

American Politics in Film
4week2
June 26-July 21, 2017
Online

"...a good movie is merely a good first draft: something you use to get into a subject, to begin to learn about it. Remember *Lawrence of Arabia*? There was a tremendous debate about it back when it was first released; some people objected to the movie's portrayal of T.E. Lawrence participating in the massacre with the Turks. But that doesn't make it a bad movie. As a result of seeing it, you need to go out and read."

—Oliver Stone, "A Filmmaker's Credo: Some Thoughts on Politics, History, and the Movies," in Daniel M. Shea, *Mass Politics, The Politics of Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's/Worth, 1999), p.138.

Course Description

This course examines representations of selected aspects of American politics in film. We will use movies as our primary texts to analyze campaigns and elections, political parties, the Cold War, censorship in American politics, the criminal justice system, and the participation of minorities in the political process, among others. Although this will not be the primary focus of the course, we will also explore the implications of media representations of politics for democracy and democratic participation.

Course Objectives

1. To expose students to an alternative way of analyzing and understanding selected aspects of American politics.
2. To give students an opportunity to acquire new information about, and to refresh their perspective on, selected aspects of American politics.
3. To provide students with opportunities to hone their information analytical and writing skills.

Course Requirements

All films must be watched even if students have had the opportunity to watch them previously.

1. **Quizzes.** You will take 10 quizzes, each based on a reading related to the movies. Nine quizzes will consist of 10 questions, each worth one point. The last quiz will consist of 5 questions, each worth 2 points. Your point total will be converted to a letter grade based on the scale below. **This letter grade will**

constitute 25% of the course grade.

Quizzes Grade Scale

90-100 A

80-89 B

70-88 C

60-69 D

<60 E

2. Daily Reflections on Movies. You will use the journal tool to keep a daily record of your thoughts, reactions, impressions, and/or questions after each movie. Your journal entries should be concise. Your journal will be evaluated as a portfolio at the end of the course as excellent, good, average, fair, or poor and graded A, B, C, D, E respectively. Your ranking will be determined by the consistency of your reflections, the thoughtfulness of your expression and the quality of your writing. **The letter grade for your daily reflections will constitute 40% of the course grade.**

3. Thematic Group Discussion & Concluding Post: There will be four thematic group discussions based on a set of movies and a concluding post based on the documentary "Rich Media, Poor Democracy." After watching the films in a specific set you will briefly answer a discussion question addressing the theme for that set. You will post your reply and then respond briefly to one other post. Your group discussion posts, replies and your concluding post will be evaluated as a portfolio at the end of the course as excellent, good, average, fair, or poor and graded A, B, C, D, E respectively. Your ranking will be determined by the focus, clarity, organization, cohesion, thoughtfulness, distinctiveness, and adhesion to standard English conventions of your writing. **The letter grade for the thematic group discussion & concluding post will constitute 35% of the course grade.**

The grade scale for quizzes will also be the grade scale for the course.

Required Readings

Available in "Readings" content section.

Virtual Office Hours

M-F 2:00-3:00 pm. During this period, I will check and respond to emails. All emails should be sent through Blackboard and you have to make sure that if you choose to use a personal email address, your emails go to Blackboard. You also must make sure that e-mails sent to you and/or the class through Blackboard are forwarded to your personal email.

Course Calendar and Assignment Schedule (Make Sure you Print this Schedule)

Date	Activities	Due
June 26	Log in, do ice breaker, meet your classmates, review all content sections, ask me any questions you may have.	Unless otherwise specified all assignments are due by 11:59 pm
27	Watch: <i>Dr. Strangelove</i> Journal Entry	
28	Watch: <i>The Front</i> Journal Entry Read: Miller, "Cold War Realities, American Dreams" Take Quiz 1	
29	Watch: <i>12 Angry Men</i> Journal Entry Read: Vidmar, <i>American Juries</i> , Chapter 3 Take Quiz 2	
30	Watch: <i>And Justice for All</i> Thematic Group Discussion 1: Free Speech-Original Post and one Reply	
July 3	Watch: <i>The Candidate</i> Journal Entry	
5	Watch: <i>Game Change</i> Journal Entry	
6	Watch: <i>Glory</i> Journal Entry Read: Blight, "Douglass and the Meaning of the Black Soldier" Take Quiz 3	
7	Watch: <i>The Brother From Another Planet</i> Journal Entry Read: Elshtain and Beem, "Race and Civil Society" Take Quiz 4	
10	Watch: <i>El Norte</i> Thematic Group Discussion 2: Race and Immigration-Original Post and one Reply	
11	Watch: <i>On the Waterfront</i> Journal Entry Read: Dubofsky and Rhea Dulles, "Corruption, Politics, and Labor's Travail" Take Quiz 5	

12	Watch: <i>Norma Rae</i> Journal Entry Read: Aronowitz, "Introduction" Take Quiz 6	
13	Watch: <i>The Last Hurrah</i> Journal Entry Read: Judd & Swanstrom, "Party Machines and the Immigrants" Take Quiz 7	
14	Watch: <i>City Hall</i> Thematic Group Discussion 3: Labor & Urban Politics-Original Post and one Reply	
17	Read: Adams, "A New World" Take Quiz 8	
18	Watch: <i>Full Metal Jacket</i> Journal Entry Read: Kolko, "Conclusion" and "Chronology" Take Quiz 9	
19	Watch: <i>American Sniper</i> Thematic Group Discussion 4: War-Original Post and one Reply	
20	Read: Münsterberg, "Why We go to the Movies" Take Quiz 10	
21	Watch: Rich Media, Poor Democracy Concluding Post: Movies and Democracy	

Suggested Readings (These are for your reference. They are not available on Blackboard)

- Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *Hollywood Films of the Seventies, Sex, Drugs, Violence, Rock'n'Roll, and Politics* (New York: Harper Row, 1984).
- Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Past Imperfect, History According to the Movies* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995).
- Timothy Corrigan, Patricia White and Meta Mazaj, eds., *Critical Visions in Film Theory, Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011).
- Daniel P. Franklin, *Politics and Film* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).
- Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson, *Politics and Film* (New York: Praeger, 1971).
- Richard Grenier, *Capturing the Culture, Film, Art, and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1991).
- Gerald Mast, *A Short History of the Movies*, Fifth Ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992).
- Frank Miller, *Censored Hollywood, Sex, Sin & Violence on Screen* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1994).

- Brian Neve, *Film and Politics in America, A Social Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
- Stephen Powers, David J. Rothman and Stanley Rothman, *Hollywood's America, Social and Political Themes in Motion Pictures* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).
- Leonard Quart and Albert Auster, *American Film and Society Since 1945*, 4th Edition (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011).
- Ian Scott, *American Politics in Hollywood Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
- Robert Brent Toplin, *History By Hollywood* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).