Seminar in Political Theory
POS 419Z (4512), Spring 2014
Monday, 2:45-5:35, LC 12

Office Hours for Professor Schoolman:
Monday, Humanities 16 (Political Science Contact Offices): 12:30-2:30 pm.
Tuesday, Milne 218 (Political Science Dept.): afternoons, by appointment

Seminar in Political Theory

Our course topic is “Film and Democracy in America” and it will focus on films that explore the question of the inclusiveness of modern democratic societies, particularly America.

How do the films produced in America help us to understand how those who are different from the majority are constructed as the “Other” and denied rights and excluded or, if granted formal-legal rights and in principle included, remain the “Other” and continue to suffer various forms of discrimination? And do films perhaps offer constructive images of inclusiveness to enlighten the public about the values to which a true democracy ought to be committed?

Readings and films considered will take up the condition in America of women; minorities of color; Jews, Muslims, and Christians; the mentally ill; immigrants; and LGBT persons.

Class participation, an oral presentation, and a final term paper are required.

Course Requirements

There are three requirements for this course:

1. Every student is expected to participate in class on a regular basis, posing questions, answering questions, contesting or arguing on behalf of the views of other students in the course and, certainly, challenging the views of the instructor. Since POS 419Z is a “seminar” format, meaning the class is comparatively small in size and allows for on-going discussion among the members of the class, student participation is facilitated. Class participation is valued at 25% of the final grade. Obviously, in order to participate students must attend class.

Attendance will be taken each class. As class meets but once each week during the course of the semester, which means that a class absence amounts to missing a full week of class, students are highly discouraged from missing any classes during the term, and certainly not more than one class. Additional, unexcused class absences are grounds for deregistration and failure.
2. All students are required to make at least one oral presentation in class on the reading material. Students will be given at least two weeks advance notice in order to be able to prepare their presentations. Presentations should be no more than 20 minutes long. This may seem like a long time for a presentation, but once student presenters thoroughly read and study a text to prepare their presentations they will see that the time allotted is not generous. **Presentations are valued at 25% of the final grade.** Student presentations should do the following three things:

**First,** presentations should summarize the arguments in the reading assignment for that day, drawing upon examples from films, *if possible,* to illustrate arguments from the readings.

**Second,** presentations should relate the argument in the reading to class discussions we have had earlier in the semester. This helps to establish continuity in our discussions;

**Third,** presentations should pose critical questions about the reading material.

**Best presentations (grade of A) -- will include all three of the above.**

3. Finally, students will have a term paper (15 pages) to write, the goal of which will be to examine selected course readings and films with regard to the questions around which our course is framed. Options for designing your term paper are laid out on p. 8 of this syllabus. Here are the questions you must focus on in your term paper:

To what extent are modern democratic societies – especially America – inclusive? How do the films produced in America or elsewhere help us to understand how those who are considered to be “different” from the majority with respect to their gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so forth, are constructed as the “Other” and denied rights and excluded and perhaps the victims of violence towards difference, or, if granted formal-legal rights and in principle are included, remain the “Other” and continue to suffer forms of discrimination? And do films perhaps offer constructive images of inclusiveness to enlighten the public about the values to which a true democracy ought to be committed?

Each student will submit a term paper prospectus due on March 17 as scheduled below. The prospectus should be 4-5 typewritten pages outlining the term paper project and should include a working bibliography. Students should take advantage of Professor Schoolman’s office hours to discuss the prospectus. The prospectus is to be submitted by email attachment to *mschlman@albany.edu,* and must be received no later than 5pm. No late papers accepted. Term paper prospectuses are valued at 25% of the final grade.
Final term papers are due on May 14, as scheduled below. No late papers are accepted. Term papers are to be submitted in hard copy and by email attachment.

Because the term paper topic – “Film and Democracy in America” – is the main focus of each class meeting, term papers can be developed during the course of the semester as the class proceeds, which will be to each student’s great advantage. **Term papers are 25% of the final grade.** This course fulfills the 400 level writing intensive requirement for the major in Political Science and the upper-level University GenEd writing requirement.

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**Rules of Engagement**

Students are permitted to bring beverages to class, although no food of any sort is permitted. Cell phones are to be turned off upon entering class. Students who use computers for note taking are not permitted to use their computers for any other application during class time. Each violation of these rules will be rewarded with a deduction of 5 pts. from the final grade. Students must arrive to class on time. If anything competes with these obligations a student should take a different course with more flexible requirements.

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**Learning Objectives**

The goal of this course is to teach students how to carefully read and interpret texts, identify key concepts on which theoretical arguments are based, and how to use these arguments and concepts to develop critical analyses and understandings of democratic societies and their politics. Students will be taught to think about the complex matter of what counts as politics in modern democratic societies. These objectives will contribute to teaching students how to formulate concepts and arguments of their own in their written work (term papers) and in oral presentations (class participation and class presentations). Finally, students will be taught how to interpret the meaning of films and their images in so far as they pertain to the nature of a democratic education for the citizens of a modern democratic society.
Required Reading

With the exception of Jacques Ranciere’s *The Politics of Aesthetics* all readings are available as selected essays, chapters, or articles in Dropbox, and can be accessed through the following link, which you should patch into your browser: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xfdcsts91e5y7r4/4Asfewf1La

J. Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (Mary Jane Books, Quail & Western)  
“The Distribution of the Sensible” (46)

T. W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (collected essays, Dropbox)  
Chapter 2 “The Schema of Mass Culture” (37)  
Chapter 3 “Culture Industry Reconsidered” (10)  
Chapter 6 “How to Look at Television” (20)  
Chapter 7 “Transparencies on Film” (10)  
Chapter 8 “Free Time” (10)

M. Horkheimer & T.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*  
“The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (40)

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I* (selected chapters, Dropbox)  
Chapter 1 “Theses on Movement First Commentary on Bergson” (10)  
Chapter 2 “Frame and shot, framing and cutting” (15)  
Chapter 3 “Montage” (15)  
Chapter 4 “The Movement image and Its Three Varieties” (25)

M. Schoolman, *Democratic Enlightenment: The Reconciliation Image and the Emancipation of Perception*  
Chapter 1 “Whitman, the Idea of Democratic Enlightenment, and the Ideal of Reconciliation” (1 cl)  
Chapter 2 “Whitman’s Discovery – Aesthetic Education through the Visual Image” (1 class)  
Chapter 4) “The Reconciliation Image in Art” (1 class)
Schedule of Reading and Viewing Assignments

January 27. Course Introduction

February 3. The Idea of Democratic Enlightenment

M. Schoolman, “Whitman, the Idea of Democratic Enlightenment, and the Ideal of Reconciliation”

Class Presentation: Professor Schoolman

February 10. Democratic Enlightenment through the Visual Image

M. Schoolman, “Whitman’s Discovery – Aesthetic Education through the Visual Image”

Class Presentation: (1)_________________  (2)________________

February 17. Democratic Enlightenment: The Reconciliation Image in Art

M. Schoolman, “The Reconciliation Image in Art”

Class Presentation: (3) ______________ (4) ______________

February 24. Democratic Enlightenment: The Reconciliation Image in Film

Viewing of The Help

Discussion of the Reconciliation Image in The Help

March 3. The Politics of Film: Democratic or Non-Democratic

Discussion of “The Reconciliation Image” in The Help

Class Presentations: (5) ___________ (6) ________ (7)__________

March 10. Critique of Democratic Enlightenment

Jacques Ranciere, The Politics of Aesthetics
“The Distribution of the Sensible”

Class Presentation: (8) ______________ (9) ______________

March 17. Classes suspended. Students should use this time to formulate and write a term paper prospectus, which is due March 24.
March 24. Critique of Democratic Enlightenment (*Term paper prospectus due*)

M. Horkheimer & T.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
“The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”

Class Presentation: (10) ________________

T. W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*
Chapter 2 “The Schema of Mass Culture”

Class Presentation: (11) __________________

March 31. Critique of Democratic Enlightenment

T. W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*
Chapter 3 “Culture Industry Reconsidered”
Chapter 6 “How to Look at Television”
Chapter 7 “Transparencies on Film”
Chapter 8 “Free Time”

Class Presentation: (12) ___________ (13)_____________ (14)_______ (15) ________

April 7. Rebuttal to Critique of Democratic Enlightenment

1. Further reflections on “The Reconciliation Image in” *The Help*

The purpose of this 30 minute discussion is to determine if “the Reconciliation Image” in *The Help* is a strong response to the critiques of mass culture made by Horkheimer and Adorno.

2. Viewing of *Hairspray*

3. Discussion of “The Reconciliation Image” in *Hairspray* (one hr., 47 Min)

Class Presentation (16)________________________ (17) ______________________

* Students making class presentations on *Hairspray* will have the opportunity to view the film in advance of our class meeting.

April 14. Classes suspended.
April 21. Deleuze: Democratic Enlightenment’s Most Radical Dimension

Gilles Deleuze, Cinema I (selected chapters, Dropbox)
Chapter 1 “Theses on Movement First Commentary on Bergson” (10)
Chapter 2 “Frame and shot, framing and cutting” (15)

Class Presentation: (18) ________________________   (19) ___________________________

Examples for Chapter 1:

Fred Astaire’s “Action Dance” (Any-Location-Whatever)
"One for My Baby" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD7sqGJ3NBg
"Swing Time" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxPgpIMujzQ&feature=related
"Ceiling Dance" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0g3g6AvLtM
"Fred Astaire Lifetime Achievement Award" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9WT9fmi4U&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PL3C172E0C5AFD1D5D

Examples for Chapter 2:

Hitchcock “Suspicion”(Glass of Milk lit from inside)- “Rear Window” (Cigarette Glow) -Whole accent placed on single image
"Suspicion" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk8FW9atXuw (around 1:46)
"Rear Window" - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKCGcHQSvHw (around 2:10)

Hitchcock “Spellbound” (Glass of milk leaving screen empty/white)- When set is emptied of certain sub-sets
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grn-Wecipdo (around 1:10)

Griffith “Intolerance” (Change in shot direction in accordance to the ramparts)- Frame is inseparable from rigid geometric distinctions
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkgSI0U_cc (around 26:00)

Dreyer “Passion of Joan of Arc”- Example of concept of deframing; cutting frames, faces cut by edge of screen (around 1:09)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25lVFTyq7Nc&feature=related

Hitchcock “Frenzy”- Modifies relative position of immobile sets (running up stairs to door that man opens then camera leaves and shoots through window of apartment) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRfbuQgI5jY (around 3:00)
April 28. Deleuze: Democratic Enlightenment’s Most Radical Dimension

Chapter 3 “Montage” (15)
Chapter 4 “The Movement image and Its Three Varieties” (25)

Class Presentation: (20) ________________________   (21) ___________________________

Examples for Chapter 3:

Griffith “The Massacre”- Shows how closeups can change size of set and scene (Baby during the action sequence) (around 30 minutes)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HB4JXAQ-eE

Griffith “Intolerance”- Shows montage (Transition from Babylonian to Modern race)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF7ho_-1aWo (around 3:30)

Eisenstein “Odessa”(Stairs) and “Ivan The Terrible” (Two caesuras responding to Ivan’s two moments of doubt”- Shows Deleuze’s theory that movement-image is cell of montage

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps-v-kZzfec (around 7:30)

Vertov “Man With a Movie-Camera”- Shows interval of movement (perception, the glance, and the eye)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDXgcBQVJCw (around 8:00)

* Examples for Chapter 4 to be brought to class by Professor Schoolman.

May 5. Theoretical Summary: Is there a Vision of Reconciliation or some other democratic vision in film?

Term Paper Optional Topics

You have available three options for completing your term paper assignment:

First, you may adopt my approach and look for examples of “the reconciliation image” in two films of your own choosing, or for examples of its “illusory” forms.

Second, you may adopt the theoretical orientation of Ranciere, Horkheimer and Adorno, or Deleuze and use their work to analyze two films of your own choosing.

Third, you can discuss and analyze the readings for our course as a whole, with or without film examples.