Seminar in Political Theory

The topic for this course is "democratic enlightenment." It will take up two theoretical questions. First, is there a major and fundamental shift underway in the culture of modern democratic societies? Specifically, is the culture that was developed around language being replaced by a culture that revolves around the ubiquity of visual images? Second, what political lessons, if any, do visual images teach? Put differently, do visual images constitute a new form of enlightenment and, if so, in what ways do they enlighten a democratic people or contribute to the development of an enlightened democratic society? What social and political values, for example, do visual images convey? To begin to answer these questions the course will focus on film, which is arguably the most dominant visual media today, though we also will be interested more broadly in visual media on the internet and on television. While there is much scholarship on visual images and their media, perhaps the most important work for political theorists has been the writing of Gilles Deleuze, whose two books, *Cinema I* and *Cinema II* will form the reading for our course. Deleuze’s theory has the great benefit of considering the visual image as it is, in itself, apart from language, which thus allows us to consider visual images as independent forms of discourse – as “visual discourse,” let us say for the time being.

Course Requirements

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 419 is in a “seminar” format, meaning the class is comparatively small in size and allows for 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 discouraged from missing more than one class during the term. Additional, unexcused class absences are grounds for deregistration and failure.
All students are required to make at least one 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. Presentations are valued at 25% of the final grade. Student presentations should accomplish three things:

First, presentations should summarize Deleuze’s arguments in the reading assignment for that day, drawing upon examples from films, if possible, to illustrate Deleuze’s arguments about images;

Second, presentations should relate the argument in the reading to class discussions on Deleuze earlier in the semester;

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

Finally, students will have a term paper (15-20 pages) to write on “images,” the goal of which will be to create ways of thinking about the “democratic nature” of images. In their papers students will be expected to propose three types of democratic images, to explain what kinds of democratic values the images communicate, and how the image communicates those values. Students’ conceptualization of images can be based on and drawn from films of their own choosing. Term papers are due on the last day of class indicated below. However, because the term paper topic will be the main focus of each class meeting, term papers should be written during the course of the semester as the class proceeds. Term papers are 50% of the final grade. This course fulfills the 400 level writing intensive requirement for the major in Political Science.

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. Students must arrive to class on time. If anything competes with this obligation a student should take a different course with more flexible requirements.

**Required Reading (available at Mary Jane Books)**

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*
Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*

**Weekly Assignments**

September 2. Course introduction.

Reading assignment for the class of September 16: Schoolman, *Democratic Enlightenment: Whitman and Aesthetic Education*. This reading will be available on Blackboard.

September 16.
Schoolman, *Democratic Enlightenment: Whitman and Aesthetic Education.*
Class Presentors: 1. Professor Schoolman
2. Jamie Carlson

September 23.
Reading: *Cinema I*, chapters 1-2.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 

September 30.
Reading: *Cinema I*, chapters 3-4.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 

October 7.
Reading: *Cinema I*, chapters 5-6.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 

October 14.
Reading: *Cinema I*, chapters 7-8.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 

October 21.
Reading: *Cinema I*, chapters 9-10.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 

October 28.
Reading: *Cinema I*, chapters 11-12.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 

November 4.
Reading: *Cinema II*, chapter 1.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 

November 11.
Reading: *Cinema II*, chapter 2.
Class Presentors:
1. 
2. 
November 18.
  Reading: Cinema II, chapter 7.
Class Presentors: 1. __________________________
  2. __________________________

November 25. No class. Thanksgiving.

December 2. Last class.
  Term papers due – student summary presentations of term papers.
  Course summary: Democratic Enlightenment?