How to evaluate the social and political impact of a film.
4. How to apply contemporary social science research methods to conduct rigorous research on political phenomena.

Required Materials:

1. *All required readings are posted on Carmen*
2. *Students are required to bring a clicker (Turning Technologies) to class daily*
Clickers can be rented or purchased at the OSU bookstore. You can purchase the cheapest model available. Note: The software-only “Response Ware” *will not* work in this class. Instructions for linking a clicker to your student account are posted on Carmen.

Assignments:

1. **Class Participation (15% of Overall Grade)**
Students can earn participation points by using their clickers to respond to questions incorporated into the course lecture and by taking part in class discussions.
2. **Daily Reading Quiz (20% of Overall Grade)**
Students are required to complete the assigned readings prior to the start of class. In the beginning of each class period, students will use the clickers to complete a short quiz testing basic comprehension and recall of major facts from the readings assigned for that day (i.e., there will be no trick questions). *Quizzes missed due to absences cannot be made up, but the lowest four quiz scores will be dropped prior to the calculation of the final grades.*
3. **Midterm (20% of Overall Grade)**
The midterm will consist of two parts. Two take-home essay questions will be handed out in class and will be due a week later. Students will also complete an in-class multiple choice exam using their clickers. Students will have previously seen at least half of the multiple choice questions during regular lecture (see Participation and Attendance and Daily Reading Quiz sections above).
4. **Final Paper (25% of Overall Grade)**
For this assignment, students will choose a political film (a list of potential films will be distributed in class) and review leading political science research on the topics relevant to the subject or theme of the movie. The final product will consist of an 8- to 10-page paper that compares and contrasts the portrayal in the film to the political reality as understood through empirical political science research.
5. **Final Exam (20% of Overall Grade)**
The final exam will have the same format as the midterm.

******A copy of all written assignments and exam essay questions must be uploaded to the appropriate dropbox on Carmen. Assignments will be considered late and assessed a late penalty unless they are uploaded by the beginning of the class when they are due.***

Academic Integrity:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Students are required to upload their papers and written exams to Carmen, which utilizes Turnitin.com for plagiarism detection. This online service analyzes student submissions for plagiarism from published or online sources and from other students (including students who have taken the course in earlier years). To avoid plagiarism charges, students must cite all sources from which they get their information and use quotation marks when quoting directly from these sources. **Students are responsible for knowing how to correctly cite their sources; ignorance about proper citation standards will not be accepted as an excuse for plagiarism.**

Late and Make-Up Policy:

All assignments and write-ups are due at the beginning of class. Assignments submitted more than 15 minutes after the class has begun will be assessed a 5 percent late penalty, and assignments submitted after the class has ended will be assessed a 10 percent penalty. There will be an additional 10 percent penalty for each subsequent day that the assignment is late. *No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.*

Make-up exams and extensions will be approved only in the event of a medical or family emergency or a University-sanctioned event. Extensions must be arranged ahead of time. You must have documentation of your emergency (for example, a doctor’s note) to be able to take a make-up exam or get an extension. After you provide this documentation, a decision will be made regarding whether and when you may take a make-up exam/get an extension. Similarly, any request for an incomplete must be accompanied by written medical documentation.

Grade Appeals:

You have one week from when the exams and assignments are returned to appeal the grade. You must submit a typed, double-spaced statement explaining why you are requesting a grade appeal and justify it with evidence from your paper, exam, readings, lectures, and answer keys. If you choose to appeal your grade, I reserve the right to decrease the existing grade if I determine that the original grade was erroneously high.

Accommodations for Disabled Students:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Grading Policy (Rule 3335-7-21):**A, A-**

The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives of the course in an excellent manner. The student's performance was judged to be in this range of high quality based upon a comparison with other students in the course, and/or with students who have taken the course previously, and/or the instructor's personal expectations relative to the stated objectives of the course, based on the instructor's experience and expertise.

B+, B, B-

The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives of the course in an above-average manner. The student's performance was judged to be in this range of above-average quality based upon a comparison with other students in the course, and/or with students who have taken the course previously, and/or the instructor's personal expectations relative to the stated objectives of the course, based on the instructor's experience and expertise.

C+, C, C-

The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives of the course in an average manner. The student's performance was judged to be in this range of average quality based upon a comparison with other students in the course, and/or with students who have taken the course previously, and/or the instructor's personal expectations relative to the stated objectives of the course, based on the instructor's experience and expertise.

D+, D

The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives of the course in a low but acceptable manner. The student's performance was judged to be in this range of below average but acceptable quality based upon a comparison with other students in the course, and/or with students who have taken the course previously, and/or the instructor's personal expectations relative to the stated objectives of the course, based on the instructor's experience and expertise.

E

The instructor judged the student not to have satisfied the stated objectives of the course. Credit for a course in which the mark of "E" has been received can be obtained only by repeating and passing the course in class. (See rules 3335-7-23 to 3335-7-28 of the Administrative Code.)

Course Overview and Schedule:**Week 1: Introduction and Course Overview****Week 2: Politics in Film***Reading:*

- Christensen, Terry, *Reel Politics: American Political Movies from Birth of a Nation to Platoon* (New York: Basic Blackwell, 1987): Preface.
- Giglio, Ernest, *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film & Politics, Second Edition* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2007): Chapter 1.

Week 3: **Elections I**

Film: “Primary Colors” (1998)

Reading:

- Sides, John and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Random, or Romney?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013): Chapters 1-4.

Week 4: **Elections II**

Film: “The War Room” (1993)

Reading:

- Popkin, Samuel L., *The Candidate: What It Takes to Win – and Hold – the White House* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): Chapters 1-3, 9-10.

Week 5: **Incumbency Advantage**

Film: “The Distinguished Gentleman” (1992)

Reading:

- Jacobson, Gary C., *The Politics of Congressional Elections, Eighth Edition* (New York: Pearson, 2012): Chapters 1-3.
- Desposato, Scott W., and John R. Petrocik, 2003, “The Variable Incumbency Advantage: New Voters, Redistricting, and the Personal Vote,” *American Journal of Political Science* 47(1): pp. 18-32.

Week 6: **Legislative Politics**

Film: “Charlie Wilson’s War” (2007)

Reading:

- Mayhew, David, *Congress: The Electoral Connection, Second Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974): Part I.

Week 7: **Congressional-Presidential Relations I**

Film: “The Contender” (2000)

Reading:

- Segal, Jeffrey, 1987, “Senate Confirmation of Supreme Court Justices: Partisan and Institutional Politics,” *Journal of Politics* 49(4): pp. 998-1015.
- Schickler, Eric, “Congressional Investigations of the Executive Branch,” unpublished manuscript.

Week 8: **Midterm Exam**

Week 9: **Congressional-Presidential Relations II**

Film: “The West Wing,” Season 1, Episode 9 and Season 3, Episode 4

Reading:

- Cameron, Charles, *Veto Bargaining: Divided Government and Interbranch Bargaining* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000): Chapters 1-3.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, 2001, “The President’s Legislative Influence from Public Appeals,” *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2): pp. 313-329.

Week 10: **Interest Groups**

Film: "Thank You for Smoking" (2005)

Reading:

- Wright, John R., *Interest Groups and Congress: Lobbying, Contributions and Influence* (New York: Pearson): Chapters 1,3,4, and 6.

Week 11: **Political Parties**

Film: "House of Cards," Chapter 9

Reading:

- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): Chapters 1-4.

Week 12: **Media and Politics**

Film: "Wag the Dog" (1997)

Reading:

- Krosnick, Jon A. and Laura A. Brannon, 1993, "The Impact of the Gulf War on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: Multi-Dimensional Effects of Political Involvement," *American Political Science Review* 87(4): 963-975.
- Karol, David, and Edward Miguel, 2007, "The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election," *Journal of Politics* 69(3): pp. 633-648.

Week 13: **Democratization**

Film: "The Last King of Scotland" (2006)

Reading:

- Geddes, Barbara, 1999, "What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: pp. 115-144.

Week 14: **International Relations**

Film: "Deterrence" (1999)

Reading:

- Wagner, R. Harrison, 1991, "Nuclear Deterrence, Counterforce Strategies, and the Incentive to Strike First," *American Political Science Review* 85(3): pp. 727-749.

Week 15: **Civil War**

Film: "Hotel Rwanda" (2004)

Reading:

- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin, 2003, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97(1): pp. 75-90.
- Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, 2013, "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War," *American Journal of Political Science* 57(4): 875-891.

****FINAL EXAM: Monday, April 28, 10 to 11:45 a.m.****