

ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: Popular Cultures and World Politics

POLSCI 4QQ3
Fall 2021, Term 1

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Course Description

This course investigates the relationship between symbolic *representation* and the materiality of our *participation* in popular cultures in order to understand how global power relationships are expressed through visual culture, event culture, and digital culture. Our participation in popular cultures – such as watching films, attending sporting events or film festivals, and how we know the world through social media – demonstrates how global politics is not something that happens ‘somewhere else’ abstracted from our everyday lives. Our experiences as audience members and our creative self-expression demonstrate how political imagination holds the potential to both normalize the status quo and be a site of transformation. This course is organized in four sections: an introduction to worldviews and theories of global power and popular cultures in International Relations theories and debates; Visual Culture (film and comics); Event Culture (focusing on The Olympic Games); and Digital Culture (state surveillance, corporate monetization of data and metadata, and #activism of transnational political movements). Through assigned readings, weekly seminar discussions, and individual writing assignments, the objective of the course is to think through how popular cultures can be sites of reproducing global power hierarchies and also can be sites of expressing agency to imagine and enact transformative change in world politics.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Analyze how key concepts in International Relations are expressed and contested through popular cultures: power, security, subjectivity, violence, community, commodification, and agency
- Identify key theoretical approaches to analyzing international dimensions of popular cultures: feminist analyses of gender; cultural political economy analyses of neoliberalism; and postcolonial, Black and Indigenous analyses of racialization
- Understand the arguments and debates in foundational academic texts on popular cultures and international politics
- Through assigned readings, seminar discussions, and writing assignments students will develop skills to read critically, analyze, and assert their own arguments about how popular culture and international politics shape one another and why this matters in our everyday lives

Required Materials and Texts

There is no textbook to purchase for this course. Links to all of the readings (e-journal articles, e-book chapters, films to stream online, etc.) are provided on the Avenue to Learn website.

Class Format

Course Delivery:

Due to the ongoing pandemic this course will be conducted online via Zoom on Wednesday mornings from September to December. As a seminar course, it is important that we meet weekly to discuss the readings, for you to share your insights on the topics we are discussing and for you to have opportunities to ask me and your classmates questions that you have about the course material and assignments. The quality of seminar conversations is enhanced when students have the video turned on for the duration of the class.

Avenue to Learn:

Students are responsible for checking the course website regularly throughout the term as it will host:

- The syllabus
- Announcements and updates from the course director
- The link to the weekly Zoom meeting room for our seminar discussions
- Links to the assigned readings
- Links to upload your writing assignments

Email Policy and Office Hours:

If you have a question about the course, your first step should be to read through the syllabus document and Announcements posted on Avenue to Learn. If you have a question about course readings or assignment requirements please ask during our weekly synchronous class discussion so that your classmates can benefit from hearing your question and you will benefit from hearing their questions. If you have a question about academic accommodations or another matter, email the Course Instructor with the email subject line "4QQ3 Popular Cultures and World Politics". Your question will receive an email response or if needed an appointment for office hours will be set up. Please note that emails will be answered during regular office hours on weekdays and emails sent 24 hours before an assignment deadline may not be answered in time.

Course Evaluation – Overview

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Seminar participation	Every week	20%
Presentation on one assigned reading	Each student will present on one article	5%
Short Paper on Satire	Due October 20 at 9am	30%
Workshop Presentation and Peer Feedback	In class on November 24 and December 1	5% (pass/fail)
Research Paper	Due December 8 at 9am	40%

Course Evaluation – Details

NOTE: All assignments should include a separate cover page with your name, student number, assignment title and a separate page at the end for your bibliography. All assignments should be double-spaced in 12 point font. You can work with MLA, APA, or Chicago Manual of Style citation method. Whichever style you use it is essential to include page number and author name information for all direct quotes and paraphrased ideas from sources as well as to include a bibliography/works cited.

Seminar participation. Weekly participation every Wednesday (20%)

Seminar participation will be evaluated based on how you contribute to the class discussion about the weekly readings, asking questions, making connections between the readings and world events, and active listening to your classmates. To prepare for your participation, when you are doing the weekly readings before class you should be thinking about: what is the author's argument? What sources does the author draw on to support this argument? Why does this matter to understand politics and the media? In order to work through these questions together it is essential for students to keep up with the readings each week and come to class prepared to contribute. NOTE: Seminar courses are discussion-based and depend on consistent collective engagement with the readings. Therefore students who miss five or more classes without discussing an accommodation with the course director will receive a grade of zero for participation.

Presentation on one of the readings (5%)

Each student will be responsible for making a short presentation and leading discussion on one of the assigned readings. Students will be responsible for preparing a brief presentation and take an active role in discussion that week. The presentation will be ten minutes, identify key themes in the reading, and raise two discussion questions for the class. Presentations should not provide a summary of the reading. Rather, the purpose of the presentation is to identify the significance of key themes in the context of the course and to raise questions that encourage discussion. The presenters will take an active role in that week's conversation, responding to questions and insights from classmates. This assignment will be discussed during the first class on September 8.

Short Paper on Satire. Due Wednesday October 20 at 9am (30%)

Watch one of the films listed below through the McMaster University Library online catalogue. Discussing specific examples from the film, respond to the question: how does satire in film invite us to think about global power in new ways? You do not need to do any independent research however your essay must make substantial reference to a minimum of four assigned readings from the course that we have discussed in class before the essay is due. Your essay about one of the following films should be 5 pages double-spaced, which is approximately 1250 words

* Charlie Chaplain, director. 1940. *The Great Dictator*. United Artists.

* Stanley Kubrick, director. 1964. *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Columbia Pictures.

* Tim Robbins, director. 1992. *Bob Roberts*. Paramount Picture Corporation.

Writing workshop presentation and peer feedback. Wednesday November 24, 2021 and Wednesday December 1, 2021 (5%)

By Tuesday November 16 at midnight you will need to send an email to the course director saying which one of the three essay topics you will write your final research paper about. A schedule will be posted on the course website on Wednesday November 17 showing which dates students will be presenting. On November 24 and December 1 we will have writing workshops in class. Each student will give an individual short presentation about their research paper and respond to feedback from classmates and the course director. The presentation should focus on: your thesis, the independently researched academic materials you are incorporating to support your argument, and how your paper is situated within the course assigned readings. This is a report back to the class about the work you have done so far and to show your argument and analysis. Think about – why did you choose this topic? Why does this case matter for understanding the relationship between popular cultures and world politics? What help do you need from the class in order to finish your paper? Students will be prepared to actively listen and give constructive feedback to one another (ie. supporting where classmates are incorporating key concepts and providing constructive criticism for how connections between course material and research could be clarified, etc.) NOTE: This is a Pass/Fail assignment. If you actively participate in discussion and show that you made a sincere effort to prepare you will receive the full 5%.

Research paper. Due Wednesday December 8, 2021 at 9am (40%)

The research paper assignment requires you to apply your knowledge of course material to independent research. This requires demonstrating an understanding of International Relations theories and case studies in course readings and also independently researching academic sources on the essay topic. The final paper will include a clear thesis statement in the introduction that demonstrates your argument and analysis of the topic.

Select one of the following topic options and investigate a case study of your choice:

- Option 1. Feminist theories of the body in visual culture (examples for making your case study selection: a film, a comic, an advertising campaign, etc.)
- Option 2. Cultural political economy theories of wealth and labour in event culture (examples for making your case study selection: a film festival, FIFA World Cup, The Olympic Games, etc.)
- Option 3. Black and Indigenous theories of surveillance and liberation in digital culture (examples for making your case study selection: transnational #activist movements such as Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, etc.)

Research essays will be evaluated based on the grading rubric provided in the course syllabus and the following assignment criteria:

- Demonstrating an understanding of theories and case studies in course materials
- Independently researching a minimum of six academic sources on the topic
- Essay format and style will be evaluated on: introduction, thesis, organization of paragraphs, conclusion, grammar, citations, and bibliography
- Essay length: ten pages double-spaced, which is approximately 2500 words

Grading of the short essay and research paper will take into account:

Criteria	80 – 100% A+, A, A- Excellent to Exceptional	70 – 79% B+, B, B- Good to Very Good	60 – 69% C+, C, C- Fairly Competent to Competent	50 – 59% D+, D, D- Marginally Passing to Passing
Communication Clarity, organization, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, citation of sources	Technically flawless Concise sentence structure and organization	Few technical errors Clear sentence structure and organization	Many technical errors Some sentence structure and organization is unclear	Significant technical errors throughout Unclear sentence structure and lack of overall organization
Analytical Skills Grasp of meaning and ability to concisely synthesize individual insights with the course readings	Original analysis of course material Author's voice comes through clearly (research paper) Addresses all assignment requirements excellently	Demonstrates critical thinking skills applied to course material Addresses all assignment requirements with some errors	Descriptive rather than analytical writing Addresses most assignment requirements but with significant errors	No analysis or critical thinking skills demonstrated Substantial aspects of assignment requirements are not addressed
Application of Course Material Understanding of the significance of authors' arguments, key concepts and case studies presented in the assigned readings and research material	Exceptional application of concepts and case studies to demonstrate original insights about their significance for understanding popular cultures and world politics	Definitions of concepts and descriptions of case studies in course material is evident however further analysis is needed to demonstrate understanding of the author's main argument and/or demonstrate significance for understanding popular cultures and world politics	Attempts to link course material to case studies however analysis and critical thinking are not demonstrated	No demonstration of ability to apply course concepts and case studies to other situations

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Introduction

Week 1. Wednesday September 8, 2021

Welcome to the Course and Introductions

- Welcome to the course and introducing ourselves
- Reviewing the syllabus together and discussing any questions

International Relations Theories and Worldviews

Week 2. Wednesday September 15, 2021

International Relations Theories and Methods of Understanding Popular Cultures

- Kyle Grayson, Matt Davies, Simon Philpott. 2009. "Pop Goes IR? Researching on the Popular Culture World Politics Continuum." *Politics*. 29(3): 155 – 163.
- Jutta Weldes and Christina Rowley. 2015. "So How Does Popular Culture Relate to World Politics?" in *Popular Culture and World Politics: Theories, Methods, Pedagogies*. Pages 11 – 34.
- Roland Bleiker. 2001. "The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory" in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. 30(3): 509 – 533.

Week 3. Wednesday September 22, 2021

Satire or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Neoliberalism

- Jonathan Swift. 1792. "A Modest Proposal: For Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being a Burden on Their Parents or Country and For Making Them Beneficial to the Publick".
- Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair. 2002. "Introduction. Power in a Postcolonial World: Race, Gender and Class in International Relations" in *Power Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Gender, Race and Class*. New York: Routledge. Pages 1 – 32.
- Bong Joon-ho. 2019. *Parasite*. 2 hours 12 minutes. South Korea: CJ Entertainment.

Visual Culture

Week 4. Wednesday September 29, 2021

Feminist Theories of the Body in Visual Culture

- Katie Milestone and Anneke Meyer. 2020. "Chapter 1. Introduction" in *Gender and Popular Culture*. Polity Press.
- Nicholas Mirzoeff. 2015. "Introduction. How to See the World" in *How to See the World*. London: Pelican Books. Pages 3 – 27.
- Shohini Chaudhuri. 2006. "Chapter 2. The Male Gaze" in *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Laurentis, Barbara Creed*. London: Routledge, 2006. Pages 31 – 44.

Week 5. Wednesday October 6, 2021

The Hero's Journey Through the Post-Apocalyptic World

- PBS. 2013. "Episode 3. A Hero Can Be Anyone (1980s – today)" in *Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle*.
- Annika Hagley and Michael Harrison. 2014. "Fighting the Battles We Never Could: *The Avengers* and Post-September 11 American Political Identities" in *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 47(1): 120 – 124.
- Martin Scorsese. 2019. "I Said Marvel Movies Aren't Cinema: Let Me Explain" in *The New York Times*. November 4, 2019.
- Gary Ross. 2012. *The Hunger Games*. Lionsgate Films. 144 minutes.

Week 6. Wednesday October 13, 2021

Fall Term Break

Event Culture

Week 7. Wednesday October 20, 2021

The Spectacle of The Olympic Games

- Gamal Abdel-Shehid and Nathan Kalman-Lamb. 2011. "Chapter 10. Sport, Spectacle and Desire" and in *Out of Left Field: Social Inequality and Sport*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing. Pages 92 – 101.
- Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson. "Introduction: Understanding Cultural Political Economy" in *Cultural Political Economy*, Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson, Eds. New York: Routledge, 2010. 1 – 25.
- Watch the first 30 minutes of the opening ceremony of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games hosted in Vancouver. A video is available at the link here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxZpUueDAvc>
- teleSUR. *Imagined Communities: On British Nationalism ('Farewell to Benedict Anderson')* Introduction by Tariq Ali). 30 minutes.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15nqjGCAqd4>

Week 8. Wednesday October 27, 2021

The Cultural Political Economy of Hosting The Olympic Games

Guest Speaker: Dr. Satoko Itani. Associate Professor of Sport, Gender and Sexuality at Kansai University, Japan

- Maurice Roche. 2000. "Chapter 7. Mega-Events and Global Citizenship: Olympic Problems and Responses" in *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*. Routledge. Pages 194 – 216.
- Kennelly and Paul Watt. "Sanitizing Public Space in Olympic Host Cities: The Spatial Experience of Marginalized Youth in 2010 Vancouver and 2012 London". *Sociology*. 45(5): 765 – 781.
- DemocracyNow! May 27, 2021. "No Tokyo Olympics: As COVID Spikes in Japan, Calls Grow to Cancel Games. IOC Refuses. Who Profits?" The video and transcript of the conversation are available here:
https://www.democracynow.org/2021/5/27/cancel_tokyo_olympics

Digital Culture

Week 9. Wednesday November 3, 2021

State Surveillance and Corporate Monetization of Data & Metadata

- Safiya Umoja Noble. 2018. "Chapter 1. A Society, Searching" in *Algorithms of Oppression*. New York: New York University Press. Pages 15 – 63.
- Laura Poitras. 2014. *Citizenfour*. Praxis Films.

Week 10. Wednesday November 10, 2021

Black Lives Matter: #Activism and Transnational Political Movements

- Sankaran Krishna. 2001. "Race, Amnesia and the Education of International Relations." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*. 26(4): 401 – 424.
- Robyn Maynard. 2017. "Conclusion – From 'Woke' to Free: Imagining Black Futures" in *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing. Pages 229 – 234.
- Kealeboga Ramaru. "Feminist Reflections on the Rhodes Must Fall Movement" in *Feminist Africa*. 89 – 96. https://feministafrica.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/fa22_standpoint_1.pdf
- Christiana Abraham. 2021. "Toppled Monuments and Black Lives Matter: Race, Gender and Decolonization in the Public Space: An Interview with Charmaine A. Nelson" in *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice*. 42(1) [forthcoming issue. available now open access. 17 pages].
<https://journals.msvu.ca/index.php/atlantis/article/view/5552>
- Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism: <https://wildseedcentre.com>

Writing Workshop

Week 11. Wednesday November 17, 2021

Individual Appointments for Research Paper Consultation

- students can sign up for a one-on-one consultation with the course instructor to talk over Zoom about your research paper topic during class time on this date
- students are advised to spend this week writing as much of the research paper assignment as possible in order to share your work during the writing workshop on November 24 and December 1

Week 12. Wednesday November 24, 2021

Writing Workshop on Research Papers

- the presentation schedule will be posted on Avenue to Learn

Week 13. Wednesday December 1, 2021

Writing Workshop on Research Papers

- the presentation schedule will be posted on Avenue to Learn

Final Essay

Wednesday December 8, 2021

- Final Research Paper due at 9am. This is a firm deadline because final grades are due to the university soon after.

Course Policies

Email Policy and Office Hours

If you have a question about the course, your first step should be to read through the syllabus document and Announcements posted on Avenue to Learn. If you have a question about course readings or assignment requirements please ask during our weekly synchronous class discussion so that your classmates can benefit from hearing your question and you will benefit from hearing their questions. If you have a question about academic accommodations or another matter, email the Course Instructor with the email subject line “4QQ3 Popular Cultures and World Politics”. Your question will receive an email response or if needed an appointment for office hours will be set up. Please note that emails will be answered during regular office hours on weekdays and emails sent 24 hours before an assignment deadline may not be answered in time.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Courses With An On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Submission of Assignments

Assignments are to be submitted on the Avenue to Learn course website Turnitin applications. Assignments that are emailed to the instructor will not be accepted, unless a specific accommodation arrangement has been made in advance.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must notify the instructor at least two weeks before the deadline to make arrangements for how the assignment will be submitted electronically. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Grades

All assignment grades and final grades are unofficial until the final course grades are released by the Office of the Registrar.

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B

MARK	GRADE
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the dates and times outlined in this document. The penalty for late assignment submission is 3% per day including weekend days. No written assignments will be accepted ten days after the deadline, except in cases of accommodation.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check

his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.