

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
FILM 305.28 L01: Topic in Genre (Political Cinema)
Winter 2022: January 10 to April 11 (excluding Feb 20-26)

Lecture: F 11:00 to 12:50
Screening M 9:00 – 11:45

Note: This course will be delivered in-person. If you are unable to participate in-class owing to time differences or geographical location, please arrange to take this course in a future term

Instructor:	Matthew Croombs
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Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Fridays 17:00-19:00 or by appointment (in person)

Course Description

In an age characterized by the rise of unchecked corporate control, the expansion of the prison-industrial complex, populism, and the proliferation of dramatic protests and social movements, the question of the political has come back into focus as one of Film Studies' central concerns. This course will provide students with a broad overview of some of the key debates, aesthetic tendencies, and issues that have defined the history of political film. We will proceed thematically, orienting our weekly screenings, lectures, and discussions around broad themes and genres, including: Cinema and Decolonization, the Political Thriller, Representing Fascism, Screening Sex and Sexuality, and Eco-Aesthetics. The initial unit of the class will explore how cinema acted as a key tool in the decolonization movements that spread throughout the Global South in the 1960s, while also considering the various forms of "internal colonization" that continue to shape the governance of Western societies. Subsequently, we will take up the question of how film worked as both an explicit vehicle of state propaganda and ideological coercion, as well as an agent against forms of state repression. Subsequently, we will explore the complex intersection between film aesthetics and questions of sexuality, examining how film has worked to liberate perception from patriarchal norms of representation. In our final unit, we will rethink film aesthetics in the post-Covid 19 era.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline and on D2L.

Objectives of the Course

Following the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify key periods and tendencies in the history of political film.
2. Establish a firm command over the debates that have defined the relationship between film aesthetics and politics, including questions of race, class, and sex.
3. Make connections between recent political issues and themes and problems of the past.
4. Enhance their skills at collaborative work and oral presentations.
5. Perform critical analyses and write well-crafted arguments about visual culture.

Textbooks and Readings

All assigned readings for the course will be uploaded to D2L.

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online courses only).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

Laptops should be used for note-taking purposes only. Cell phones should be turned off during screenings and lectures to avoid deductions from your participation grade.

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

10%	Participation	weekly
25%	Response Paper	Feb. 4
25%	Cinemas of Global Solidarity Response	March 11
10%	Quiz	March 28
30%	Final Essay	April 11

Participation (10%)

Since this class involves both challenging films and ideas, attendance, class participation, and completion of the readings are absolutely necessary. Lecture content will usually move beyond the week's assigned readings, so students will need to have read the required materials by the Friday lecture in order for the class experience to remain meaningful. Class participation grades will be evaluated based on the quality of your contributions to in-class discussions and the completion of short in-class assignments.

Response Paper (25%)

Students will submit a short essay on February 5th (4 pages long), which can address any of the readings covered up until that date. Students should provide a cogent and brief précis of their chosen reading followed by a critical analysis. Critical analyses might include situating the reading

in relation to other arguments surveyed in the course, relating the reading to a film screened in class, or following a particular strand of the reading's argument in order to pursue it further. Ultimately, the response paper is an opportunity for students to work their thoughts into written form, and to develop their writing skills before the major research paper.

Cinemas of Global Solidarity Response (25%)

On March 4th, our class will host a conference (online) featuring leading scholars in the field of film and media studies. Students are required to attend one full panel (three talks) scheduled during our normal class hours for which they **will receive an automatic grade of 10%**. Subsequently, they will have one week to write a three page response to **one of the talks, drawing on two of the required or recommended readings from the course. The response will be graded out of 15%**.

Quiz (10%)

On March 28th, there will be a brief in-class quiz, which will cover the lectures and readings from the period between March 7th until March 21st. Students will have thirty minutes to answer ten multiple choice questions. The quiz is open book but students may not consult each other.

Final Essay (30%)

An assignment sheet on the final paper will be given out on March 25. The essay will be 8 pages, double-spaced, and is due on April 11 at the beginning of class.

*Note: Each written assignment will be accompanied by a rubric and instruction sheet on D2L

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No.

Note: You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments in class or by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox. Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for written assignments, while percentage or numerical grades will be used for quizzes and participation grades.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

- * Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense.

Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copy-right in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must

review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

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Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

PART 1 – Cinemas of Decolonization

January 10

Introduction

Screening: *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes* (Canada, Story, 2016)

Reading: Jacques Rancière, “The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics,” in *The Politics of Aesthetics*, pp. 12-19.

January 17

Third Cinema and Anti-colonialism

Screening: *The Battle of Algiers* (Italy/Algeria, Pontecorvo, 1966)

Reading: Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, racism and representation," *Screen*, 24.2 (1983): pp. 2-20.

Recommended: Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Toward a third cinema,” *Cinéaste* 4.3 (1970): 1-10.

Recommended: Shekhar Deshpande and Meta Mazaj, “What is World Cinema?” in *World Cinema: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2018: 15-36.

January 24 The L.A. Rebellion and Beyond

Screening: *Bush Mama* (USA, Gerima, 1979)
 Beyoncé: Lemonade (USA, Knowles-Carter, 2016)

Reading: Cynthia A. Young, “Shot in Watts,” in *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left*, pp. 209-244.

Recommended: Brittney Cooper, *Eloquent rage: a black feminist discovers her superpower* (excerpts).

January 31 Canada and Settler Colonialism

Screening: *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (Canada, Obomsawin, 1993)

Reading: Zuzana Pick, “This Land Is Ours’—Storytelling and History in *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*,” in *Candid Eyes: Essays on Canadian Documentaries*, pp. 181-196.

Recommended: Bruno Cornellier, “The Thing About Obomsawin’s Indianness: Indigenous Reality and the Burden of Education at the National Film Board of Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 21.2 (2012): pp. 2-26.

PART 2 – Variations on the Political Thriller

February 7 The Pakula Parallax

Screening: *All the President’s Men* (USA, Pakula, 1976)

Reading: Richard Thompson. “Mr. Pakula Goes To Washington.” *Film Comment*, 12. 5 (1976): 12-19.

February 14 The Neo-liberal World Order

Screening: *Hypernormalisation* (UK, Curtis, 2016)

Reading: Brett Nichols, “Adam Curtis’s Compelling Logic: The Tortuous Corridor to the Hypernormal,” *borderlands*, 16.1 (2017): 1-24.

Wendy Brown, “Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism’s Remaking of the State and Subject,” in *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*, 17-45.

February 21 READING DAYS—NO CLASSES

February 28 **Cinemas of Global Solidarity Symposium**

Screenings: *Born in Flames* (Borden, USA, 1983)

Reading: Matthew Croombs, "In the Wake of Militant Cinema: Challenges for Film Studies," *Discourse*, 41.1 (2019): 68-89.

PART 3 – REPRESENTING FASCISM

March 7 **National Allegory**

Screening: *Squid Game* (Dong-hyuk, South Korea, 2017)
Selected Episodes

Reading: TBD

March 14 **Fascinating Fascism**

Screening: *Triumph of the Will* (Germany, Riefenstahl, 1935)

Reading: Susan Sontag, "Fascinating fascism," in *Under the sign of Saturn*, 73-105.

PART 4 – Screening Sex and Sexuality

March 14 **On Whiteness**

Screening: *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (USA, Soderbergh, 1989)

Reading: Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness," in *White privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism*, 9-14.

Alisa Perren, "Sex, lies and marketing: Miramax and the development of the quality indie blockbuster," *Film Quarterly* 55.2 (2001): 30-39.

March 21 **Political Modernism and the Female Gaze**

Screening: *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels* (Belgium, Ackerman, 1975)

Reading: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism 7th Ed.*, 711-722.

Marion Schmid, *Chantal Akerman*, 16-22, 32-50.

March 28 **Black Trans Futures**

Screening: *Tangerine* (USA, Reggio, 1982)

Reading: Ridley LaVelle, "Imagining Otherly: Performing Possible Black Trans Futures in Tangerine." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6.4 (2019): 481-490.

PART 5: Eco-aesthetics

April 4 **After Covid-19**

Screening: *Safe* (USA, Haynes, 1995)

Reading: TBD

April 11 **Class vote!**