**Contemporary Political Theory**

The topic of this course is “politics and film.” With regard to a particular theme on which course readings and course films will focus we will ask whether film is a medium, not just of popular culture but of popular art, through which the public is educated about the nature of democratic society, its limitations and possibilities for growth and development. Our theme for Spring 2010 is “intolerance” as it is directed against African-Americans, Jews and Muslims, women, gays and lesbians, and against other forms social differences take from the majority. Course readings will explore identity politics, the construction of the “other,” forms of resistance to intolerance, and how successfully film depicts and investigates intolerance and its related issues. The films to be shown are “Triumph of the Will,” “Judgment at Nuremberg,” “The Birth of a Nation,” “Philadelphia,” “Far From Heaven,” “My Son the Fanatic,” and “The Stepford Wives.” With the exception of one text, Maria Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, which can be purchased used from Amazon Books, readings are posted on Blackboard.

**Requirements for the Course**

Among the requirements for this course is student participation in class discussions. Every student is expected to participate 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 instructors. Students cannot receive a passing grade in this seminar without a record of regular class participation. Obviously, in order to participate students must attend class. Attendance will be taken each class. As class meets only once each week, students are not permitted to miss more than one class (which translates into one week of missed class). Missed classes are grounds for de-registration and failure.

Students are required to write short, two-page bi-weekly response papers based on readings and films. Due dates for response papers are indicated below on your syllabus. No late papers are accepted. In addition, students are required to write a term paper of twenty pages, which may grow out of the bi-weekly response papers if the student chooses. Students are encouraged to discuss their papers with the instructors as it develops during the course of the semester. Term papers are to be handed in on the final day of classes. No late papers are accepted.
Films
“Triumph of the Will”
“Judgment at Nuremberg”
“The Birth of a Nation”
“Far From Heaven”
“The Stepford Wives”
“Philadelphia”
“My Son the Fanatic”

Assigned Readings (readings posted on Blackboard)

Michel Foucault, “Two Lectures” and “Truth and Power”
Walt Whitman, Democratic Vistas
Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “Enlightenment as Mass Deception”
Theodor Adorno, “Transparencies on Film”
Morton Schoolman, “Democratic Enlightenment”

Readings to be Purchased

Maria Sturken & Lisa Cartwright, Practices of Looking (available used from Amazon)

Weekly Schedule and Assignments


Film: “Triumph of the Will,” (120 minutes) followed by class discussion.

January 28.

Reading: Class discussion of Michel Foucault, “Two-Lectures” & “Truth and Power.”

February 4.

Film: “Judgment at Nuremberg” (186 minutes)

February 11.

Class discussion of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “Enlightenment as Mass Deception” and Theodor Adorno, “Transparencies on Film”

February 18.

Film: “The Birth of a Nation.” (187 minutes)
February 25.
Class discussion of Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* and M. Schoolman, “Democratic Enlightenment”

March 4.
Film: “Far From Heaven”


March 18.
Film: “Philadelphia”

March 25.

April 1. Classes suspended, Spring break.

April 8.
Film: “The Stepford Wives”

April 15.
Class discussion of Sturken & Cartwright, “Consumer Culture and the Manufacturing of Desire” and “Postmodernism and Popular Culture”

April 22.
Film: “My Son the Fanatic”

April 29.

May 6. Last day of classes. Final paper due.