



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FACULTY OF ARTS

POLI 415 L01
Politics Through Film
Summer 2021

INSTRUCTOR: Chris W. J. Roberts

TELEPHONE: Cell (403) 870-9241

EMAIL: christopher.roberts@ucalgary.ca

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

OFFICE HOURS (via ZOOM): Wednesday, 1100-1300 & Thursday, 1300-1400, or by appointment.

COURSE DAY/TIME (via ZOOM): Tuesday & Thursday 1600-1845 – synchronous sessions via ZOOM. These will also be recorded and posted on D2L after class.

DELIVERY METHOD: Web-based

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 thematically grouped films and readings that span seminal work to leading edge research that reflect important, *general* political themes across political science major fields (from political theory and international relations to comparative politics). Films will also be relevant to one or more *specific* subfields and interests, including deterrence, crisis decision-making, elections and representation (including within specific jurisdictions), propaganda and political mobilization, and authoritarian impulses and durability.

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, some 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 at the beginning of the 2020s. Both domestic and global orders seem to be in flux, especially after we emerge from a global pandemic. Can we garner additional insights into the political economy of societal change through a more rigorous engagement with feature films and documentaries? And can we have fun doing it?

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 scholarly 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 PER THEME	WEIGHTING	DUE DATES
Weeks 1-2: Class participation via D2L Discussion Boards	20%	Requirements will be explained in class.
Weeks 3-4: Cumulative Mid-Term Exam (on D2L Quizzes)	30%	To be completed within 24-hour window by end of class time on Thursday, July 22 nd via D2L Quizzes
Week 5: Class participation via D2L Discussion Boards	20%	Requirements will be explained in class.
Weeks 6-7: Take-Home Exam (1	30%	Midnight Friday, Aug 13 th uploaded to

short answer and 1 essay)		D2L Dropbox
Total	100%	

Each of the four themes will have a specific assignment:

CLASS PARTICIPATION VIA D2L Discussion Boards (2 x 20% = 40%):

For the **first and third themes** of the course, assessment will be done via D2L Discussion Board contributions. This course is designed around extensive class participation even if it does not, unfortunately, involve us watching the films together in the theatre on the second floor of the Social Sciences building, followed by discussions. You are expected to do the relevant thematic readings prior to viewing the films, make notes during film viewing, and engage in respectful in-class (during synchronous Zoom class time) and D2L Discussion Forums after viewing the films. Quality of engagement will be graded more highly than quantity, with guidelines discussed in the first class. Quality in-class/Zoom participation will also be reflected in your Discussion Board grades.

MID-TERM EXAM (30%)

A cumulative two-hour mid-term for Weeks 1-4, but weighted to the second theme (Weeks 3-4) will be written within the 24-hour period ending at 6:45pm on Thursday, July 22nd via D2L Quizzes. The exam will comprise mostly short answer (1-2 paragraph) questions, with some limited multiple-choice and/or matching questions.

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM (30%): Due Noon, Friday, Aug 13th on D2L Dropbox

The take home guidelines will be distributed during class on Tuesday, Aug. 3rd

Your take home exam will be based on the films and readings from the last theme (Weeks 6-7 “Authoritarian Impulses Week”). This assignment provides more opportunity to employ and illustrate your analytical, research, and critical thinking skills developed over the previous three themes of the course.

The take-home will include a choice of three short answer questions (choose one) and then parameters for you to write a short, analytical essay (approx, 2000-2500 words). There are two additional research requirements for the final exam essay:

1) Once you narrow your essay focus, you’ll integrate at least two contemporary, political analysis pieces (e.g., journal articles, book chapters, policy “longreads” or “thought” pieces from policy-makers, scholars, think tanks, or public intellectuals, etc.) published since January 2018 that illustrate a connection to and leverage the films/readings/themes. These should relate your theme/focus to current political issues and trends.

2) While our specific films/readings will form the foundation for your paper, you also need to reference one additional film or appropriate TV show/episode that complements your analysis. Your personal 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 early, once the take-home exam guidelines are distributed in Week 6.

There are a range of specific themes you can select: for the take-home exam, your goal is to

produce a unique analytical perspective (i.e., this is not a collaborative assignment).

WRITING STATEMENT:

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:

A+ (91-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (67-69)	D+ (55-59)
A (85-90)	B (73-76)	C (63-66)	D (50-54)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (60-62)	F (0-49)

Note: Students must contribute to the two required Discussion Boards, take the mid-term exam, and submit a final exam to be eligible to pass.

LATE PENALTIES:

Once D2L Discussion Boards close for a given theme/topic they will not be reopened. Timelines for Discussion Board contributions will be discussed in the first class.

The take home exam is due on Friday, August 13th at 11:59pm. There will be a ten percent (10%) late penalty (i.e., 3-point deduction out of 30 points available) if submitted before noon, Sunday, Aug 15th. Exams will not be accepted after noon on Sunday, August 15th, except in extenuating circumstances that are supported by appropriate documentation.

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

DATE	TOPIC/FILMS	READINGS
Weeks 1-2 Tuesday, June 29th Thursday, July 1st (CANADA DAY/ NO CLASS)	<i>MAD Decision-Making under Crisis Week</i> Course Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus, Assignments, D2L • Frameworks for thinking about politics through film 	General Readings: David Bordwell (2000), "Studying Cinema" (D2L) David Bordwell (2008), "Doing Film History" (D2L) – <i>just the introduction: stop at first sub-header</i> Susan Sontag (1964), "Against Interpretation" & "The Decay of Cinema" (1996) (URL) **Film viewing options will be discussed in the first class** -----
Tuesday, July 6th	<i>Dr. Strangelove (UK/USA 1964) – Kubrick</i>	Herman Kahn (1960), "The Nature and Feasibility of War and Deterrence," Rand Corporation [D2L] Graham Allison (1969), "Conceptual Models of the Cuban Missile Crisis," <i>APSR</i> Vol. 63 (September) [D2L]
Thursday, July 8th	<i>Thirteen Days (USA 2000) – Donaldson</i>	

		Erik Lin-Greenberg (2021), "Soldiers, Pollsters, and International Crises: Public Opinion and the Military's Advice on the Use of Force," <i>Foreign Policy Analysis</i> 17, 3. [D2L]
Weeks 3-4	Candidates & Elections Week	Kenneth Arrow (1950), "A Difficulty in the Concept of Social Welfare," <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> , 58, 4 (August) [D2L] – See also Michael Morreau (2014), "Arrow's Theorem," <i>Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy</i> [D2L] Anthony Downs (1957), "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy," <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> 65, 2 (April) [D2L] Nate Silver (2016), "Why Republican Voters Decided on Trump," <i>FiveThirtyEight</i> [D2L] Priya Chacko (2018), "The Right Turn in India: Authoritarianism, Populism and Neoliberalisation," <i>Journal of Contemporary Asia</i> 48, 4: 541-565. [D2L] Ludovic Rheault, Erica Rayment, and Andreea Musulan (2019), "Politicians in the line of fire: incivility and the treatment of women on social media," <i>Research & Politics</i> [D2L] Megan Garber (2019), "Knock Down the House and the Quiet Insurgency of Tears," <i>The Atlantic</i> [D2L]
Tuesday, July 13 th	<i>The Candidate</i> (USA 1972) – Ritchie	
Thursday, July 15 th	<i>The Accidental PM</i> (India 2019) – Gutte	
Tuesday, July 20 th	<i>Knock Down the House</i> (USA/Netflix 2019) – Lears and Blotnick	
Thursday, July 22 nd	Mid-term Exam (D2L Quizzes)	
Week 5	Propaganda & Political Mobilization Week	Alan Sennett (2014), "Film Propaganda: Triumph of the Will as a Case Study," <i>Framework: The Journal of Cinema & Media</i> 55, 1: 45-65. Ekaterina Zhuravsakay et al. (2020), "Political Effects of the Internet and Social Media," <i>Annual Review of Economics</i> 12: 415-38. [D2L]
Tuesday, July 27 th	<i>Triumph of the Will</i> (Germany 1935) – Riefenstahl	
Thursday, July 29 th	<i>Influence...the film</i> (Canada/South Africa 2020) – Neille and Poplak	
Weeks 6-7	Authoritarian Impulses Week	H.E. Finer (1974), "The Man on Horseback -1974," <i>Armed Forces & Society</i> 1, 1 (November) [D2L] Lucien Pye (1986), Reassessing the Cultural Revolution," <i>The China Quarterly</i> 108 (Dec): 597-612. Brian Crim (2010), "The Intergalactic Final Solution: Nazism and Genocide in Paul Verhoeven's <i>Starship Troopers</i> ," <i>Shofar</i> 28, 4: 104-115. [D2L] Pew Research Center (2021), "Public Trust in Government: 1958-2021" [D2L] Brian Resnick (2019), "Nine essential lessons from psychology to understand the Trump era," <i>Vox</i> [D2L] Lachapelle et al., "Social Revolution and Authoritarian Durability," <i>World Politics</i> 72, 4: 557-600. [D2L]
Tuesday, Aug 3 rd	<i>Seven Days in May</i> (USA 1964) – Frankenheimer	
Thursday, Aug 5 th	<i>The Blue Kite</i> (China 1993) – Zhuangzhuang	
Tuesday, Aug 10 th (Last class)	<i>Starship Troopers</i> (USA 1997) – Verhoeven	

	Take Home Final Exam	Due Friday, Aug. 13th at 11:59pm (D2L Dropbox)
--	-----------------------------	--

INSTRUCTOR GUIDELINES

Students requiring assistance are encouraged to speak to the instructor during class or their office hours. Should you wish to meet via Zoom outside of office hours, please email or call to make an appointment. It is to the student's advantage to keep such appointments. All meetings will be held virtually (via ZOOM or by phone).

Email is a common form of communication, but it is not always the most effective way of answering student questions. **Always include the course name (Poli 415) in the subject header of your email. Emails without a course name in the subject header may not receive a reply.** 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.

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). 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 Commissioners for Oaths, visit 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>

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>.

Reappraisals

The University Calendar states that for reappraisals of graded term work:

“A student who feels that a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, test, etc.) has been unfairly graded, may have the work reappraised as follows. The student shall discuss the work with the instructor **within ten business days** of being notified about the mark or of the item's return to the class. If not satisfied, the student shall take the matter to the head of the department offering the course **within 2 business days of receiving the decision from the instructor**, who will arrange for a reappraisal of the work **within the next ten business days**. The reappraisal will only be considered if the student provides a detailed rationale that outlines where and for what reason an error is suspected.” See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/archives/2020/i-2.html> for additional information.

With regard to reappraisal of academic assessments (final grades) [I think we should use the terminology in the calendar here], I suggest the following:

The University Calendar states that for reappraisal of academic assessments (final grades):

“In the reappraisal of a final grade, the only element that will be considered is the final assessment(s) that makes up the final mark (e.g., final examination, final project, and final paper). The exception is when a grade for a piece of graded term work is made available to students after the last day of classes for the term in which the course is scheduled; that grade may also be considered in a reappraisal of the final grade.”

“A student seeking a reappraisal of a final grade should first attempt to review the final assessment with the department or faculty offering the course. After which the student shall obtain a Reappraisal of Final Grade form from [ucalgary.ca/registrar](https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar) (under Student Forms). The student must indicate exactly what error was made in marking the final assessment and/or in computing the final grade. The reappraisal will only be considered if the student provides a detailed rationale that outlines where and for what reason an error is suspected.” More information is available at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/archives/2020/i-3.html>.

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.

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/.

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.html>. Such offences will be taken seriously and reported immediately, as required by Faculty of Arts policy.

Required Access to Technology

Please see the University's resource page at https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it?id=kb_article&sys_id=86e7438013753ac06f3afbb2e144b031

Copyright Legislation

As stated in the University of Calgary Calendar, Academic Regulations, "students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright and requirements of the copyright act to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorised sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy."

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-electronic-resources-and-information-policy.pdf> and <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>

Instructor Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors (including 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 course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

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.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

For program planning and advice, please consult with the Arts Students' Centre by calling 403-220-3580 or by email at artsads@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit 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].

Important Contact Information

Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Students' Union Representatives

Phone: 403-220-6551

Email: arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca,
arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Students' Union URL: www.su.ucalgary.ca

Graduate Students' Association

Phone: 403-220-5997

Email: askgsa@ucalgary.ca

URL: www.ucalgary.ca/gsa

Student Ombudsman

Phone: 403-220-6420

Email: ombuds@ucalgary.ca

Campus Mental Health Resources

The University of Calgary recognizes the pivotal role that student mental health plays in physical health, social connectedness and academic success, and aspires to create a caring and supportive campus community where individuals can freely talk about mental health and receive supports when needed. We encourage you to explore the excellent mental health resources available throughout the university community, such as counselling, self-help resources, peer support or skills-building available through the following resources:

SU Wellness Centre: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>

Student Wellness Services:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services/services/mental-health-services>

Campus Mental Health Strategy website: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>.