

Meets Wednesdays, 1.30-4pm in BUSAD E203
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Office: Saunders 633R
Office Hours: W 4-4.30PM + R 2.30-3PM or by appt.

Fall 2015

POLS 343 The Politics of Film

It is ordinarily presumed that films are political when they explore the relationship between persons and recognized political institutions, for example Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, about a naïve everyman who fills a Senate vacancy and learns that he must cope with political corruption. The treatment of politics and film offered in this course operates with a different assumption. Here, cinema as an art is not political because its content references familiar political institutions, but because of the way it challenges familiar senses of reality through the way it composes images, words and sounds. Therefore, approaching cinema as political thinking requires attention to film form, which delivers the way films think. In other words, this course will explore the ways in which film form creates the conditions of possibility for political thinking.

Course Requirements

Viewings and Readings

Each week, we will watch the film in class. You are expected to have read the text for that week before coming to class. All texts will be made available on Laulima (no need to buy anything).

Flash Reviews

After the viewing, you will get 10 minutes to write a "flash-review" of the film. You hand this flash-review in to me at the end of the class, either via email or on a piece of paper if you wrote it by hand. These flash-reviews are also my way of taking attendance. If I have a flash-review from you from that day, you were in class. A good flash review incorporates the text for that week.

Student Launches

Each week, a group of students will have watched the film beforehand, and will be ready to give a 5-minute presentation in which they launch the discussion for the film. What major topics, questions or controversies do the film and the text raise?

Final Paper: 1000-word synopsis + politics

The final paper for this class is a synopsis for a film you come up with, and an accompanying segment on the politics of your film. Your paper has to consist of an approximately 1000-word description of your film that tells the who, what, where, when and how of the film, in other words the main characters, conflicts, and story structure with turning points and a climax. Your paper must also include a segment (500-1000 words) that elaborates on the politics of your movie. What kind of political thinking do you want to make possible for your viewers? Why?

Grading

Flash Reviews: 75% (5% per class)

Final Paper: 20%

Student Launch: 5%

90-100% A | 80-89% B | 70-79% C | 60-69% D | >60 % F

Semester Schedule

DOCUMENTARIES

Week 1 August 26 [Introductions](#)

Film: Christopher Guldbrandsen *Stealing Africa* (2012, 58m)

Text: No reading for today

Week 2 September 2 [Film and Reality](#)

Film: Mads Brügger *The Ambassador* (1 h 37m 2011)

Text: Slavoj Žižek *Now I have Glycerine!*

Week 3 September 9 [Photography](#)

Film: Wim Wenders & Juliano Ribeiro Salgado *The Salt of the Earth* (2014 1 h 50m)

Text: Susan Sontag *Looking at War: Photography's view of devastation and death*

Week 4 September 16 [Abu Ghraib](#)

Film: Errol Morris *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008 1h 58m)

Text: Judith Butler *Frames of War*

FEATURE FILMS

Week 5 September 23 [Global Arms-trade](#)

Film: Andrew Niccol *Lord of War* (2005, 2h 3m)

Text: Michael J. Shapiro *War Crimes, Atrocities and Justice* (2014)

Week 6 September 30 [Race in the US](#)

Film: *Crash* (2004, 1h 55m)

Text: Susan and Henry Giroux "Don't Worry, We are all Racists!: Crash and the Politics of Privatisation" *Third Text*, 2007, Vol.21(6), p.745-759

Week 7 October 7 [Non-existing subjects?](#)

Film: Stephen Frear *Dirty Pretty Things* (1h 37m)

Text: Michael J. Shapiro *The Sublime Today. Re-partitioning the global sensible* (2006).

POLITICAL TV-SHOWS

Week 8 October 14 [Cynics](#)

Film: *House of Cards*

Text: TBA

Week 9 October 21

Film: *West Wing* or *Show Me a Hero*

Text: TBA

Week 10 October 28 [Idealists](#)

Film: *Borgen*

Text: TBA

FILM AND THE POSTHUMAN

Week 11 November 4 [Mass Extinction](#)

Film: BBC *Planet Earth* (2006)

Text: Thom Van Dooren *Flight Ways* (2014)

Week 12 November 11 Holiday: Veterans' Day. No class.

Week 13 November 18 [To eat and be eaten](#)

Film: Danish tv-show *Nak & Æd* (Kill & Devour)

Text: Thom Van Dooren *Dwelling in Sacred Community* (2005).

FILM AND THE FUTURE

Week 14 November 25 [Killer drones](#)

Film: Alex Rivera *Sleep-dealer* (2008, 1h 30m)

Text: Gregoire Chamayou *A theory of the Drone* (2014)

Week 15 December 2 [AI Love](#)

Film: Spike Jonze *Her* (2h 6m)

Text: TBA

AND FINALLY: ONE ROMANTIC COMEDY

Week 16 December 9 [Freedom from what?](#)

Film: Ryan Murphy *Eat Pray Love* (2h 10m)

Text: Gitte du Plessis *Enjoy your Vacation!* (2015)

Wednesday December 16: Film synopsis due