



2019–2020 Academic Year  
Summer 2019



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
FACULTY OF ARTS

**POLI 415 L01**  
**Politics Through Film**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Chris W. J. Roberts

**TELEPHONE:** Cell (403) 870-9241

**OFFICE:** SS 702

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesday & Wednesday 1300-1400 or by appointment

**EMAIL:** [christopher.roberts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:christopher.roberts@ucalgary.ca)

**COURSE D2L:** <https://d2l.ucalgary.ca>

**COURSE DAY/TIME:** Tuesday & Thursday 1600-1845

**COURSE LOCATION:** Lecture Class – SS 113; Film viewing -- SS 203

**COURSE PRE-REQUISITES:** Three (3) units in political science

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Films can be “consumed” and engaged at multiple levels. They are not just aesthetic creations designed to tell a particular story or, more crassly, to make money. From its earliest days, film as an art form was often an explicitly political medium, designed to mobilize and persuade. As an occasionally powerful form of communication, films can inform or misinform, influence and incite audiences to think about political (and social and economic) problems and phenomena in different ways. By reflecting a certain moment and taking on certain themes, feature films and documentaries can provide complementary insights to scholarly literature about politics and history.

In this course we’ll examine a series of paired films that reflect important, *general* political themes across political science major fields (from political theory and international relations to comparative politics) while each film will also be relevant to one or more *specific* subfields and interests, including elections and representation; crises of capitalism; war and deterrence; postcolonialism; international humanitarianism; and the banality of totalitarianism. One cross-cutting theme for some films and readings is gender and politics.

Much of our time in class will be spent watching and discussing our films in the context of relevant literature and themes. Some of these movies will be black and white, some will have subtitles. Some will be big budget Hollywood productions; others will come from various regions of the world including documentaries. Some will be funny and satirical, some will be violent, and many will tackle very difficult subjects, so both language and visuals will occasionally become intense. Sensitive material is unavoidable, so if you find it difficult to watch or discuss such content, this may not be the right class for you.

Finally, most assignments will be focused on drawing out insights about how these films might help us understand our own challenging political moment we (as Canadians, North Americans, global citizens, etc.) find ourselves facing near the end of the 2010s. Both domestic and global orders seem to be in flux. Can we garner additional insights into the political economy of global change through a more rigorous engagement with feature films and documentaries?

**COURSE OBJECTIVES & LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

In this course we'll rigorously apply a four-part analytical framework to our films, so you will develop the competencies to integrate these four core questions into your political analysis toolkit:

Q1) Most importantly, how might the medium of film help us understand better those timeless political themes and challenges as an adjunct to the relevant literature?

Q2) Where applicable, what kinds of political and historical insights can we glean from films about the specific phenomenon or event they cover? Conversely, what might they overlook, obscure, or simply get wrong, and what are the consequences?

Q3) What might a film tell us about the political-historical moment it was made (not just what it is about)?

Q4) Why and how was this particular film made then and by whom, in terms of the political economy of film-making? *[This is not a major focus, but should not be overlooked.]*

By the end of this course, if you do your part through careful study, you will not only strengthen your analytical and critical thinking abilities, but also develop a foundation for making sense of political questions through the non-traditional medium of film (*this sentence and others courtesy of Professor Pablo Policzer, who originally conceived of this course*).

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S):**

No required textbook. Required and supplemental course readings will be posted on D2L or otherwise available online.

**COURSE COMPONENT WEIGHTS AND DUE DATES:**

COMPONENT	WEIGHTING	DUE DATES
<b>Class participation</b> (includes at least one brief class presentation)	<b>25%</b>	<b>Throughout</b>
<b>Three short (four pages each) thematic-analytical reviews</b> (15% each)	<b>45%</b>	<b>Throughout (generally due by 6pm, Sundays, uploaded to D2L Dropbox)</b>
<b>Take-Home Exam (8-10pp)</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>Noon, Sunday, Aug 18th on D2L Dropbox</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

***CLASS PARTICIPATION (25%):***

This course is designed around extensive class participation. You are expected to do the weekly thematic readings prior to viewing the films, make notes during film viewing, and engage in respectful class discussions after viewing the films. Quality of engagement will be graded more highly than quantity.

Every student will also commit to preparing some research about one film or documentary prior to viewing that will be shared verbally with the class. This research will focus on the political economy of film-making, not the political content and insights (i.e. Q3-4 above in “Course Objectives”). There will be a sign-up process in the first class. You will provide a copy of your notes to the instructor in hard copy at the beginning of the class. This will comprise 5 points out of the 25 points available for participation.

***THREE SHORT THEMATIC-ANALYTICAL REVIEWS (3 X 15% = 45%): Due 6pm on the first Sunday after the two films (on D2L Dropbox)***

Each student will write three short (maximum four pages each) thematic-analytical reviews. These will focus on one or two key themes from one weekly module (two paired films, associated readings, class discussions) from the first five weeks of the course. These short essays will apply the four-part analytical framework in a selective manner, where you will focus on one or two key political themes (concentrating on Q1-2 above) but including Q3-4 if appropriate to your analysis.

The additional research requirement for the essay is to integrate at least one contemporary, political analysis piece (e.g., newspaper editorials, blogs, policy “longreads” or “thought” pieces from policy-makers, scholars, think tanks, or public intellectuals, etc.) published since January 2018 that illustrate in some way the contemporary relevance of the film/reading themes for that week beyond the scope of the specificities of the films and/or readings. A rubric and guidelines will be provided in the first week of class.

***TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM (30%): Due Noon, Sunday, Aug 18th on D2L Dropbox***

Your take home exam will be based on the films and readings from the last topic (“Banality of Totalitarianism”). It provides more opportunity to employ and illustrate your analytical, research, and critical thinking skills developed over your first three short analytical reviews.

While those specific films/readings will form the foundation for your paper, you are expected to bring into consideration one additional film or appropriate TV show/episode that complements your analysis. Your third film or TV show/episode must be approved in advance by the instructor, at which point your selection will be posted on D2L and no other student can use that same film or TV episode. Thus, it is beneficial to finalize your selection as early in the term as possible.

For the take-home, you also want to find at least **two** contemporary, relevant political analysis or pieces published since January 2018 that bring some of the themes from the films – and concepts from the core readings – to bear on current political issues and trends. You will also want to draw on additional academic work that extends or changes the thematic focus for the films under consideration. There are range of specific themes you can select: as a take-home exam, you must

produce a unique analytical perspective (i.e., this is not a collaborative assignment). Full guidelines for the take home exam will be handed out in Week 5.

**Note about assignment choice:** Students have to do an assignment related to four of the first five weeks of the course: pre-viewing research about one film and three short reviews. **You cannot do two assignments related to the same week.** You have to plan your assignments carefully starting in the first week. Everyone then does their take home exam related to the final topic (Week 6-7).

**Note:** Written assignments are often required in Political Science courses, including this one, and the quality of writing skills, including but not limited to such elements as grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, clarity, citation, and organization, will be taken into account in the determination of grades. Students are encouraged to make use of the services offered through Writing Support Services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library) or at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>.

**GRADE SCALE:** The following grading scale will be used:

<b>A+ (95+)</b>	<b>B+ (80-84)</b>	<b>C+ (66-69)</b>	<b>D+ (54-57)</b>
<b>A (90-94)</b>	<b>B (75-79)</b>	<b>C (62-65)</b>	<b>D (50-53)</b>
<b>A- (85-89)</b>	<b>B- (70-74)</b>	<b>C- (58-61)</b>	<b>F (0-49)</b>

**\*\*Overall requirement to pass the course:** Students must complete three short thematic-analytical reviews and the take home exam. Failure to meet this level of work covering four of the six weeks will result in an automatic F grade.\*\*

#### **LATE PENALTIES:**

You are required to submit a total of four formal written assignments (three short reviews plus the take home exam). Late short assignments, handed in after 6pm on the specific Sunday deadline, will incur a five percent (5%) per day late penalty (i.e., 0.75 point deduction out of 15 points available). The take home exam is due on Sunday, August 18th, by noon. Students will incur a ten percent (10%) late penalty (i.e., 3 point deduction out of 30 points available) if submitted before noon, Monday, August 19th. Exams will not be accepted after noon on Monday, August 19th, except in extenuating circumstances that are supported by appropriate documentation (please refer to the statement below, “Supporting Documentation and the Use of a Statutory Declaration”).

**COURSE SCHEDULE & TOPICS:** The schedule is tentative and may change as need arises.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC/FILMS</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
<b>Week 1</b>  <b>July 2nd</b>	<b><i>MAD &amp; the Limits of Military Power Week</i></b>  <b>Course Introduction</b> Syllabus, Assignments, D2L Frameworks for thinking about politics through film	<b>General Readings:</b> David Bordwell (2000), “Studying Cinema” (URL) David Bordwell (2008), “Doing Film History” (URL) – just the introduction: stop at first sub-header Susan Sontag (1964), “Against Interpretation” (URL) Susan Sontag (1996), “The Decay of Cinema” (URL)

<p>July 4th</p>	<p><i>Dr. Strangelove (1964)</i> – Kubrick</p> <p><i>The Mouse That Roared (1959)</i> – Boulting, Dell</p>	<p>Herman Kahn (1960), "The Nature and Feasibility of War and Deterrence," Rand Corporation [PDF]</p> <p>Graham Allison (1969), "Conceptual Models of the Cuban Missile Crisis," <i>APSR</i> Vol. 63 (September) [PDF]</p> <p>Hans Morgenthau (1962), "A Political Theory of Foreign Aid," <i>APSR</i> 56 (June) [PDF]</p>
<p>Week 2</p> <p>July 9th</p> <p>July 11th</p>	<p><i>Representation &amp; the Median Voter Week</i></p> <p><i>The Candidate (1972)</i> – Ritchie</p> <p><i>Knock Down the House (Netflix 2019)</i> – Lears and Blotnick</p>	<p>Kenneth Arrow (1950), "A Difficulty in the Concept of Social Welfare," <i>Journal of Political Economy</i>, 58, 4 (August) [PDF] – See also Michael Morreau (2014), "Arrow's Theorem," <i>Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy</i> [URL]</p> <p>Anthony Downs (1957), "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy," <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> 65, 2 (April) [PDF]</p> <p>Amanda Clayton, Diana O'Brien, and Jennifer Piscopo (2019), "All Male Panels? Representation and Democratic Legitimacy," <i>AJPS</i> (January) [PDF]</p>
<p>Week 3</p> <p>July 16th</p> <p>July 18th</p>	<p><i>Postcolonial Week</i></p> <p><i>The Battle of Algiers (1966)</i> – Pontecorvo</p> <p><i>Black Girl (1966)</i> – Sembène</p>	<p>Frantz Fanon (1952), <i>Black Skin White Masks</i> [excerpts as listed on D2L-PDF]</p> <p>Frantz Fanon (1961), <i>Wretched of the Earth</i> [excerpts as listed on D2L-PDF]</p> <p>Samir Amin (1972), "Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa-Origins and Contemporary Forms," <i>Journal of Modern African Studies</i> 10, 4 (December) [PDF]</p> <p>Jean O'Barr (1975), "Making the Invisible Visible: African Women in Politics and Policy," <i>African Studies Review</i> 18/3 (December) [PDF]</p> <p>UNESCO (2014), "Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and the Women's Union of Abeokuta" [PDF]</p>
<p>Week 4</p> <p>July 23rd</p> <p>July 25th</p>	<p><i>Humanitarian Ethics Week</i></p> <p><i>Jesus Christ Airlines (2001)</i> – Jensen</p> <p><i>A Perfect Day (2015)</i> – De Aranoa</p>	<p>Lasse Herten (2017), "Introduction" &amp; "Conclusion," <i>Biafran War and Postcolonial Humanitarianism: spectacles of suffering</i> (2017) [UCalgary Library online access] (Other generally useful chapters are 8 &amp; 10)</p> <p>Michelle Bentley (2017), "The Intervention Taboos: Strategy and Normative Invalidation," <i>Review of International Studies</i> 43 [PDF]</p> <p>Severine Autesserre (2015), "Trouble in Peaceland," <i>Foreign Policy</i> [PDF]</p>

<p><b>Week 5</b></p> <p><b>July 30th</b></p> <p><b>Aug 1st</b></p>	<p><i><b>Crises in American Capitalism Week</b></i></p> <p><i><b>Salt of the Earth (1954) - Biberman</b></i></p> <p><i><b>PBS Frontline documentary(s) on 2009 Great Recession (2010s)</b></i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #90EE90; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>Guidelines for Take Home Final Exam Distributed</b></p> </div>	<p>Friedrich Hayek, <i>The Road to Serfdom</i> (Condensed version of 1944 book that appeared in April 1945 edition of Reader's Digest) [PDF]</p> <p>Robert Kuttner (2014), "Karl Polanyi Explains It All," <i>The American Prospect</i> (April) [URL]</p> <p>Eleanor Hadley (1956), "A Critical Analysis of the Wetback Problem," <i>Law and Contemporary Problems</i> 21 (Spring) [PDF]</p> <p>Benjamin Balthaser (2008), "Cold War Re-Visions: Representation and Resistance in the Unseen Salt of the Earth," <i>American Quarterly</i> 60 (June) [PDF]</p> <p>Douglas Massey (2012), "Immigration and the Great Recession," Stanford Centre on Poverty and Inequality [PDF]</p> <p>Christopher Layne (2018), "The US-China power shift and the end of the Pax Americana," <i>International Affairs</i> 94 [PDF]</p>
<p><b>Week 6 -7</b></p> <p><i>No class Aug 6th</i></p> <p><b>Aug 8th</b></p> <p><b>Aug 13th</b></p>	<p><i><b>Banality of Totalitarianism Week</b></i></p> <p><i><b>Hannah Arendt (2012 film or 2015 documentary)</b></i></p> <p><i><b>HBO's Chernobyl (2019) – Episode 5</b></i></p>	<p>Stephen Whitfield (1981), "Hannah Arendt and the Banality of Evil," <i>The History Teacher</i> 14 (August) [PDF]</p> <p>Michal Aharony (2010), "Hannah Arendt and the Idea of Total Domination," <i>Holocaust and Genocide Studies</i> 24 (Fall) [PDF]</p> <p>Charles Schwartz (1979), "Corruption and Political Development in the USSR," <i>Comparative Politics</i> 11 (July) [PDF]</p> <p>Masha Gessen (2019), "What HBO's 'Chernobyl' Got Right, and What It Got Terribly Wrong," <i>The New Yorker</i> (4 June 2019) [PDF]</p>
<b>Take Home Final Exam</b>		<b>Due Sunday, Aug 18th, Noon (D2L Dropbox)</b>

## INSTRUCTOR GUIDELINES

Students requiring assistance are encouraged to speak to the instructor during class or office hours. Should you wish to meet outside of office hours, please email to make an appointment. It is to the student's advantage to keep such appointments.

Email is a common form of communication but it is not always the most effective way of answering student questions. If you cannot make it to office hours, please request a one-on-one meeting outside of these hours. It is imperative that students regularly check their UofC email accounts and D2L for course related information and announcements. If you have sent the instructor an email but have not received a reply within 24 hours, please resend.

Students may not use laptops and other electronic note-taking devices during film viewing, and there may be other times when you'll be asked to turn the technology off. No recording of lectures (audio and/or video) is permitted without prior approval of the instructor, with

exceptions of course made in the case of approved accommodations. Please be considerate of others and switch off all phones when you enter the classroom. Sending/receiving texts and browsing social media is extremely disruptive to others, and your own performance will also suffer.

## IMPORTANT POLICIES AND INFORMATION

### Supporting Documentation and the Use of a Statutory Declaration

As stated in the University Calendar:

Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation for an exemption/special request. This may include, but is not limited to, a prolonged absence from a course where participation is required, a missed course assessment, a deferred examination, or an appeal. Students are encouraged to submit documentation that will support their situation. Supporting documentation may be dependent on the reason noted in their personal statement/explanation provided to explain their situation. This could be medical certificate/documentation, references, police reports, invitation letter, third party letter of support or a statutory declaration etc. The decision to provide supporting documentation that best suits the situation is at the discretion of the student. Students cannot be required to provide specific supporting documentation, such as a medical note.

Students can make a Statutory Declaration as their supporting documentation (available at [ucalgary.ca/registrar](http://ucalgary.ca/registrar)). This requires students to make a declaration in the presence of a Commissioner for Oaths. It demonstrates the importance of honest and accurate information provided and is a legally binding declaration. Several registered Commissioners for Oaths are available to students at no charge, on campus. For a list of locations to access a Commissioner for Oaths, visit [ucalgary.ca/registrar](http://ucalgary.ca/registrar)).

Falsification of any supporting documentation will be taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action through the Academic Discipline regulations or the Student Non-Academic Misconduct policy.

This statement is accessible at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

*Please note that while the form of supporting documentation provided is at the discretion of the student, the instructor has the discretion not to accept the supporting documentation if it does not corroborate the reason(s) given for the exemption/special request.*

### Absence From a Mid-term Examination:

Students who are absent from a scheduled term test or quiz for legitimate reasons are responsible for contacting the instructor via email within 48 hours of the missed test to discuss alternative arrangements. A copy of this email may be requested as proof of the attempt to contact the instructor. Any student who fails to do so forfeits the right to a makeup test.

### Deferral of a Final Examination:

Deferral of a final examination can be granted for reasons of illness, domestic affliction, and unforeseen circumstances, as well as to those with three (3) final exams scheduled within a 24-hour period. Deferred final exams will not be granted to those who sit the exam, who have made travel arrangements that conflict with their exam, or who have misread the examination timetable. The decision to allow a deferred final exam rests not with the instructor but with Enrolment Services. Instructors should, however, be notified if you will be absent during the examination. The Application for Deferred Final Exam, deadlines, requirements and submission instructions can be found on the Enrolment Services website at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>.

### Appeals:

If a student has a concern about the course or a grade they have been assigned, they must first discuss their concerns with the instructor. If this does not resolve the matter, the student then proceed with an academic appeal. The first step in an academic appeal is to set up a meeting with the Department Head. Appeals must be requested within 15 days of receipt of the graded assignment.

### University Regulations:

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the University policies found in the Academic Regulations sections of the Calendar at [www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html).

### Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

### Plagiarism And Other Forms Of Academic Misconduct:

Academic misconduct in any form (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) is a serious academic offence that can lead to disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the University. Students are expected to be familiar with the standards surrounding academic honesty; these can be found in the University of Calgary calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>. Such offences will be taken seriously and reported immediately, as required by Faculty of Arts policy.



### Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP):

FOIP legislation requires that instructors maintain the confidentiality of student information. In practice, this means that student assignment and tests cannot be left for collection in any public place without the consent of the student. It also means that grades cannot be distributed via email. Final exams are kept by instructors but can be viewed by contacting them or the main office in the Department of Political Science. Any uncollected assignments and tests meant to be returned will be destroyed after six months from the end of term; final examinations are destroyed after one year.

### Evacuation Assembly Points:

In the event of an emergency evacuation from class, students are required to gather in designated assembly points. Please check the list found at [www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints) and note the assembly point nearest to your classroom.

### Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

For program planning and advice, visit the Arts Students' Centre in Social Sciences 102, call 403-220-3580 or email [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit [arts.ucalgary.ca/advising](http://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising) for program assistance.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit their office in the MacKimmie Library Block.

### **Important Contact Information:**

Campus Security and Safewalk (24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year)  
Phone: 403-220-5333

Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Students' Union Representatives  
Phone: 403-220-6551  
Email: [arts1@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts2@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts3@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@su.ucalgary.ca),  
[arts4@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@su.ucalgary.ca)  
Students' Union URL: [www.su.ucalgary.ca](http://www.su.ucalgary.ca)

Graduate Students' Association  
Phone: 403-220-5997  
Email: [ask@gsa.ucalgary.ca](mailto:ask@gsa.ucalgary.ca)  
URL: [www.ucalgary.ca/gsa](http://www.ucalgary.ca/gsa)

Student Ombudsman  
Phone: 403-220-6420  
Email: [ombuds@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ombuds@ucalgary.ca)

### **Campus Mental Health Resources:**

SU Wellness Centre: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>  
Campus Mental Health Strategy: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>